Grading Policy

Policy/Procedure

Grading Procedure

Professors evaluate student achievement by the traditional means of written comments on papers and exams as well as by assigning letter grades. They are also available to students for individual conferences, to answer questions or discuss complaints, and just to talk further about some important matter raised in class. Faculty report an evaluation of student performance twice each semester. At mid-semester (Roll Call), the following grades are reported for all students: "S" indicating satisfactory achievement to date (normally, work of "C" quality or above), "U" indicating unsatisfactory achievement (normally, work of "C-" or below), "I" indicating incomplete work outstanding, and "NE" indicating no evaluation made by the faculty member (applicable to an entire course or section). These roll call grades are available to students via the college Website and are sent to advisors and serve as a useful benchmark for progress; however, they do not become part of the student's permanent record. At the end of each semester final grades are reported which become part of the student's permanent record. Once a grade has been reported to the Registrar's Office, it may not be changed unless the change has been requested by the instructor and approved by the Provost/Dean of the College. Students who think that a final grade may be inaccurate should begin by contacting the professor as soon as possible. If the professor confirms that a calculation or data entry error has occurred, the professor will submit a grade change request to the Provost/Dean of the College. This request must be submitted no later than Roll Call of the subsequent semester.

Students who, after requesting and receiving from the faculty member a detailed explanation of a grade, think that an assigned grade represents unfair or capricious grading should contact the Department Chairperson who will investigate the charge and report findings to the Provost/Dean of the College for further action.

Most coursework, independent study, and independent research work are graded on an A through F grading scale incorporating pluses and minuses. A student's cumulative average is based on letter grades received in Dickinson courses and at other colleges in the Central Pennsylvania Consortium (Franklin and Marshall and Gettysburg). Two other grading options, pass/fail and credit/no credit, exist and are explained below.

A through F Grading

All courses are offered for a letter grade unless otherwise listed in the bulletin or in the course offerings online. The letter grades reflect the achievement of Dickinson students in the following manner: A, exceptionally high level of achievement; B, substantial level of achievement; C, satisfactory level of achievement, the minimum average grade required for graduation; D, minimal
level of achievement required to receive course credit; F, unacceptable level of achievement. Plus (+) and minus (-) are gradations of the letter grade scale.

A student's cumulative average is based on the numerical value assigned to letter grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Numerical Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>1.67</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pass/Fail Grading**

The pass/fail grading system in courses for academic credit is an option intended to encourage students to venture into new intellectual fields. This option is available on a limited basis to students after the first semester of their freshman year.

Under this system, "pass" is defined as work of a quality earning a grade of at least "C" and "fail" is defined as work of a quality earning a grade of "C-" or below unless the instructor indicates a different criterion for the grade of "pass." Pass/fail grades do not calculate into the gpa. Taking a course on the pass/fail basis requires approval of the instructor. It is the responsibility of each individual instructor to indicate at the beginning of the course the standards for passing and failing work in that course. Some departments may prohibit use of the pass/fail option in specific courses and, normally, pass/fail work should not be included among courses taken for the major or minor or certificate program requirements, or, to satisfy any specific graduation requirement.

Courses taught on the credit/no credit system may not be taken on a pass/fail basis. Students may elect to take no more than one course on a pass/fail basis each semester and no more than a total of four pass/fail courses among the 32 required for graduation. Changes to or from a pass/fail grading basis must be made during the add/drop period.

Courses offered only as pass/fail (i.e., when the student has no option to take as a regularly graded course) are not included in the four course limit referenced above.

**Credit/No Credit Grading**

Credit/no credit grading, in contrast to the pass/fail system, is not the student's option. Each semester a few courses are offered on the credit/no credit basis at the request of the instructors and with the approval of the Subcommittee on Academic Standards. All students registering for a course offered for
credit/no credit will be evaluated on that basis. Mastery of the course's objectives is considered a satisfactory completion of the course and results in a grade of "credit." Failure in the course results in a grade of "no credit." Normally, internships are offered on a credit/no credit basis. As with the pass/fail system, neither grade results in a change to the student's cumulative average. The option to enroll in credit/no credit courses is open to all students including first-semester first-year students (except internships, normally limited to juniors and seniors) with no maximum number of credit/no credit enrollments.

**Incomplete Grades**

A grade of "incomplete" may be reported only in cases in which illness or other serious emergency has prevented the student from completing the work for the marking period. No incomplete is in effect until a form has been filed with the Registrar that states the reasons under which it has been granted, contains an evaluation of the student's work to the date of the incomplete, and is signed by both student and instructor. An incomplete may not be reported because of negligence or procrastination on the part of the student. An incomplete grade must be cleared before Roll Call of the following semester unless an exception is granted by the Subcommittee on Academic Standards. In every case, the incomplete must be cleared before the end of the semester. If an incomplete has not been cleared within stipulated time limits, the appropriate grade indicating a lack of satisfactory completion will be recorded.

**Grades in Year Courses**

Independent Study and Independent Research registered for year-long activity, as well as several senior seminars, may receive either a letter grade for the semester or an "S" grade with course credit. Upon completion of the second semester, the "S" grade will be converted to a letter grade along with the second semester's letter grade.

**Course Failure**

A letter grade of "F," a "fail" under the pass/fail system, or a "no credit" under the credit/no credit system are all evaluations expressing failure in a course. The letter grade of "F" reduces the semester and cumulative averages, while "fail" and "no credit" do not change the average. A failed course may be retaken for credit. In the case of letter-graded courses, both the original grade and the new grade are calculated in the average. All failing grades continue to appear on the student's academic record regardless of course repetition.

**Repeat Policy**

Students may not repeat a course for which they have already posted credit. This applies to courses taken at Dickinson for which a grade of D- or above was earned, as well as equivalent course content taken at another institution and transferred to Dickinson.
Dean’s List

Full-time degree-seeking students who, in a given semester, earn a superior academic average are named to the Dean's List. Academic qualification for inclusion on the Dean's List requires that the student earns a 3.70 academic average for the semester, with no grades lower than a C- and no incomplete grades. A minimum of three courses must be completed for a grade, and the student must have a cumulative grade-point average greater than 2.00. Students with records in violation of the community standards or who engage in other behaviors that the dean judges inimical to the mission of the college may be ineligible for the Dean's List. Students who are on "suspension", "stayed suspension" and/or affiliated with organizations banned by the college are typically ineligible for the Dean's List.

Contesting a Grade

The College protects students from capricious and/or prejudice in grading. Students have the right to request a written explanation of a grade in a course. Students need to compare the explanation to their own records to be sure there is no miscalculation or other discrepancy that would lead to the next step of a discussion to rectify the situation. Faculty are usually quick to request permission to change a grade that has been miscalculated.

Students who, after requesting and receiving from the faculty member a detailed explanation of a grade, think that an assigned grade represents unfair or capricious grading should contact the Department Chairperson who will investigate the charge and report findings to the Provost/Dean of the College for further action. Students may want to consult with their advisor prior to contacting the Department Chairperson.

Related Information

History/Revision Information

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