Grading Policies

Grades must be given in all courses. When your grades are ready, enter them on the class lists provided and give them to Heather Peterson (310 Malott Hall) as soon as you possibly can. Failure to observe deadlines means that the great machine will cause your students all kinds of grief!

- If your course has a scheduled final exam, grades must be submitted two days after the scheduled date.
- Instructors of advanced courses with no final can do the office a great service by handing in their grades early.

Direct all policy questions to the director of undergraduate studies, Lars Wahlbin (573 Malott Hall).

Grade Options

- The permissible letter grades are A, B, C, D, F, and + or – on all grades except F. The grade of F is failing, D is marginal, C is satisfactory, B is good, and A is excellent.
- A grade of S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory) may be given if the student enrolls with that grade option. The University guideline for S/U grades is that S means C– or better. S/U grades are usually given for all courses numbered 7000 and above (except MATH 7900).
- When appropriate, extramural and graduate students may be given a mark of V (audit).

Suggested Median Grades

The following suggested grade averages are advisory only. If there is good cause for deviating from them, do so.

- B for most 1000- and 2000-level courses.
- B+ for most 3000- and 4000-level courses.

Exceptions:

- In MATH 2230, 2240, 4010, 4130, 4140, 4330, and 4340, the median is up to the instructor but preferably A–.
- In MATH 1220, the instructor may prefer a B+ average if the course is taught substantially differently from MATH 1120.

In recent years, the undergraduate honors courses MATH 4130-4140 and 4330-4340 have drawn many graduate students. Whatever the composition of the class, such courses should always be taught at a level appropriate to honors undergraduates, and the undergraduates in the class should be graded accordingly.

College Minimums

- Engineering students must attain at least a C– in each of MATH 1910, 1920, 2930, and 2940 or repeat the course before the next course in this required sequence may be taken.
- Arts and Sciences students must complete 100 credits at Cornell at C or above and are considered in good academic standing for the term if they successfully complete at least 12 degree credits and earn no more than one D and no F or U grades. If a student completes only three courses, all grades must be above D.

Incompletes

“The symbol of Incomplete is only appropriate when two basic conditions are met: (1) The student has substantial equity at a passing level in the course with respect to work completed; and (2) the student has been prevented by circumstances beyond his/her control, such as illness or family emergency, from completing all of the course requirements on time.” — taken from The Faculty Handbook

Giving a student an incomplete when he or she deserves an F is usually misplaced kindness. A common consequence of such an action is that, in addition to his (her) regular schedule of courses the following semester, the student unofficially takes the course to be completed. The student’s entire program for that semester suffers because of the de facto course overload, and his/her already poor record deteriorates further.
Graduate Students and Graduate Courses

The following guidelines arose from discussions at a March 1967 departmental meeting. It is hoped that most people will follow these guidelines, but there is no question of having to adhere to them.

- The department recommends that grades in 6000-level courses range from A to C (and + or – on those grades), such that A means excellent, B means OK, and C means lousy.
- The A–C scale in 6000-level courses should work in favor of undergraduates and does not prevent an occasional D or F, but the grading procedure for undergraduates should be left completely to the instructor.
- The question of whether to grade graduate students more harshly than undergraduates in undergraduate courses is best left to the individual course instructors.

Restrictions on Posting/Sending Grades

Please be aware of the following:

- Department staff never issue grades.
- Grades must never be sent through email.
- Posting grades by student ID# (name, CUID, etc.) is prohibited under the terms of FERPA. There is no legal waiver for this.
- The only legal way to post grades is by a totally random number. Number the exam books and tell your students to remember the number, then post grades by the number written on the exam book.

Grade Changes

A change in grade may be made only if the instructor made an error in assigning the original grade. If this is the case, see Heather about submitting a Manual Grade Form.