

# GRADING

## Grading System

Grades represent the permanent official record of a student's academic performance. The grading system at Iowa State University operates according to regulations outlined on the Grade Policies tab. The following provides quality points assigned for each letter grades:

Grade	Quality Points
A	4.00
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.00
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.00
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.00
D-	0.67
F	0.00

Grade	Description
P	Passing mark obtained under the Pass-Not Pass system.*
NP	Non-passing mark obtained under the Pass-Not Pass system.*
S	Satisfactory completion of a course offered on a Satisfactory-Fail grading basis. May also be reported to indicate satisfactory performance in R (required-credit) courses, and in courses numbered 290, 490, 590, and 690.
T	Satisfactory performance (equivalent to a grade of C or better in courses numbered 100-499, and a grade of B or better in courses numbered 500-699) in a special examination for academic credit.
X	The course was officially dropped by the student after the first week of the term.

N	No report was submitted by the instructor. An N is not a recognized grade or mark, it merely indicates the instructor has not submitted a grade and that a grade report has been requested. A nonreport (N) will automatically change to a grade of 'F' after one calendar year whether or not the undergraduate student enrolled during that period. If the N is outstanding at the time of graduation, it will be converted to a grade of 'F'. Undergraduate students will not graduate with N on their permanent record. Repeating a course will not resolve the N.
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I	Incomplete. An incomplete mark may be assigned when the student is passing at the time of the request, but special circumstances beyond the student's control prevent completion of the course. In general, failing the final exam or project or not submitting course work as a result of inadequate preparation or learning are not valid excuses.***
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\*See Pass Not Pass Grading.

\*\*\*See Incomplete Marks in the Grade Policies tab.

## Policy Information

Grades represent the permanent official record of a student's academic performance. The grading system at Iowa State operates according to the following regulations:

**1. Student performance or status** is recorded by the grades and marks described below. A student's grade point average is calculated on the basis of credits earned at Iowa State with the grades and quality points shown below. Credits earned with P, S, or T are not used in calculating the grade point average but may be applied toward meeting degree requirements. A cumulative grade point average of 2.00 is required for a bachelor's degree.

**2. Students who want to protest a grade submitted by an instructor** should follow the procedures described in the section, Appeal of Academic Grievances.

**3. Incomplete Marks** - If the instructor and student agree that an Incomplete is appropriate, they should complete an Incomplete (I) Contract (downloadable from the Office of the Registrar forms (<http://www.registrar.iastate.edu/forms>) website) to document the reason for the I, the requirements for resolving it, and the date by which it must be resolved, not to exceed one calendar year or the student's graduation term (whichever is earlier). If the student is not available to sign the Incomplete (I) Contract, the instructor must document the conditions for the Incomplete by communicating directly with the student by e-mail or postal mail. A copy of this communication must be retained by the instructor until after the I is resolved in case there are any questions in the future regarding the terms of the Incomplete. The instructor also needs to enter the Incomplete (I) electronically as part of the end of term final grade submission.

Resolving an Incomplete: When a student completes the requirements specified on the Incomplete Contract, the instructor submits the appropriate grade, which becomes part of the student's cumulative, but not term, grade-point average. The grade does not replace the I on the record. The I remains on the record for the applicable term.

A final course grade, once submitted to the registrar, **may not** be changed to an Incomplete except to correct an error at the request of the instructor, and with the approval of the instructor's department head and the dean of the instructor's college. The Incomplete (I) Contract should be used by the instructor to document the conditions for the Incomplete as specified above. The Grade Report to the Registrar form should be used to initiate the request to change the grade to an Incomplete. The Grade Report form should be completed and forwarded by the instructor to his/her Dean for approval. The Dean will forward the Grade Report form to the Office of the Registrar if approved.

Incompletes in all courses must be resolved by the middle of the student's term of graduation. Repeating a course will not resolve an I mark. A mark of I will automatically change to a grade of F after one calendar year (whether or not the student was enrolled during the period).

**4. To change a grade or mark** already reported to the registrar, the instructor submits the Grade Report to the Registrar form. This form is used for resolving an I with a grade, for correcting an instructor error, or for the late report of a grade.

**5. Midterm Grades.** The registrar will collect C-, D+, D, D- and F midterm grades and nonattendance notifications from the instructor and report this information to students and their advisers using AccessPlus. In addition to submitting the midterm grades, the instructor is responsible for informing the class of the basis on which they were calculated.

The purpose of midterm grades is to provide the student and adviser with a timely warning that the student's academic performance to that point in the course may be lower than desirable. Students who receive midterms are encouraged to discuss their academic performance with the course instructor and their adviser.

**6. Grades in all courses attempted** remain on each student's record. If a course is repeated, the record will show the grade obtained on the initial attempt as well as grades received on subsequent attempts.

**7. The cumulative grade point average** is calculated by dividing the total number of quality points earned by the total number of credits in all courses attempted. Grades of S, P, NP, and T are not counted in calculating the grade point average.

#### **8. Repeating Courses.**

- The most recent grade for a course a student repeats will be used in computing the student's cumulative grade point average rather than the previous grade(s), up to a limit of 15 credits. (This could result in a lowered grade point average if the second grade is lower than the first, or even loss of credit if the grade is lowered to an F.) All grades will remain on the student's record.
- Students may repeat any course for which an F grade, an NP grade, or any passing grade was received.
- Beyond 15 credits of repeats, all grades will be included in computing the cumulative grade point average. Please refer to items #1 and #7 above regarding how to calculate the grade point average.
- Courses should be repeated as soon as possible, preferably within three semesters in residence, because of changes that occur with course updating, change in course number, or revision in the number of credits.
- Approval to repeat a course in which the course number or number of credits has changed must be noted on a Designation of Repeated Course form, which can be obtained from departmental offices. This form must be signed by the head of the department offering the course and by the student's adviser, and then taken to the Office of the Registrar. Deadlines for filing repeated course forms for full-semester and half-semester courses are published in the university calendar.
- Transfer students may repeat courses at Iowa State University for which a D or F was received at another institution. They must process a Designated Repeat Form indicating they are repeating the course to reduce a transfer deficiency. Such repeated credits will count toward the 15-credit request limit and will affect only their transfer deficiency.
- A student who has earned an F at Iowa State University may repeat the course at another institution and the credits earned may be

applied toward graduation at Iowa State, but the grade earned will not be used in computing a cumulative grade point average.

- Repeated courses may affect any federal financial aid. See the Financial Aid website (<http://www.financialaid.iastate.edu>) for further information.

## Pass-Not Pass Grading

Students may choose to take a maximum of 9 semester credit hours on a Pass-Not Pass basis, meaning that only a P or NP will be recorded as their final grade in the course. The purpose of P-NP grading is to encourage students to broaden their education by taking courses outside the usual program of study for their major and minor disciplines. The following policies apply:

1. Undergraduate students who are not on academic probation (P) at the beginning of the semester are eligible. A special (nondegree) student must obtain approval from their academic adviser and college dean.
2. Only elective courses may be taken on a P-NP basis. In specific majors, some restrictions may apply, so students should consult with their academic adviser.
3. Except for restrictions on its own undergraduate majors, a department may not deny the availability of any of its course offerings on a P-NP basis.
4. Courses offered on a satisfactory-fail basis may not be taken P-NP.
5. Students should register for a P-NP course in the same manner and at the same time that they register for their other courses. Students should then change to P-NP by processing a schedule change form with their academic adviser's signature in the P-NP approval section of the form.
6. Students who elect to change back to a graded basis should process the change using the P-NP section of the schedule change form.
7. Changes to or from a P-NP basis must be made before the last day to drop (usually the Friday of week 10 of the term).
8. Registration on a P-NP basis is not indicated on the instructor's class list. Students will receive a P if their grade is D minus or better and an NP if their grade was F.
9. Neither P (earned grade of D minus or better) nor NP (earned grade of F) is counted in calculating a student's grade point average (GPA).
10. When students change their curriculum, any P credits that they have accumulated will be accepted by the new department if such credits are in courses normally accepted by the department.
11. Credits taken on a P-NP basis at another institution and transferred to Iowa State may be applied as electives in a student's degree program if the credits are otherwise acceptable in that program. The number of P-NP transfer credits that can be accepted depends on the number permitted by the institution from which the student is transferring.

If a student transfers more than nine semester P-NP credits, no additional Iowa State P-NP credits can be applied to the student's degree program.

## Examinations

Examinations are one of the most common ways instructors assess student performance. In order that examinations can be a useful part of the educational process, the following policies have been instituted:

1. One purpose of examinations is to help students' learning. Therefore, examinations should be evaluated as soon as possible after they are given and the results should be made available to the students in a timely way to enhance learning.
2. All tests and examinations administered between the beginning of the term and final examination week shall be held during a regularly scheduled lecture or laboratory class period for that course. A department may obtain approval to administer a separately scheduled examination if all of the following criteria are met:
  - a. The course is multi-sectioned.
  - b. A common departmentally developed examination will be administered to all students in all sections at the same time.
  - c. The test scores will be used as a basis for a uniform grading procedure for all sections of the course. Requests to hold separately scheduled examinations must be made to the registrar and approved by the provost in time to be announced in the Schedule of Classes to allow students to plan in advance. Only under unusual circumstances will a course be approved for separately scheduled examinations if the deadline is past to include notification in the Schedule of Classes. Whenever a separately scheduled examination is administered, a regular class meeting during that week shall be omitted. Students who are unable to take a separately scheduled examination at the scheduled time indicated in the Schedule of Classes, because of a course conflict or other legitimate reason must notify the instructor in advance and must be given the opportunity to be examined at another time mutually convenient for the student and the instructor. The instructor shall determine whether to administer the same examination or an alternate examination, or use an alternate assessment procedure.
3. At the end of the semester, a week is set aside for final examinations or other term evaluations, with a two-hour period normally scheduled for each course. The following policies govern the responsibilities of students and faculty members during this week:
  - a. Final exams may not be given at a time other than that for which the exam is scheduled by the registrar. An instructor may not give a final exam prior to final exam week nor change the time of offering of the final examination as it appears in the final exam schedule. Permission to change the time for which an exam is

- scheduled may be given only by the dean of the college. If the instructor elects not to give a final exam in a course of two or more credits, the class is required to meet at the scheduled final exam period for other educational activity such as a review of the course or feedback on previous exams.
- b. Final exam periods are determined according to the regularly scheduled meeting time of the class. However, certain courses are assigned special group exam times so that several sections of the same course may be tested together. The criteria for establishing special group exams are similar to those listed for separately scheduled exams listed in number 2 above. If this results in conflicting group examination periods, students should inform the instructor in charge of the first of the two conflicting courses as listed on the final exam schedule within the special groups in question; that instructor is responsible for arranging a special examination or making some other adjustment.
  - c. Evening courses with lectures scheduled at 6:00 p.m. or later should give their examinations during finals week from 7:00-9:00 p.m. on the day the class normally meets. If this exam conflicts with an evening group exam, the instructor responsible for the latter must arrange a special examination for any students who have a conflict.
  - d. If unusual circumstances involve the need for students to change the time of their final examination, they must obtain the approval of the instructor of the course.
  - e. If a student has three examinations scheduled on the same calendar day and wishes to change one to another day, the instructor of the course having the smallest number of students is responsible for arranging an alternate examination time for the student unless make-up exam times are available in one of the other courses.
  - f. All faculty members and teaching assistants with instructional or grading responsibilities are considered to be on duty throughout the entire final examination week and are expected to be available to students during that week for discussion of any matters pertaining to the final examination and final grade or to other aspects of the course.
- Due dates for mandatory graded submissions of any kind that fall within Dead Week must be listed on the syllabus provided at the start of the course.
  - Mandatory final examinations may not be given during the Dead Week period except for laboratory courses or courses that meet weekly and for which there is no contact during the normal final examination week.
  - No in-class quizzes or exams may be given on the Thursday and Friday of Dead Week. Quizzes/exams that are administered outside of class such as take-home exams, online exams, or exams given in the testing centers must: 1) open no later than Wednesday at noon of Dead Week, and 2) only cover material presented on or before the Tuesday of Dead Week.

Exceptions to this policy include the following:

- Classes that only meet on Thursdays or Fridays
- Lab components of courses
- Half-semester courses
- Make-up exams due to excused absences
- Regularly used formative assessments intended to enhance student engagement and guide course delivery

All other exceptions require approval by the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost.

- Registered ISU Student Organizations may not hold any meetings, functions, or sponsored events during the Dead Week period. Any exception to these restrictions must be authorized in advance by the Office of the Senior Vice President for Student Affairs.

Instructors are reminded that most students are enrolled in several courses each semester, and the widespread violation of this policy can cause student workloads to be excessive as students begin their preparation for final examinations.

Students are reminded that their academic curriculum is their principal reason for being in college and they have a responsibility to study in a timely fashion throughout the entire semester.

*Policy approved by Faculty Senate, Senior Vice President and Provost, and President, 2013; Amended and approved by Faculty Senate, Senior Vice President and Provost, and President, 2017.*

## Scholastic Recognition

The university recognizes those students who are doing exceptionally well in several ways, including the following.

1. **Dean's List.** Each semester the university issues a dean's list made up of those students who have carried at least 12 credit hours of graded or S-F courses with a 3.50 grade-point average or above for

## Dead Week

For each Fall and Spring semester, the last full week of classes before final examinations is designated as Dead Week. The intent of this policy is to establish a one-week period of substantial and predictable study time for undergraduate students. During the Dead Week period, regular lectures are expected to continue, including the introduction of new content, as deemed appropriate by the instructor. The restrictions established by this Dead Week policy are:

the semester. Courses taken on a P-NP basis do not count as part of the 12-credit hour requirement. No dean's list is issued for summer school. The list can be viewed from the Office of the Registrar website (<http://www.registrar.iastate.edu>).

Instructors leaving the university must file records of all graded work with their department office before departure.

2. **Top 2 Percent.** Each spring semester, undergraduate students in the top 2% of their class (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior) within their college, based on cumulative grade point average, are recognized. In addition to a congratulatory letter from the university president, a notation of the accomplishment is recorded on the student's permanent record.
3. **Graduation with Distinction.** Undergraduates who have a cumulative grade point average of 3.50 or higher at the beginning of their final term are eligible to graduate "with distinction" provided they have completed 60 semester credits of coursework at Iowa State University at the time they graduate, including a minimum of 50 graded credits.  
Students who graduate with a cumulative grade point average of 3.90 or higher will graduate Summa Cum Laude; those who graduate with a cumulative grade point average of 3.70 to 3.89 will graduate Magna Cum Laude; and those who graduate with a cumulative grade point average of 3.50 to 3.69 will graduate Cum Laude. This recognition appears on the student's official transcript and diploma and in the commencement program.  
Candidates for the bachelor of liberal studies degree may be graduated with distinction providing that they (a) have completed 45 semester credits of coursework at the three Iowa Regent universities at the time of graduation, (b) have earned at least a 3.50 cumulative grade point average at ISU, and (c) their combined grade point average for coursework taken at the three Iowa Regent universities meets the honors cutoff specified above.
4. **Honors Program.** Students who are full members of the University Honors Program need a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 at the beginning of their final term. In addition to meeting the appropriate grade point requirement, students will have completed an approved honors program of study and an honors project prior to graduation. This recognition appears on the student's permanent record and diploma, and in the commencement program.

## Evaluation Procedures

It is university policy that the instructor shall inform the students at the beginning of each course of the evaluation procedures planned for use in the course.

## Retention of Records

Records of all graded work must be retained by the instructors until midterm of the semester following completion of a course or until all pending appeals and incompletes are resolved, whichever is later.