

Dear colleague

I am writing to you to remind you of the grading policies of the department and the university.

Suggested Curve for Undergraduate Lecture Courses

Here is the recommended curve for an undergraduate lecture course:

A+/A/A-	30 - 35% of the class
B+/B/B-	35-45% of the class
C+/C/C-/D/F	25-30% of the class

The average grade should be around 3 (B). Note that at the bottom of the web grading page a histogram of grades is produced and a course GPA is calculated.

Suggested Curve for Senior Seminars

The grades in senior seminars are generally higher than in lecture courses. In general, the average GPA is a B+ and most grades are in the A and B range. However, if a student did not participate in the class or handed in an unacceptable paper then the grades of C through F apply.

Below is information regarding specific grades such as AR, W, UW, D, A+ etc.

Make-up Final Exams

These exams will be administered by the school and not by you. If a student in your class has an approved incomplete, then I will contact you for a make-up exam and have that exam administered by the school. See the separate memo on make-up exams for more details.

AR (CC or GS students only)

You should use the grade of AR for students in Columbia College, and General Studies who appear on your grading roster and who did not complete the course. For example, this is the grade to submit for a CC or GS student who failed to show up for the final exam or to turn in a final paper. **NEW:** If you assign this grade, you will be prompted to provide a contingency grade for the student. You calculate the contingency grade by averaging in a 0 for all missed work. After the semester you may be contacted by a representative of the college of GS who will let you know if the student has been approved for an incomplete (and thus is eligible to make up the work). You will not use the grade of AR for students from other schools and will continue to use the grades of F and INC as outlined below.

INC (students other than CC or GS)

You should use the grade of INC for students from schools other than CC and GS who appear on your grading roster and who did not complete the course. For example, this is the grade to submit for a non CC or non GS student who failed to show up for the final exam or to turn in a final paper. After the semester you may be contacted by a

representative of the student's school who will let you know if the student has been approved for an incomplete (and thus is eligible to make up the work). The procedure for the make-up exam is the same for all undergraduate students.

University Policy Regarding Unofficial Withdrawl (UW)

This grade will no longer be available for CC and GS students starting in the Spring of 2014. However, students in other schools such as SEAS and Barnard, may still be eligible. If you have a student that requests the grade of UW then ask that student to have his or her School Adviser contact you to let you know what the guidelines are for that school. If the student fails to have an adviser contact you then feel free to use the guidelines below (these are the rules that we used when CC and GS were eligible).

Students that are

- 1) still registered for the class
- 2) have completed some work in the class (such as the midterm exam) and
- 3) have not been granted an incomplete

but have not completed all of the work in the class (such as the final) are NOT eligible for a UW. Students that completed some but not all work should receive 0's on all incomplete work that should be averaged into their final grade. A UW is only for students that have completed little or no work in the class.

University Policy Regarding Withdrawl (W)

This grade will replace UW for CC and GS students starting in the Spring of 2014.

Beginning in the spring of 2014, students will have the option of withdrawing from a class. Students may withdraw from a class up until the P/D/F date (ie the date by which they would have to declare if they would like to take P/D/F instead of a letter grade). After the P/D/F date, students may petition their school to withdraw from a class. Students who withdraw from a class will appear on your grade sheet with a W grade already listed. You will not submit a grade for these students.

University Policy Regarding Pass/D/Fail

All undergraduates **must** receive a letter grade for their courses. If the student has registered for the course Pass/D/Fail the registrar will convert the letter grade to either P or F or leave it as a D (if that was the submitted grade). Please note that a new policy allows students to see their letter grade before it is converted to P/D/F and to opt to keep the letter grade if they so choose. If a student contacts you directly to inquire what his or her letter grade is do NOT give it to the student. Instead direct the student to contact the registrar. If some faculty give out grades it will encourage students to contact all faculty for their grades which in the very large classes will create a substantial burden on the faculty.

Students that Miss the Final Exam

If a student misses the final exam due to a last minute illness or accident then you should notify Andrew Plaa in the college (ap50@columbia.edu) or Ivonne Rojas in GS (inr2101@columbia.edu) immediately. They will contact the student to determine

whether or not the student is eligible for an incomplete. If the student contacts you directly then tell the student to contact his or her school adviser ASAP to start the process of applying for an incomplete. In the meantime, you should submit the grades for all of your students in the class and submit the grade of AR or INC for any student who misses the exam.

The Grade of A+

There are several classes where the grade of A+ was given to more than 10% of the class (and in one instance to more than 15% of the class). The grade of A+ should be reserved for only the truly exceptional students who are worthy of the highest honors in the department and the college. Because of overall grade inflation at the university NO honors (e.g. Phi Beta Kappa, Summa Cum Laude, etc) are currently given out on the basis of GPA alone. Instead the department (me) must make individual recommendations for every student that is deserving of an honor. I use the grade of A+ to search for those truly exceptional students. There is **no** reason why more than 5% of any group of students should receive the grade of A+. If a large number of students receive an A+ in a class, then I treat it all of those grades as an A. Hence the only students that are hurt are the ones truly deserving of high honors.

The Grades of D and F

A student who receives a grade of D or lower in an economics class cannot count the credits from that class towards the completion of his or her economics major, joint major or concentration. If it is a required course, the student will have to repeat the class. If it is an elective, the student may either repeat the class or take another elective. We have all had students that did not deserve to pass our class. We have all had students that should not be economics majors (but who are). Although it often seems that giving a student an acceptable grade of C- is more humane, you are just passing the problem along to someone else and may in fact be making it more difficult for a student to finish his or her degree. When you have a student that fails to demonstrate basic literacy in economics or basic comprehension of your course, you should give that student an appropriate grade such as a D or an F. In general, I give students a grade of D if they put effort into the course but demonstrated no competency and a grade of F if they put in no effort and demonstrated no competency.

If you have any questions regarding the appropriate grade, then feel free to contact me.
Susan