

Office of Graduate Studies Policy on Grading and Enrollment Exceptions

Enrollment in classes and recording of grades is managed by the Registrar's office. It is the responsibility of the student to make sure that they are properly enrolled in classes that they are attending for credit and to drop classes that they are not attending. Caltech has well-defined and generous Add and Drop periods for classes and it is the student's responsibility to submit paperwork according to these deadlines. The Instructor's role is to assign grades and communicate these, as well as any changes, to the Registrar. The instructor is also responsible for evaluating the student's progress and providing midterm deficiency notices. It is the joint responsibility of the student and instructor to make arrangements for making up late work or in extreme cases, arranging for the extension of the submission of the final grade. The Registrar or Dean of Students cannot change a student's grades – this can only be done at the request of the Instructor or in case of a grade dispute, by the Division Chair.

The Institute Regulations on grading are given in the subsection on Grades and Grading in the General Information Section of the Catalog. We occasionally get requests for exceptions; these are considered on a case-by-case basis. Decisions are made by the Dean of Graduate Studies in consultation with the Registrar and the course instructor. However, grade dispute resolution is administered through the Office of the Provost. The regulations (with the relevant section of the catalog indicated) and the policy of the graduate office in interpreting exceptions are discussed subsequently.

Failing grade "F" (p. 41) *An F, once recorded, will be changed to a passing grade only on the basis of error. Such a change may be made only with the approval of the Undergraduate Academic Standards and Honors Committee or of the Graduate Studies Committee, whichever has jurisdiction.*

Comments: Very few graduate students get failing grades in any classes. Because of the very liberal drop/add policy at Caltech; a failing grade is often due to procrastination or willful neglect of the deadline by the student. This is not acceptable. Graduate students should drop classes by the drop day of the term in question if they are failing the class for any reason. It is the student's responsibility to determine if they are failing and take appropriate action. The instructor may give midterm deficiency notices but this is not mandatory. Most instructors give timely notification to the students if there is clear evidence of a problem but it is the student's responsibility to be proactive in monitoring their grades and taking action. Students may petition to drop classes they have failed after the deadline but should not expect leniency because they simply procrastinated in submitting the drop card. If a student is unable to reach their advisor or go in person to the Registrar, then an email stating the intention to drop should be sent before the deadline to the instructor, registrar, and graduate office. This should then be followed in a timely manner (before the end of the term in question) with the submission of the paperwork.

On rare occasions, a graduate student disputes an "F" and believes that their work was mis-graded, lost, or otherwise not properly evaluated by the instructor or teaching assistant. In such a case, the student should ask the instructor or TA to re-grade the work and reconsider the grade. It is the student's responsibility to do so in a timely fashion; it is up to the instructor to make the

final decision and inform the Registrar. The instructor should consult with the graduate office if there are questions of academic integrity or there are particularly troubling issues that need to be resolved. If the student feels that they have not been treated fairly by the instructor, then they should contact the Office of the Provost and follow the procedure outlined in the catalog subsection on Grades and Grading.

Extensions -"E" grades (P. 40 and 41). *At their discretion, instructors may give students who have not completed their work for a course by the end of the term a grade of E. The grade E indicates deficiencies that may be made up without repeating the course. If the instructor does not specify a date on the grade report sheet for completion of the work, students receiving an E will have until Add Day of the following term to complete their work for that course. Instructors may, however, require the work for the course to be completed by an earlier date. If a student receives an E and does not complete the work by the date specified by the instructor or by Add Day, the grade will be changed to an F. Adequate time must be afforded to instructors to grade the work and to submit the final grade to the registrar. It is the responsibility of a student receiving an E to confirm that the registrar has recorded the terms for satisfying the completion of the work in the course.*

With the written permission of the instructor, a student may extend the E grade past Add Day of the following term, but doing so will cause an additional E grade to be registered. Each additional extension of the E will be until the date specified by the instructor or until Add Day of the following term, but in each case will require the written permission of the instructor and the registering of an additional E grade...

...Students receiving grades of E or I should consult with their instructors not later than the beginning of the next term in residence as to the work required and the time allowed. This time should, in most cases, coincide with the date fixed in the calendar for removal of conditions and incompletes (Add Day), and in fact if no other time is specified, this date will be assumed. Further, under no circumstances may the time for the completion of the work be extended for more than three terms in residence after the end of the term in which the grade of E or I was given. At the end of the specified time, unless there is a written request from the instructor to the contrary, or in any event at the time of graduation or at the end of three terms in residence, whichever occurs first, all E's and I's not otherwise reported will be changed to F. Grades of E and I shall not be considered in calculating a student's grade-point average.

Comments: It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements for a grade submission extension "E" and it is the instructor's prerogative to accept or reject such arrangements. The instructor may wish to consult with the Graduate Office to determine if an "E" is appropriate in a particular case. But it is ultimately the responsibility of the student to make sure that the arrangement for "E" is in place before the end of the term. The instructor should carefully consider if the student is actually making sufficient progress and if the request for an "E" is reasonable. If a student is sufficiently far behind, has not been attending class, or the instructor feels that they are not prepared to master the material, they should ask the student to drop the class. If the student has a personal crisis or medical emergency that prevents completing work, this should be handled as an "I" grade and arranged through the Graduate Office as discussed below.

Arranging for an extension is a commitment on the student's part to complete the work in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to request a further extension if they are unable to meet the extension deadline. If the deadline passes without completing the work and without an extension, then the "E" will be changed to an "F". Multiple extensions are not allowed past three terms.

Incompletes - "I" grades (p. 41). *The grade I is given only in case of sickness or other emergency that justifies noncompletion of the work at the usual time. It is given at the discretion of the instructor, after approval by the dean or associate dean of students or the dean of graduate studies. The time period within which the grade of I is to be made up should be indicated on the grade sheet, or students receiving an I will have until Add Day of the following term to complete their work for the course. As in the case of the E grade, the grade of I shall not be considered in calculating a student's grade-point average.*

Acceptable reasons for an "I" include student illness, personal or family crises that prevent a student from attending class or completing assignments. A grade of "I" must be approved by the graduate office and should not be used if the student is just behind in their work – this should be treated as an "E". The graduate office may require the student to submit documentation or to have their physician contact the Caltech Health and Counseling center with a release to provide one of the graduate Deans information on the student's medical condition.

Deadlines (p. 242) *All changes in registration must be reported, on drop or add cards, to the Registrar's Office by the student. Such changes are governed by the last dates for adding or dropping courses as shown on the academic calendar on pages 4 and 5. A student may not withdraw from or add a course after the last date for dropping or adding courses without his or her option's consent and the approval of the dean of graduate studies. (p. 42) ...All other students, undergraduate and graduate, in courses with numbers under 200 will receive letter grades unless the course is designated "graded pass/fail" or unless, when it is allowed, the student files with the office of the registrar a completed Pass/Fail Course Selection Card not later than the last day for dropping courses.*

Comments: Students may drop courses, exercise a pass/fail option, and change sections up until the designated drop day, without penalty. Drop day (approximately the 8th week of the term) is listed in the Academic Calendar and e-mail reminders are sent to all students by the Registrar prior to the deadline. If a student is enrolled in a class but is not attending, it is unacceptable to remain enrolled past the drop day and then submit a claim of non-attendance as justifying a late drop. If a student does not intend to take a class, this should be dropped as soon as this decision is made.

After Drop Day, students can petition the Dean of Graduate Studies for changes but exceptions will only be granted in very limited cases for reasons of legitimate personal emergencies such as family crises, illness or medical procedures, or legitimate administrative error. Neglecting to file paperwork in a timely fashion is not an acceptable excuse. Requests for dropping classes or changing from letter grades to P/F after the end of the term will be subject to very careful scrutiny. Students must provide a written justification of the request and a supporting statement

from the Instructor. Petitions must be submitted before add day of the following term and with appropriate documentation.

Issued: February 1, 2011

Revised: January 25, 2013 – Clarification: Grade disputes are referred to Provost Office per Catalog

JES 25 January 2013