

Grading Policies

Distribution of Grades

Academic grades of undergraduate students may be released to parent(s) of a student claimed as a dependent for tax purposes. WPI presumes that all undergraduate students are dependents of their parent(s) unless they file a Declaration of Independent Status petition form with the Registrar's Office. These forms are available in the Registrar's Office. After the Registrar's Office receives a Declaration of Independent Status petition form from an undergraduate student, the Office will not release the student's academic grades to the parent(s) of such student until such time as the student rescinds their Declaration, in writing filed with the Registrar's Office, or his/her parent(s) provide acceptable proof of tax-dependent status to the Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office will keep a record of any release of grades directly to the parent(s) of a dependent student in that student's record, and the student will be able to review that record.

Grading System

Projects: The following term grades are possible: A, B, C, SP (Satisfactory Progress), NAC (Not Acceptable) and NR (No record).

Courses: The following grades are possible: A, B, C, NR, and I (Incomplete). An instructor may also assign an "I" in an Independent Study course. AT (attended) is used to denote participation in seminars or college-sponsored programs. If an undergraduate student repeats a course previously graded with an A, B or C, both grades will appear on the undergraduate student transcript with the lower grade marked with a '/R' indicating a repeated class. Only the higher grade will be used to calculate the student's numerical equivalent.

Students such as Consortium (CO), nondegree-seeking students, and Graduate students will receive traditional A, B, C, D, F, Withdrawal and Pass/Fail grades.

Grades for Completion of Degree Requirements

The overall evaluation of degree requirements (for the MQP, the IQP and the Humanities and Arts Requirement) will be graded in the student's respective grade system. The transcript will contain an abstract describing the content of the completed project.

No Record (NR)

The NR (No Record) grade is assigned by a faculty member for course or project work for which credit has not been earned. This grade applies to PLAN students (admitted, degree-seeking) only. The NR grade does not appear on the students' transcripts or grade reports.

Incomplete (I)

An I grade, when assigned, will be changed to NR after one term unless extended in writing by the instructor to the Registrar's Office. The I grade is not assigned for Qualifying Projects.

Satisfactory Progress (SP)

In project work (IQP, MQP only) extending beyond one term for which a grade is not yet assigned, an interim grade of SP (Satisfactory Progress) may be used on grade sheets. In such cases, the SP evaluation will count as units earned toward meeting the 15-unit rule, the distribution requirements, and the minimum standards for satisfactory academic progress. SP grades remain on the transcript until changed to the final grade as submitted on the Completion of Degree Requirement Form or through the grade change form procedure.

Other Grades

A ? or Q signifies a grade that has not been submitted.

Qualifying Project Grading

The Faculty of WPI has endorsed the following grading guidelines for qualifying project activity:

1. Each term a student is registered for a qualifying project, the student receives a term grade reflecting assessment of his or her accomplishments for that term.
2. Upon completion of a project, each student will receive an overall project grade (also known as the "CDR grade," since it certifies completion of the degree requirement) reflecting his or her individual overall accomplishments for the project.
3. The term grades and the overall project grade reflect both the *products* of the project (e.g., results, reports, etc.) and also the *process* by which they were attained. The term grades and the overall project grade may be different.

The following are some characteristics that faculty should use in communicating expectations and evaluating the quality of each student's project work.

The degree to which the student:

- developed effective or creative goals or approaches,
- demonstrated initiative and originality,
- showed depth and critical thought in analysis,
- produced high quality results,
- took the lead in discussion, planning, and analysis,
- produced a clear, professional-level report with excellent drafts along the way,
- anticipated work that needed to be done and completed it in a timely manner, and
- worked to advance the success of the team.

For both terms and overall project, the available grades and interpretations are:

A: This grade denotes *excellent work* that attains all of the project goals and learning outcomes. The product and process of this work meet all of the expectations and exceed them in several areas.

B: This grade denotes *consistently good work* that attains the project goals and learning outcomes. The product and process of this work meet but generally do not exceed all of the expectations.

C: This grade denotes *acceptable work* that partially attains project goals and learning outcomes. The product and process of this work meet some but not all expectations.

SP: This grade denotes *satisfactory progress* and certifies sufficient accomplishments to earn credit for that term. Faculty who assign this grade should provide clear feedback to the student regarding his or her progress during the term. The use of the SP grade is discouraged except in circumstances where the faculty member is unable to judge the quality of the work, yet can attest that the granting of credit is appropriate. This is a temporary grade and must be replaced by a permanent grade consistent with the criteria outlined above by, if not before, the end of the project.

NR: This grade denotes work that did not attain the project goals or learning outcomes and is *insufficient for registered credit*. Both product and process were inconsistent with acceptable project work at WPI as outlined above.

NAC: This grade is reserved for *performance that is unacceptable*. It might mean that a student's performance (or lack of it) has seriously impeded group progress, or it has embarrassed the group, a project sponsor, or WPI. Note that this grade remains on the transcript.

4. Project goals should be established and clearly articulated early in the project. This may be done in the form of a formal project proposal. Learning outcomes for the qualifying projects have been established by the faculty and are published in the undergraduate catalog.

5. Project advisors should clearly convey in writing their expectations for learning and performance to project students at the start of the project, and provide students with substantive feedback on a regular basis during the project.

Cumulative Grade Point Average

WPI does not maintain a Cumulative Grade Point Average for undergraduate students. A student who needs a cumulative point average for external use may apply to the Registrar and receive a numerical equivalent. This information is usually provided only for students applying to graduate or professional schools when the application process requires a translation. Cumulative point averages will not be printed on student's transcripts nor shall class rankings be developed from them.

When requested by the student, the numerical equivalent of the cumulative point average will be based on a point assignment of A = 4.0, B = 3.0, C = 2.0 while DIST and AC grades will be 4.0 and 2.75 respectively.

Dean's List

The Dean's List is created and published twice a year: in January to review student work completed during the AB terms and in May to review student work completed during the CD terms. To be named to the Dean's List a student must:

Complete 4/3 units with grades of A's, and at least an additional 2/3 units with grades of B or above.

For example, a student with 4A's, 2B's and 1C (or 1 NR) in 1/3-unit courses during a semester is eligible for the Dean's List. Credits earned in Wellness and Physical Education, Military Science, and Air Force Aerospace Studies are not used in the evaluation for the Dean's List. For the purposes of determining the Dean's List only, an SP grade for project work will be considered a B grade. The Dean's List recognizes outstanding work completed during the most recent semester. Student requests to re-evaluate their eligibility for the Dean's List due to a grade change after the semester review is completed will be considered only in unusual circumstances and at the discretion of the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

Grade Appeal and Grade Change Policy

The purpose of the Grade Appeal Policy is to provide the student with a safeguard against receiving an unfair final grade, while respecting the academic responsibility of the instructor. Thus, this procedure recognizes that,

- Every student has a right to receive a grade assigned upon a fair and unprejudiced evaluation based on a method that is neither arbitrary nor capricious; and,
- Instructors have the right to assign a grade based on any method that is professionally acceptable, submitted in writing to all students, and applied equally.

Instructors have the responsibility to provide careful evaluation and timely assignment of appropriate grades. Course and project grading methods should be explained to students at the beginning of the term. WPI presumes that the judgment of the instructor of record is authoritative, and the final grades assigned are correct.

A grade appeal shall be confined to charges of unfair action toward an individual student and may not involve a challenge of an instructor's grading standard. A student has a right to expect thoughtful and clearly defined approaches to course and project grading, but it must be recognized that varied standards and individual approaches to grading are valid. The grade appeal considers whether a grade was determined in a fair and appropriate manner; it does not attempt to grade or re-grade individual assignments or projects. It is incumbent

on the student to substantiate the claim that his or her final grade represents unfair treatment, compared to the standard applied to other students. Only the final grade in a course or project may be appealed. In the absence of compelling reasons, such as clerical error, prejudice, or capriciousness, the grade assigned by the instructor of record is to be considered final.

In a grade appeal, only arbitrariness, prejudice, and/or error will be considered as legitimate grounds for an appeal.

Arbitrariness: The grade awarded represents such a substantial departure from accepted academic norms as to demonstrate that the instructor did not actually exercise professional judgment.

Prejudice: The grade awarded was motivated by ill will, and is not indicative of the student's academic performance.

Error: The instructor made a mistake in fact.

This grade appeal procedure applies only when a student initiates a grade appeal and not when the instructor decides to change a grade on his or her own initiative. This procedure does not cover instances where students have been assigned grades based on academic dishonesty or academic misconduct, which are included in WPI's Academic Honesty Policy. Also excluded from this procedure are grade appeals alleging discrimination, harassment or retaliation in violation of WPI's Sexual Harassment Policy, which shall be referred to the appropriate office at WPI as required by law and by WPI policy.

The Grade Appeal Procedure strives to resolve a disagreement between student and instructor concerning the assignment of a grade in an expeditious and collegial manner. The intent is to provide a mechanism for the informal discussion of differences of opinion, and for the formal adjudication by faculty only when necessary. In all instances, students who believe that an appropriate grade has not been assigned must first seek to resolve the matter informally with the instructor of record. If the matter cannot be resolved informally, the student must present his or her case to the Faculty Review Committee before the end of the second week of the term after the disputed grade is received (D term grades may be appealed the following A term). Any exceptions to this deadline for submission of appeal can only be made by the Office of the Provost.

Student Grade Appeal Procedure

1. A student who wishes to question a grade must discuss the matter first with the instructor of record within one week after the start of the next regular academic term (A – D) after receiving the grade. Late appeals will only be reviewed at the discretion of the Faculty Review Committee (FRC). In most cases, the discussion between the student and the instructor should suffice and the matter will not need to be carried further. The student should be aware that the only valid basis for grade appeal beyond Step One is to establish that an instructor assigned a grade that was arbitrary, prejudiced, or in error.
2. If the student's concerns remain unresolved after the discussion with the instructor, the student may submit a written request to meet with the appropriate Department Head, within one week of speaking with the instructor. For a grade in a course, independent study, Inquiry Seminar or Practicum, or Major Qualifying Project (MQP), the appropriate person is the instructor's Department Head. For a grade in an Interactive Qualifying Project (IQP), the appropriate person is the Dean of the Department of Integrated and Global Studies (DIGS). If the instructor of record is a Department Head or the Dean of the DIGS, then the student should request to meet with the representative from the Provost's office (the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, or alternative if necessary), who will serve as the appropriate Department Head/Dean in this step. The appropriate Department Head/Dean will meet within one week with the student, and, if he or she believes that the complaint may have merit, with the instructor. After consultation with the Department Head/Dean, the instructor may choose to let the grade remain, to change a course grade, or to petition the Committee on Academic Operations to change a grade for a Degree Requirement (CDR grade for MQP, IQP, or Humanities and Arts Inquiry Seminar or Practicum). The Department Head/Dean will communicate the result of these discussions to the student.
3. If the matter remains unresolved after Step Two, the student should submit a written request within one week to the Provost's Office to request an ad hoc Faculty Committee for Appeal of a Grade. The Provost's representative (the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, or alternate) will meet with the student, and will ask the FRC to appoint the ad hoc Committee for Appeal of a Grade. The Chair of the FRC will select the

members of the ad hoc committee and serve as its non-voting chair. The ad hoc committee for all undergraduate appeals will be composed of three FRC members. Appointees to the ad hoc committee must not have any apparent conflicts of interest with the student or instructor of record. The Chair of the FRC requests a written statement from the student and a written response from the instructor. The ad hoc committee examines the written information and may gather additional information as it sees fit.

4. Through its inquiries and deliberations, the ad hoc committee is charged to determine whether the grade was assigned in a fair and appropriate manner, or whether clear and convincing evidence of arbitrariness, prejudice, and/or error might justify changing the grade. The ad hoc committee will make its decisions based on a majority vote.
5. If the ad hoc committee concludes that the grade was assigned in a fair and appropriate manner, the ad hoc committee will report its conclusion in writing to the student and instructor. This decision of the ad hoc committee is final and not subject to appeal.
6. If the ad hoc faculty committee determines that compelling reasons exist for changing the grade, it would request that the instructor make the change, providing the instructor with a written explanation of its reasons. At this point, the instructor may change the grade. If the instructor declines to change the grade, he or she must provide a written explanation for refusing. If the ad hoc faculty committee concludes that the instructor's written explanation justifies the original grade, the ad hoc committee will report this in writing to the student and instructor and the matter will be closed. If the ad hoc faculty committee concludes that it would be unjust to allow the original grade to stand, the ad hoc committee will then determine what grade is to be assigned. The new grade may be higher than, the same as, or lower than the original grade. Having made this determination, the three members of the committee will sign the grade change form and transmit it to the Registrar. The instructor and student will be advised of the new grade. Under no circumstances may persons other than the original faculty member or the review committee change a grade. The written records of these proceedings will be filed in the student's file in the Registrar's Office.

Faculty Grade Change Procedure

The Student Grade Appeal Procedure affirms the principle that grades should be considered final. The principle that grades for courses or projects should be considered final does not excuse an instructor from the responsibility to explain his or her grading standards to students and to assign grades in a fair and appropriate manner. The appeal procedure also provides an instructor with the opportunity to change a grade for a course or project on his or her own initiative. The appeal procedure recognizes that errors can be made and that an instructor who decides that it would be unfair to allow a final grade to stand due to error, prejudice or arbitrariness may request a change of grade for a course or project without the formation of an *ad hoc* committee. An instructor may request a grade change in one of two ways. First, for courses, an instructor may submit a course grade change via Workday to the Registrar at any time prior to a student's graduation. Second, for Degree Requirements (MQP, IQP), an instructor must submit a petition to the Committee on Academic Operations (CAO) to change the grade.