Policy and Procedures for the Incomplete (INC) Grade in Undergraduate Courses

The purpose of this memo is to remind you of the conditions and procedures concerning the incomplete grade (INC) for undergraduate courses. The university’s policy on the granting of the incomplete grade states:

The Incomplete (INC) grade is reported only where a portion of the assigned or required class work, or the final examination, has not been completed because of serious illness, extreme personal circumstances, or scholarly reasons at the request of the instructor. A student who would fail the course regardless of the missing work will not receive an incomplete, but will fail the course.

Students wishing to receive the INC grade must obtain the instructor’s permission and must fill out the “Grade Incomplete” form, available from the appropriate departmental offices. A student receiving the grade of incomplete is allowed one full year in which to complete the course. The new grade must be submitted to the Registrar’s Office by the grading deadline for that semester, i.e. by the end of the next fall semester for fall incompletes; by the end of the next spring semester for spring incompletes. The grade for any course not completed by this deadline will be converted to the grade of “IF”, and the student will not be allowed to complete the course.

As you consider giving a grade of INC, please keep the following in mind:

• INC grades can only be awarded after the pass/fail/withdrawal deadline. If a student requests an Incomplete before that deadline, please recommend that the student withdraw from the course.
• INC grades can only be awarded if the student was up-to-date with all required work and had passing grades in the course at the time he or she requested the incomplete;
• There was an identifiable unforeseen extenuating circumstance that interfered with a timely completion of the course.

It is your responsibility as an instructor to adhere to this policy and to follow the process. Please take the following steps before giving a student the grade of INC:

• Consult with the student. This is best done in person; however, phone or email consultation may also take place. Make sure you explain clearly what the student’s current grade is, what work needs to be completed, and the time frame for completion of the work. Give the student a realistic estimate of what his or her final grade will be.
• Fill out the “Grade Incomplete” form (also known as the incomplete contract), give the student a copy, and give a copy to your departmental administrator. One of the purposes of the contract is to document the conversation with the student and to give the student a clear outline of the work that needs to be done, as well as the timeline. It is also useful for you as a reminder when the student completes the work. And if you should be away the next year, when the student completes the work, it is a record for the department to use. If you cannot fill out the contract,
communicate your expectations to the student by email and provide a copy to your departmental administrator.

• The university allows for a maximum of one year to complete the coursework, but it is appropriate to impose a shorter time period. This should be clearly communicated to the student in writing.

Here are some common questions regarding this policy, along with some answers:

Q: A student stopped attending my course at some point in the semester and has not communicated with me at all. Should I give this student an INC grade?
A: No. At the end of add/drop you received a request from the Registrar’s Office to notify that office of any student who was not attending. If you followed through with this notification, the Registrar would have posted a grade of NA (not attending) to the student’s record. If the student stopped attending after the add/drop deadline, you should evaluate the student’s work and give a grade accordingly (even if this means giving an F).

Q: I couldn’t get in touch with the student. Can I still give the INC?
A: No. The conversation with the student about expectations and timelines is a necessary part of giving an INC grade.

Q: A student would like to sit in on the course next semester in order to complete the coursework. Is that an appropriate way of making up the INC?
A: This is up to the discretion of the instructor. As you consider this option, keep in mind that it may be a burden on the instructor who teaches the course the next semester, it takes a seat away from another student, and it gives the student with the INC another chance at learning the course material without having to pay for the course.

Q: A student has missed a number of classes and is asking for an incomplete to have more time to finish the coursework. How should I evaluate this request?
A: Evaluate this request with the guidelines in mind. If there is no serious illness or extreme personal situation that prevented the student from attending class, you should deny the request. Keep in mind that there are other options for students. For example, a student who cannot complete his or her classes in the semester can request a withdrawal from the University up to the last day of classes; students need to meet with an advisor from the University Advising Center to take this step (students in CM should go to their Undergraduate Program Office; students in CNHS should go to their Student Services Office). Another option is to recommend that a student repeat the course. Our course re-take policy is fairly liberal. Please consult the Registrar’s website at: http://www.umb.edu/registrar/academic_policies/course_repeat_policy for more information about retaking courses.

Q: Where do I get an incomplete contract?
A: They should be available in your department office. You can also contact your Dean’s Office or the Office of Undergraduate Studies for copies.
Q: A student has made up the INC work. What do I do now?
A: You will need to fill out a change of grade form (available from your department) and get it signed by your department chair. It should then be walked over to the Registrar’s Office. (Note: the student cannot deliver the form!)

Q: A student completed the work within one year but I missed the deadline for turning in the form. What do I do?
A: If you are in CEHD, CPCS, CLA or CSM, bring the signed change-of-grade form to Brenda Gordon in the Office of Undergraduate Studies with a letter explaining the situation. The Standards and Credits Committee considers all requests past the one-year deadline and Ms. Gordon will bring it to that committee if necessary. Faculty in CM should contact the Undergraduate Program Office; faculty in CNHS should contact the Associate Dean.

Q: I gave a student an incomplete but the student missed the one-year deadline for making up the work. Now the student has requested that I extend the deadline. Can I do this?
A: In rare and exceptional circumstances, it is possible to waive the one-year deadline. However, you are under no obligation to agree to this student request. If you are considering this, I urge you to contact the appropriate office for your college. Please contact these offices BEFORE the student attempts to complete the work. And please use good judgment: if more than three years have passed, approval will not be given. For CLA, CSM, CEHD and CPCS, talk with Brenda Gordon, who sits on the Standards & Credits Committee; CM faculty should contact the Undergraduate Program Office; CNHS faculty and staff should contact their Associate Dean.

Updated by Maura Mast, Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies: December 10, 2013