

GRADES

All grades are based solely on work completed during the term a course is offered, except in the case of a grade issued to replace an incomplete, as authorized by the General Studies Committee on Academic Standing or the Postbac Premedical Committee.

Letter Grades

The letter grading system within Columbia's undergraduate colleges is as follows: A, excellent; B, good; C, fair; D, poor but passing; F, failure (a final grade, not subject to reexamination). Plus and minus grades are also used, except with grades of D or F. No work with a grade of D will be credited toward the major unless otherwise noted by a department in its official policies. For Postbac Premed students and undergraduate prehealth students, grades in required preprofessional courses below C do not satisfy those requirements.

Grade Point Average (GPA)

The Registrar calculates semester as well as cumulative grade point averages based on the number of points per class. The GPA is used to assess a student's academic progress as well as to determine a student's eligibility for certain honors such as the Dean's List or the Honor Society. The GPA is printed on all official Columbia transcripts. GPAs are computed on the following scale:

A+ = 4.33	B+ = 3.33	C+ = 2.33	D = 1.00
A = 4.00	B = 3.00	C = 2.00	F = 0.00
A- = 3.67	B- = 2.67	C- = 1.67	

When the Registrar calculates the GPA, courses are weighted by the number of points they carry. Courses that cannot be credited toward the degree are not included in the GPA. For repeated courses, only the grade earned for the first attempt will be calculated into the grade point average. In cases where the first attempt was an F, both grades will be factored into the grade point average.

Note for Postbac Premed students: Where a Postbac has repeated a required course, the Postbac Premed Program averages in both attempts when it conducts its academic review. Courses outside math and science are excluded from consideration for the purpose of academic review. Postbacs should consult the bulletin sections on [Academic Review](#) for a statement about GPA requirements for continued enrollment in the Postbac Program. Similarly, the sections on the requirements for the [Certificate in the Premedical Sciences](#) and eligibility requirements for linkage all include statements concerning the GPA.

Grade Appeals and Grade Changes

Assessment of a student's performance in a course is solely at the instructor's discretion. Instructors have significant autonomy in determining their methods of instruction, their learning goals, and their standards for grading. Each instructor is both an expert in their field and an individual, and some variation from one instructor to another is to be expected. Students sometimes feel disappointed if a final grade for a course is lower than they'd hoped for or expected; however, that is not itself a cause for a grade appeal. If a student believes that the grade does not appropriately reflect their performance in a course, they should first consider talking with the instructor to better understand how the grade was determined and to discuss ways to improve their work in that discipline. It can also be helpful for the student to discuss the specific

situation, and general questions about grading, with their academic advisor.

Students with concerns about a final course grade should follow these steps:

Step 1

The student should talk with the instructor about how learning was assessed and how their grade was determined. In many cases, this information is sufficient to clarify and conclude the matter. If the student believes that the information provided by the instructor reflects an error of some kind, the student should point out the perceived error to the instructor. If the student and instructor cannot reach agreement about whether an error has occurred, then the student can pursue further discussions.

Step 2

After speaking with the instructor, a student who wishes to continue to seek redress for a perceived error can consult with the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) in the relevant academic department or program. The DUS is an expert in the discipline and supports the academic experience of undergraduate students in the courses offered in the department or program. If a student has a concern about a foreign language class, it may be better to consult with the Director of Language Program (DLP) of that academic department or language program. If there is no DUS or DLP for the particular program offering the course in question, the student may consult the Chair of the academic department.

If, after reviewing the matter, the DUS (or DLP or Chair) determines that no error has occurred in the instructor's determination of the final grade, the matter shall be considered closed. Again, a student may be disappointed with the outcome of the consultation, but the DUS (or DLP or Chair) is the authority in matters of undergraduate instruction in their department or program.

Step 3

If a student continues to have concerns, they can consult the GS Dean of Academic Affairs. Students should understand that the dean recognizes and supports the principle of academic freedom and faculty authority in matters of instruction and grading. Therefore, the dean is not in a position to change a grade or to second-guess the way that student work has been evaluated. Additionally, it is quite rare for the dean to raise further questions once the DUS (or DLP or Chair) has assessed the situation and made a determination. The dean will be ready to hear of any possible errors, to help determine if a situation does warrant further conversation with an instructor or a DUS (or DLP or Chair), and/or to talk with a student and provide help in understanding and accepting the outcome of the grade appeal.

After meeting with the student, the dean will determine if any further review with the faculty would be appropriate and necessary. If the dean determines that no further consultations are warranted, the decision will be final. If the dean does consult with the DUS (or DLP or Chair) and confirms that no procedural breach or error has occurred and that the final grade was appropriate within the instructor's course, the student will be informed and the decision will be final.

The statute of limitations on final grade appeals is three months from the end of the semester in which the course was taken. Grade appeals after this time frame will not be considered.

Pass/D/Fail Option

The purpose of the Pass/D/Fail (P/D/F) option is to encourage undergraduate students to take courses outside their fields of specialization without concern for the grade. Undergraduate students may choose the P/D/F option for only one course per term, including the summer term. Courses given only on a P/F basis will not count toward this limit. Apart from those courses offered only on a P/F basis, Postbac Premed students cannot choose the P/D/F option for math and science courses, with the sole exception of MATH UN1003 (College Algebra & Analytic Geometry) and BIOL UN1004 (Foundations of Biology).

Electing a Course for Pass/D/Fail

Undergraduates within the School of General Studies may elect the Pass/D/Fail (P/D/F) option for no more than one course per semester.

- The grading option for students who register for a course P/D/F when they have exceeded the number of allowable P/D/F will revert to the letter-grade option.
- When the P/D/F option is elected for a particular course, grades of C- or above are converted to a Pass.
- A P/D/F cannot be elected after a final grade has been posted.
- When a GS student takes a course in a Columbia graduate or professional school the policies of that school with regard to P/D/F grading will be enforced.

The P/D/F option cannot be elected for the following specific courses, and/or courses administered by the Committee on the Core, whether or not they are taken to fulfill GS core requirements:

- Art Humanities: UN1121
- Contemporary Civilization: CC/GS1101-CC/GS1102
- Language courses (rare exceptions may apply; consult with your advisor)
- Foundations of Science: UN1212
- Frontiers of Science: CC1000
- Literature Humanities: CC/GS1001-CC/GS1002
- Music Humanities: UN1123
- University Writing: ENGL GS1010 or ENGL GS1014

When considering the P/D/F option, students should be aware that courses with the mark of P

- cannot be used to satisfy a GS Core requirement;
- cannot be used to satisfy a major or concentration requirement, including related courses, unless otherwise noted by the department in its written policies;
- cannot be used to satisfy science or math courses in fulfillment of premedical requirements;
- are not taken into account when calculating a student's GPA; the grades of D and F will be so used.

Students may elect the P/D/F option during registration. Students may change a P/D/F course to a letter-graded course or a letter-graded course to a P/D/F course by clicking the relevant link in SSOL by the eleventh week of the term. The P/D/F deadline for each term is listed in the GS Academic Calendar, and students must elect the option by that deadline for courses taken during that term. A P/D/F cannot be elected after a final grade has been posted.

The P/D/F option, including the opportunity to uncover a Pass, is only available to undergraduate students in the School of General Studies and not to students in the Postbaccalaureate Premedical Program.

Due to circumstances considered to be unusually disruptive to conditions for student learning, the CC-GS Committee on Instruction approved the following exceptions to policies regarding majors and concentrations and special concentrations:

In **Spring 2020**, all courses in the University were graded on a pass/fail basis. *Any* course in this term earning a grade of "P" can be applied to a major, concentration, special concentration, or core course.

In **Fall 2020**, students were permitted to use the Pass/D/Fail grading option one time without restriction – i.e., *one* course in this term earning a grade of "P" can be applied to a major, concentration, special concentration, or core course.

Standard P/D/F grading rules apply for summer semesters. For **Summer 2020** and **Summer 2021**, like all other summer semesters, P/D/F grading may not be applied for major, concentration, or core courses.

In **Spring 2021**, students were permitted to use the Pass/D/Fail grading option **for one class without restriction** – i.e., one course in this term earning a grade of "P" can be applied to a major, concentration, special concentration, or core course.

In **Fall 2021**, students were permitted to use the Pass/D/Fail grading option **for one class without restriction** – i.e., one course in this term earning a grade of "P" can be applied to a major, concentration, or special concentration, or core course.

In **Spring 2022, Fall 2022, Spring 2023, and Fall 2023**, typical policies regarding the Pass/D/Fail option remained in place. Students could use the Pass/D/Fail option for a maximum of one class, and the Pass/D/Fail option could not be used for a class required for a major, concentration, or special concentration, and could not be used for a class required for the Core Curriculum.

- **Special Note:** If students were enrolled in Fall 2021 in a course that could not be concluded because of the graduate student strike, and were required to do work for the course assigned after the conclusion of the Fall semester (i.e., any time after January 2), the students could choose to declare retroactively the Pass/D/Fail option for the course—if they had not already used the Pass/D/Fail option for another Fall course. The policies for the Pass/D/Fail option that were determined for Fall 2021, as noted in the School of General Studies Bulletin, apply to any Fall 2021 course, regardless of when the declaration is made.

In **Spring 2024**, students were permitted to elect the Pass/D/Fail option for up to two courses without restriction (not applicable to Postbac Premed Students) i.e., two courses in this term earning a grade of "P" can be applied to a major, concentration, special concentration, elective, or a Core Curriculum course. Students graduating in May 2024 had until June 1, 2024, to elect the Pass/D/Fail option for a Spring 2024 class, while the deadline for continuing students to elect the Pass/D/Fail option for a Spring 2024 course was extended to the end of the change-of-program period for the Fall 2024 semester (September 13, 2024).

Uncovering the Mark of Pass

Students are allowed to uncover a grade of Pass within two weeks of the start of the semester immediately following the term in which the grade of Pass was received. Students have until the end of the change

of program period of the following term to uncover the grade of Pass in SSOL. In all cases, GS students must finalize such requests by the time they apply for graduation. GS seniors graduating in May who wish to uncover the mark of Pass for their spring-term courses must do so by the Friday of Commencement week.

An uncovered grade may be used to satisfy a core requirement.

In consultation with the major department, an uncovered grade may be used to satisfy a major requirement.

Note: Once a student has chosen to uncover a grade, the Pass cannot be reinstated.

Withdrawals and Administrative Referral

Withdrawal (W)

Students are not permitted to have a course deleted from their academic record after the late drop deadline (the fifth week of classes). If a student withdraws from a course after the late drop deadline, and no later than the Monday prior to the last day of classes each semester, the transcript will show a mark of W for that course. This is a permanent, GPA-neutral mark and will remain on the transcript even if the student repeats the course. Students may not drop or withdraw from any course after this deadline.

Administrative Referral (AR)

The mark of AR (Administrative Referral) is a temporary grade awarded by a faculty member when a final letter grade cannot be assigned. AR is not a permanent grade.

In the event that the student has been approved through petition to the General Studies Committee on Academic Standing or (for postbacs) to the Premedical Committee to receive an Incomplete in a course, the mark of AR will be submitted pending completion of course requirements. Please note that ultimately the assignment of the final letter grade is at the instructor's discretion. **Note:** Postbac Premed students and undergraduate prehealth students are ineligible for committee support at least until final letter grades are submitted to replace any AR marks in required preprofessional courses.

Incomplete

Students must complete all coursework by the last day of exams in a given semester. For students who cannot complete their coursework or are unable to take a final examination, an incomplete for a course in progress may be granted by the General Studies Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) or the Premedical Committee. The incomplete is indicated through a temporary grade of AR, which is replaced by a permanent grade issued by the faculty member once outstanding work is completed. For more information, see [Midterm and Final Exams](#).