GRADUATE DEGREES

All degrees 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:

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\begin{align*}
A+ &= 4.33 \\
A &= 4.00 \\
A- &= 3.67 \\
B+ &= 3.33 \\
B &= 3.00 \\
B- &= 2.67 \\
C+ &= 2.33 \\
C &= 2.00 \\
C- &= 1.67 \\
D &= 1.00 \\
F &= 0.00 \\
\end{align*}
\]

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. When a student feels a grade appeal is warranted, the student should first speak with the instructor of the course in order to understand how the evaluation was derived or to clarify other specific concerns. If dissatisfied with the explanation or uncomfortable broaching this matter with the instructor, the student should speak with the director of undergraduate studies or, if appropriate, the chair of the relevant department.

Deans and GS advisors can counsel a student on whether and how to approach an instructor about a grade appeal; however, they do not arbitrate grade disputes. Students should keep their GS advisors informed of any pending grade disputes or appeals, as the Office of the

Dean of Students can help to expedite a response from a faculty member or department.

If the student is unable to resolve the matter to his or her satisfaction and believes that a procedural issue is involved, the student should bring the matter to the attention of GS Academic Affairs who will work with the student and the faculty member to determine whether there has been a procedural breach and, if so, take immediate steps to remedy the matter. If relevant faculty other than the instructor, in consultation with GS Academic Affairs, decide that the grade or other academic evaluation was appropriate, given class assignments and circumstances, 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.

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 the six-course 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).

E lecting a Course for Pass/D/Fail

• Undergraduates within the School of General Studies may elect the Pass/D/Fail (P/D/F) option for up to six courses, for a total of 18 points, but no more than one course per semester may be selected for this option.

• 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.

• 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.

For Fall 2021, the deadline for declaring the Pass/D/Fail option for a course was extended to December 15, 2021, the end of the reading period (not applicable to Postbac Premed Students).

• Students were able to elect the Pass/D/Fail option for one class in this semester without restriction — i.e., the course chosen for this grading option could fulfill a requirement for the Core Curriculum; a requirement for a major, concentration, or special concentration; or an elective.
• The usual policy for lifting a “P” to uncover a grade continued. Students were able to see their assigned grade for the course in question in SSOL and decide by the end of the second week of the Spring 2022 semester (January 28, 2022) whether to uncover the grade or let the “P” remain on the transcript permanently.
• Other policies governing the use of the Pass/D/Fail option remained in place.

For Spring 2022, the deadline for declaring the Pass/D/Fail option was extended to Monday, May 2, 2022, the last day of classes for Spring 2022 (not applicable to Postbac Premed Students).

• Other than the change to the deadline for declaring, 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 in the Spring 2022 semester, and the Pass/D/Fail option could not be used for a class required for a major or concentration and could not be used for a class required for the Core Curriculum.
• The usual policy for lifting a “P” to uncover a grade continued. Students were able to see their assigned grade for the course in question in SSOL and decide by the end of the second week of the Fall 2022 semester (September 16, 2022) whether to uncover the grade or let the “P” remain on the transcript permanently.
• 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.

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. Following the designation of the AR mark, the student’s academic advisor will follow up with the instructor to outline the requisite steps to determine an appropriate final grade. 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 “IN” will then be submitted by the academic advisor. 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 or IN 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 IN, 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.