2. “M” grade policy revision update.

Professor Horowitz explained that Council at the December 2009 meeting approved a revision to the “M” temporary grade policy such that students would not automatically receive an “F” grade if they do not make up the missed final exam for a course. Council members reasoned that the instructor of the course should be able to assign a default grade to the student in case s/he does not make up the exam. Because the present “M” temporary grade policy was the result of negotiation between the four Vanderbilt undergraduate colleges, Council requested at the December meeting that the A&S Dean’s Office consult with the other colleges before presenting the proposed revision to the A&S faculty as a whole for final approval. The other Vanderbilt undergraduate schools, through the Ad hoc Committee on Undergraduate Affairs, Professor Horowitz reported, have agreed with Council’s position (the Ad hoc Committee on Undergraduate Affairs is composed of one associate dean and one faculty member from each of the four Vanderbilt undergraduate colleges). Consequently, the proposed revision to the “M” temporary grade policy will be presented to the A&S faculty at the May meeting and to the faculties of the other Vanderbilt undergraduate colleges for final approval.
Dear Jonathan,

Below is the decision from the Ad Hoc Committee on Undergraduate Affairs.

It was agreed that the M should be treated in the same way as the I. As with the I, a default grade will be submitted along with the M. Both the M and the I will have to be monitored manually since an electronic process for managing the two grades has not yet been implemented.

Information regarding the M should be included in the next catalog, and Registrars and faculty should be made aware of the process to be used with the M. To the extent possible, common language should be used by all four schools when disseminating information about the M grade.

Thanks,
Dean B.

M. Francille Bergquist
Associate Professor of Spanish
Associate Dean
College of Arts and Science
311 Kirkland Hall
Phone: 815-229-2316
2. Business from the Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures (CASP).

a. ‘M’ temporary grade policy. Professor Horowitz explained that A&S policy dictates that a student shall receive an ‘F’ grade for a course when the student receives an ‘M’ grade for the course (by missing the final exam) and does not make up the final exam within a reasonable time period. Last April, Faculty Council requested CASP to reconsider this policy, and CASP has recommended that the ‘M’ grade policy be revised such that course instructors are permitted to submit a default grade along with the ‘M’ grade. CASP also recommended, Professor Weintraub added, that the default grade need not be submitted at the same time as the ‘M’ grade, because in some circumstances (e.g. very large classes) it might be difficult to do so. After a brief discussion in which it became apparent that Council members agreed with CASP’s recommendations, Professor Horowitz remarked that Council is recommending a change to a policy that was the result of negotiation between the four Vanderbilt undergraduate schools and suggested that A&S should consult with the other undergraduate schools before sending it to the A&S faculty as a whole for approval. The other undergraduate schools might present good reasons against this revision of the ‘M’ grade policy. **Council then approved a motion requesting that the Dean of the College of Arts and Science discuss the proposed revision of the ‘M’ temporary grade policy with the other Vanderbilt undergraduate schools.**
To: Gregg Horowitz, Chair of A&S Faculty Council

From: George Becker, Chair of Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures

Date: November 17, 2009

Re: Recommendations to the Faculty Council

The Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures met on Friday, November 6 at 3:00-4:30pm in 410 Kirkland Hall. Committee members in attendance were Professors David Cliffel, Kathy Gaca, M. Shane Hutson, Elizabeth Lunbeck, Matthew Ramsey, and George Becker. Dean Francille Bergquist attended in place of Dean John Sloop. Professor David Weintraub was present by invitation to speak to his concerns regarding one of the two items on the meeting’s agenda.

The first item addressed speaks to a charge from the Faculty Council requesting CASP to reconsider the College’s “M” grade policy, with the following suggestion: “CASP could make a recommendation regarding the meaning and importance of final exams that is consistent with the current “M” temporary grade policy or could make a recommendation that the current “M” grade policy should apply only to those courses in which final exams are required, in the sense that students, as a rule, would not pass a course if they did not take the final exam.”

Existing regulations stipulate that a student who misses a final exam for an excusable reason and who otherwise has no incomplete work for a course should receive a temporary “M” grade for the course. The one exception to this rule applies to the student who could not have passed the course even with the final exam, in which case the grade of “F” is to be given. Policy further requires that the student who was given an “M” grade and fails to take the final exam within a specified period of time will receive a grade of “F” for the course regardless of the quality of that student’s course work going into the final exam.

The policy whereby an “M” grade is automatically converted to an “F” grade upon the student’s failure to take the final exam has come under criticism. Following the Faculty Council’s recommendation, Professor David Weintraub was invited to the Committee’s meeting to explain his opposition to the current policy. He opened with the objection that existing policy violates the contract that he makes with his students upon presentation of his course–grading scale. He noted that, given the weight attached to his final examination, a student could quite possibly earn a passing grade for the course even if the final exam were counted as a “zero” in the calculations for the course grade. Given this fact, he deemed unfair the practice whereby a student is given a course grade of “F” when, in the professor’s judgment, the student’s performance merited a passing grade. Professor Weintraub rejected the argument that final exams have special significance compared to other course work or that students must be compelled to take a final exam in order to pass the course. He defended this position by noting that existing “M” grade regulations establish policy about the importance of final exams in the absence of debate or formal ruling on the part of the faculty. In order to redress these concerns, Professor Weintraub proposed a policy change that would allow a faculty to submit an “M” grade in conjunction with a default grade to students who miss the final exam. Given such arrangement, the default grade is to be submitted with the understanding that if the student failed to take the make-up final exam, that student would receive the default grade in place of the “F” grade.

Following spirited discussion after Professor Weintraub’s departure, the Committee came to a unanimous
understanding. By a vote of 6-0, the Committee recommends that the M-grade policy be changed to allow faculty the option to submit a default grade that is to be given in place of the F grade should a student fail to take the make-up final exam. Given the time constraints during the final examination period, especially for faculty teaching very large classes, the Committee recommends that a student’s default grade be submitted after notification from the Dean’s Office that a given student failed to take the make-up exam within the prescribed time frame. These proposed changes have no bearing on the existing rule governing the “F” grade that faculty submit for students who miss the final exam but could not have passed the course even if the final exam grade were counted.

The Committee’s second recommendation derived from a proposal submitted by Professor Matthew Ramsey. As a member of CASP and the director of honors in the History Department, he expressed deep concern about the recently modified rule for departmental honors, one that replaced the designation “high honors” with “highest honors.” He proposed the adoption of a three-tier system consisting of the designations “highest honors,” “high honors,” and “honors” in place of the newly instituted two-tier system. Professor Ramsey’s objections to the latter can be summarized as follows (for details see his “Recommendation for CASP”):

1. It is ungrammatical, since the use of the superlative “highest” requires at least three elements.

2. It is inconsistent with our three-tier model for Latin honors (cum laude, magna cum laude, and summa cum laude).

3. It is inconsistent with the practice at three other of our undergraduate schools.

4. It is out of line with practices at other leading universities.

5. It invites the two-fold risk of grade inflation (by granting “highest honors” to all students who in the past received “high honors”) as well as grade deflation (by granting “highest honors” to only a small number of truly exceptional students).

Following discussion of available options, the motion to seek replacement of our current two-tier system with the proposed three-tier system failed to carry by a vote of 3-3. The primary objection to the motion was the fear that the three-tier system would invite grade inflation on a significant scale.

After defeat of the motion Professor Ramsey proposed that the Committee recommend a return to our former designations of “honors” and “high honors” as preferable to the newly adopted “honors” and “highest honors” designations. Following further discussion, and punctuated by two more votes, the Committee reached a unanimous 6-0 consensus to recommend a return to our former honors designations.
Dear Professor Becker:

The A&S Faculty Council has charged the Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures (CASP) with reconsidering the A&S 'M' temporary grade policy. The precise charge is the following:

Faculty Council then decided that the “M” temporary grade policy should be returned to CASP, with the following suggestions. CASP could make a recommendation regarding the meaning and importance of final exams that is consistent with the current “M” temporary grade policy or could make a recommendation that the current “M” grade policy should apply only to those courses in which final exams are required, in the sense that students, as a rule, would not pass a course if they did not take its final exam.

A legislative history of the 'M' temporary grade policy is attached. It includes:

--Faculty Council minutes of September 3, 2009, relevant portions thereof
--Faculty Council minutes of April 7, 2009, relevant portions thereof
--CASP report of March 28, 2009
--Explanation of 'M' grade data problem
--Clarification of terms and rationale for the current
policy
--Faculty Council minutes of September 2, 2008, relevant portions thereof
--Faculty Meeting minutes of May 6, 2008, relevant portions thereof
--Faculty Council minutes of April 29, 2008, relevant portions thereof
--CASP report of April 17, 2008

The Faculty Council strongly recommends that CASP invite Professor David Weintraub to its first meeting in order for him to explain his objections to the current policy.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you,
Jonathan

Jonathan Bremer, Ph.D.
Program Coordinator, A&S Dean's Office
A&S Executive Secretary of the Faculty
Senior Lecturer, Department of Philosophy
304 Alumni Hall
Vanderbilt University
(615) (32)2-7747
a. The 'M' grade and final exam policies. Professor Horowitz explained that the current A&S 'M' temporary grade policy was adopted by the A&S faculty and the three other Vanderbilt undergraduate faculties in 2006. The policy states that a student who misses a final exam and who otherwise has no incomplete work for a course receives an 'M' grade for the course. If the student does not take the final exam within a specified time, then the student automatically receives an 'F' for the course. Implicit in this policy, Professor Horowitz continued, is that a final exam is a required component of a course, because, under this policy, a student would fail the entire course if she did not take the final exam within the specified time frame. He further explained that Professor Weintraub has objected to this policy, on the grounds that faculty members are not required to have final exams in their courses and that it is unfair to give a student an 'F' in a course when, in the judgment of the professor of the course, she does not deserve it. The student might have earned a passing grade in the course even if the instructor counted the final exam as a 'zero' in the calculation of the overall course grade.

Professor Horowitz noted that Faculty Council asked CASP (Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures) at its April 7, 2009, meeting to reconsider the current 'M' grade policy, given these concerns, and report back to Council. He also recommended that CASP invite Professor Weintraub to its first meeting in order for him to explain his objections to the current policy. Professor Weintraub added that, because the current 'M' grade policy is the result of collaboration between the four Vanderbilt undergraduate colleges, it would be inappropriate for A&S to implement its own policy. If Council were to recommend a revision of the 'M' grade policy, then A&S should consider the other Vanderbilt colleges before bringing it forward to the A&S faculty for approval.

Professor Stone reminded Council members that the 'M' grade has an important purpose, namely that it is useful when a student misses the final exam of a course and it gives the registrar and instructors of large classes a clear mechanism for issuing the final grade for a student who has received an 'M' grade.
a. The 'M' grade and final exam policies. Professor Horowitz explained that the current A&S 'M' temporary grade policy was adopted by the A&S faculty and the three other Vanderbilt undergraduate faculties in 2008. The policy states that a student who misses a final exam and who otherwise has no incomplete work for a course receives an 'M' grade for the course. If the student does not take the final exam within a specified time, then the student automatically receives an 'F' for the course. Implicit in this policy, Professor Horowitz continued, is that a final exam is a required component of a course, because, under this policy, a student would fail the entire course if s/he did not take the final exam within the specified time frame. He further explained that Professor Weintraub has objected to this policy, on the grounds that faculty members are not required to have final exams in their courses and that it is unfair to give a student an ‘F’ in a course when, in the judgment of the professor of the course, s/he does not deserve it. The student might have earned a passing grade in the course even if the instructor counted the final exam as a ‘zero’ in the calculation of the overall course grade. Professor Horowitz noted that Faculty Council asked CASP (Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures) at the April 7, 2009, meeting to reconsider the current ‘M’ grade policy, given these concerns, and report back to Council. He also recommended that CASP invite Professor Weintraub to its first meeting in order for him to explain his objections to the current policy. Professor Weintraub added that, because the current 'M' grade policy is the result of collaboration between the four Vanderbilt undergraduate colleges, it would be inappropriate for A&S to implement its own policy. If Council were to recommend a revision of the ‘M’ grade policy, then A&S should confer with the other Vanderbilt colleges before bringing it forward to the A&S faculty for approval. Professor Stone reminded Council members that the 'M' grade has an important purpose, namely that it is useful when a student misses the final exam of a course and it gives the registrar and instructors of large classes a clear mechanism for issuing the final grade for a student who has received an 'M' grade.
B. "M" temporary grade policy. CASP recommended that the current "M" temporary grade policy be retained. The current policy states that a student who misses the scheduled final exam of a course for an excusable reason should receive an "M" grade for the course, and if the student does not take the final exam within a specified time period then he or she will receive an "F" for the course regardless of the quality of his or her coursework going into the final exam. Professor Weintraub asserted that the current "M" grade policy should not be retained, arguing that, in his view, this policy violates the contract that he has made with his students when he presents his course-grading scale on the syllabus. Students should have the right, he said, to not take the final exam and not suffer anything worse than a zero grade for the final, given that the A&S faculty has not approved a policy in which students have to take the final exam in order to pass a course. He also pointed out that the vote on this issue at the CASP meeting was three to two, which shows that the committee members were strongly divided on this issue. Professor Weintraub remarked that he would prefer a system in which instructors submit the "M" grade along with a default grade to those students who miss the final exam such that if the student fails to make up the final exam, the student would receive the default grade, instead of an "F." Professor Horowitz noted that the CASP report states that course instructors have the right to change the course grade of a student. Yes, Professor Weintraub responded, but faculty members should not have to intervene after the fact in order to change a student's grade from an "F" to the grade that the student merits based on his or her work in the course.

After a discussion of some of the practical and mechanical issues surrounding the "M" grade policy, Council members acknowledged that there are several philosophical issues involved that are more important and should be resolved first. Members agreed that the "M" grade has a purpose. It is useful when a student has a legitimate excuse for missing the final exam of a course. The "M" grade, therefore, should not be abolished. Philosophical questions arise when a student fails to take the final exam in a course for which he or she has received an "M" grade. The current "M" temporary grade policy presumes that the final exam of a course is different from other coursework and deserves special consideration. Students have to take the final exam in order to pass a course. The A&S faculty has explicitly decided, however, that courses are not required to have a final exam, and, consequently, Professor Weintraub concluded, it is problematic to presume or state that final exams are special and different from other coursework or that, as a rule, students must be required to take a final exam in order to pass a course. The "M" temporary grade policy, he continued, establishes policy about the importance of final exams without debate or faculty decision. Alternatively, Professor Stone suggested, the "M" grade, as it is currently conceived, could be used only in those courses for which the final exam is a required component. In other courses, instructors would submit the "I" grade for those students who do not complete all of the coursework. Faculty Council then decided that the "M" temporary grade policy should be returned to CASP, with the following suggestions. CASP could make a recommendation regarding the meaning and importance of final exams that is consistent with the current "M"
temporary grade policy or could make a recommendation that the current "M" grade policy should apply only to those courses in which final exams are required, in the sense that students, as a rule, would not pass a course if they did not take its final exam. Council then approved a motion to close discussion on the "M" grade issue.
March 28, 2009

To: Kassian Kovalcheck, Chair, A&S Faculty Council
From: Kathy L. Gaca, Chair of CASP
Re: Recommendations from the CASP meeting of March 16, 2009. Present at the meeting were CASP members David Cliffel, Mark Ellingham, Kathy Gaca, Elizabeth Lunbeck, and Nancy Reisman. William Fowler was absent. Also in attendance were Associate Dean John Sloop and A&S Dean’s Office staff person Michael Muise.

**Topic 2: Retaining the M grade policy**

CASP was asked by Faculty Council to reconsider the current M-grade policy.

CASP voted 3-2 in favor of retaining the current policy.

A substantial argument in favor of retaining the current policy is as follows. One might maintain that the M grade policy is unfair because a student might have earned a passing grade in a course even if he or she missed the final exam and never took the makeup final exam. For example, a student might have earned a C in the course overall even if he or she missed the final exam and the instructor counted the missed final as a zero in the computation of the student’s grade for the course. Hence, it may seem prima facie wrong for the student to receive an F in the course, rather than the C he or she would have received if the professor of the course simply treated the student’s missing final exam as though it were a zero on the final exam taken by the student.

The above line of argument, however, seems to assume that a missed final exam ought to be scored as the equivalent of a zero in a taken final exam. This is dubious. If students are allowed to treat a missed final exam as a zero on a taken final exam, then final exams, by virtue of being the last item in the series of graded requirements in a course, become vulnerable to being deliberately skipped. Students can calculate their final course grade by counting a missed final as though it were a zero. If their grade looks good enough to them with the missed final counted as a zero, or if they are taking the course pass/fail, they can skip the final and still pass the course. The other graded requirements of the course are not as susceptible to a calculation of this sort because they are not the final graded requirement. Final exams thus need to have their integrity protected and respected as course requirements in those courses where professors elect to give finals. The M grade policy provides the needed protection against students treating a missed final as a zero by giving students a year in which to make up a missed final exam and then giving students an F in the course if they do not fulfill this obligation.
Additional reasons in favor of leaving the M grade policy as is:

—CASP could not recommend any policy that leads to some professors allowing an M grade to default to an F after a year and other professors electing to treat a missed final as the equivalent of a zero on the final and changing the M to a passing letter grade. This variable policy tailored to the discretion of individual professors would treat some students more severely than other students (simply by the 'luck of the draw' of which professor they have) when they miss their finals and do not make them up within a year.

—The M grade serves a useful function. An M grade arises when students have fulfilled all of the other course requirements except for the final, and course instructors must provide a course grade for the student promptly.

—The M grade policy is now consistent among all of the undergraduate schools at Vanderbilt and should not be altered unless there is a demonstrably compelling reason to change it. No such compelling reason has yet arisen.

—CASP could not determine the number of students who have been adversely affected by this policy. The A&S Registrar could not provide data about how many M grades have defaulted to F grades. The Registrar stated that she does not retroactively have access to this data.

In response to this lack of data, CASP unanimously urged the Registrar to document this data as it becomes available. CASP understands that the Registrar can capture this information as it occurs, but not retroactively.

The two dissenting votes against retaining the current M grade policy were motivated by the following concerns: 1) Insofar as CASP does not have this data from the Registrar, it is difficult to justify voting in favor of maintaining the status quo. 2) The aforementioned variable policy retains some appeal, because it gives the individual professors the option to assign a grade other than F after a year.

By contrast, the other three votes were in favor of retaining the current M grade policy for the following reasons: 1) in the absence of reliable data from the Registrar, we do not yet know whether we are facing a real or only theoretical problem of students having their Ms default to Fs because they are ignorant of what they need to do to finish the course in the intervening year. There is no need to fix what may not be a real problem. 2) The aforementioned variable policy,
despite its prima facie appeal, is inequitable when considered on a global scale (i.e., the 'luck of the draw' concern stated above). 3) To instate either a variable policy, or to eliminate M grades altogether, would also strip final exams of the aforementioned valuable protection provided by the current policy of having an M default to an F after a year. 4) Further, to eliminate M grades altogether removes the convenience of having an emergency letter grade to give to students who miss a final. 5) In actual practice, course instructors may intervene as they wish to change an M grade to a grade other than F. Thus, they do not surrender their rights to assign a grade other than F to replace an M grade, if for some reason they see justifiable grounds for so doing. Such grounds might include, at the course instructor's discretion, a decision to count a missed final as tantamount to a zero on a taken final in those cases that merit this decision.
Dear Professor Gaca,

Beth Rogers, the A&S registrar, has indicated that total grades for a 5-year term is too many to calculate (over 100,000). She did give us data, with a heavy caveat, for Fall 05.

In 05F, there were 104 M-grades. However, 10 are still in process of being resolved, since some students are still in an extreme situations, or their record just hasn't been gotten to yet by her office. That leaves 94 M-grades from that semester that have become letter-grades. 13 of these became F's (13.8%). For the same 05Fall semester, there were 24001 total grades, 383 of which were F's (1.6%), according to Beth.

The caveat she gave, is that this data is unreliable, since if a student gets and M, takes the exam, gets a C, and the C is later grade-changed to a B, for example, then there will be no record in the system of the original M-grade. Hence, there may have been more than 104 total M-grades given, lowering the percentage of F's.

She suggested that we consult with Dean Bergquist for information about M-grade frequency and conversions. She is the Dean who handles all M-Grades, and might be able to give a better idea of the comparisons of what happens to M-grades.

Would you like to meet with Dean Bergquist or have me talk to her? Please let me know if there is another direction you would like to go.

Sincerely,

Michael
Michael Muişe

Vanderbilt University

Phone: 615-343-3141

Email: michael.r.muişe@Vanderbilt.Edu
Dear Kathy,

Let me take question 2 first.

2) Also, what does it mean for a student to "default" in a course?

A student defaults a course by not working toward fulfilling the requirements of the course. The student may have missed an exam or two, not turned in a critical paper for the course, and not made arrangements to make up that outstanding work. A student may also simply abandon a course, i.e., default, because he/she knows that his/her performance will not be good and plans, therefore, to repeat it.

1) What is the rationale for an M grade defaulting to an F if the student does not make up the final exam?

Sometimes faculty members assign an "M" to a student who misses a final because, technically, the student is passing the course. However, as referred to in the last sentence to question 2, knowing that his/her performance will not be to the student's liking, the student plans to repeat the course. Since a temporary grade cannot be repeated, an "F by default" is assigned by the dean. This is to allow the student to receive repeat credit for the course and is the only instance when a faculty member does not assign a grade.

Hope this helps. Let me know if anything is not clear or if you need further information.

Francille
Associate Dean
College of Arts and Science

---Original Message---
From: Gaca, Kathy L [mailto:kathy.l.gaca@Vanderbilt.Edu]
Sent: Wednesday, October 01, 2008 9:33 AM
To: Bergquist, M. Francille
Subject: RE: CASP inquiry into rationale for the M grade policy
Dear Francille: Thank you very much for your reply. Would you please clarify further two related matters about the M grade policy? 1) What is the rationale for an M grade defaulting to an F if the student does not make up the final exam? 2) Also, what does it mean for a student to "default" in a course? This wording about a student defaulting in a course is part of the formal M grade policy.

Faculty Council has asked CASP to review question 1 above in particular, which is why I would like to receive your response on that specific point.

It is possible (though not yet clear to me) that the rationale for the M grade defaulting to an F (if the student does not make up the final) relates somehow to a student "defaulting" in a course, which is why I am also asking question 2 above.

Thank you in advance for your response.

All the best,
Kathy

> Dear Kathy,
> > The rationale for the current "M" temporary grade policy is to give
> > students who have had to miss the final exam in a course because of
> > unavoidable conflicts (illness, death in the family, etc.) a chance to
> > complete the course by taking the final exam when the student returns
> > the following semester.
> > You will remember that last year we proposed a change to the policy to
> > not calculate the temporary grade as an "F" which had been the practice
> > before. And, we changed the policy regarding the "I" grade to allow
> > faculty to assign the grade a student would earn if the missing work
> > was not turned in by the extended deadline.
> > Students default courses in one of two ways: they do not take the final
> > exam at the rescheduled time and don't ask for an extension or they
> > sign
> > up to repeat the course.
> > Hope this helps. Let me know if you need anything else.
> > Francille
> > Associate Dean
> > College of Arts and Science
> > —Original Message—
> > From: Gaca, Kathy L [mailto:kathy.l.gaca@Vanderbilt.Edu]
> > Sent: Friday, September 26, 2008 11:24 AM
> > To: Bergquist, M. Francille; Sloop, John M
> > Subject: CASP inquiry into rationale for the M grade policy
> > >
> > Greetings. The A&S Faculty Council has asked CASP to reconsider the
> "M"
> temporary grade policy. What is the rationale for the current "M"
> temporary grade policy and what does it mean for a student to
> "default"
> in
> a course?
>
> Please respond at your earliest convenience so that CASP may proceed
> in
> a
> timely way with this matter.
>
> Thank you very much!
> Kathy Gaca
> Chair of CASP
>
>
Minutes of the Arts & Science Faculty Council
September 2, 2008

4. **Consideration of issues for Council to discuss this year.**

Professor Weintraub suggested that Council consider two items: First, Council should reconsider the temporary grade policy with respect to the “M” grade, and, second, Council should decide whether the current language in the *Catalog* regarding directed study and independent study courses, and on the relevant sign-up form, should be discouraging first-year and sophomore A&S students from taking these types of courses. Council voted in favor of directing CASP (Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures) to study both issues and report back to Council.
Minutes of the Faculty  
College of Arts & Science  
May 6, 2008

5. Executive Motion Calendar.

From the Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures (CASP):

A. Proposed revision of the Temporary Grades policy.

Professor Weintraub opposed the proposed revision on the grounds that a student should not receive an “F” grade for a course just because he or she did not take a makeup final exam in a course in which he or she received an “M” grade. He argued that it is not fair or reasonable for a student to receive an “F” in this situation, nor is it fair to impose on faculty members that they must give an “F” to students in this situation, because a student might have earned a passing grade for the course even if he or she did not take the final exam. A student might have earned a “B” in the course, for example, even without taking the final exam. Dean Bergquist replied that the relevant clause of the proposed policy is the same as current policy and that the other Vanderbilt undergraduate schools have agreed to it, as part of a new university-wide policy on temporary grades. Professor Gaca, Chair of CASP, explained that it was her understanding, and Dean Bergquist confirmed this, that students specifically request an “M” grade for a course in order to take a missed final exam and that the form students use to request such a grade clearly states the consequences for not taking the makeup exam. Professor Weintraub responded that a better policy would be to request that faculty members provide a default grade, as in courses in which students receive an “Incomplete” grade, and if the student does not take the missed final exam (or complete the missed coursework) then the student would receive the default grade. Further, even if this clause in the proposed policy is the same as current policy, it would be a good time to correct the problem while we are revising the policy.

Professor Ellingham stated that he has given some thought to this issue as a member of CASP, and he explained that if the faculty were to follow Professor Weintraub’s suggestion, then there would be no distinction between an “M” grade and an “Incomplete” grade. The current and proposed policy, he continued, preserves an important distinction between missing the final exam for a course and missing other kinds of coursework. Professor McCarthy suggested that the faculty might consider whether this distinction is important. If, as a college, he continued, faculty considers final exams as more significant than other coursework, then faculty can establish policy to this effect. Professor Kovalcheck responded that the A&S faculty has established policy on this issue; namely, that faculty members do not have to give a final exam in a course, but if a faculty member does give a final exam, then all of the students have to take the exam. A faculty member cannot give a final exam to some students and not to others in the class.

Professor Dow argued that when a student asks for an “M” grade in a course, the student’s petition could be interpreted as a kind of contract between the student and the
faculty. If the student does not take the exam, then the student has defaulted on the "contract" and, as long as the student understands the consequences of defaulting on the "contract," then it should not be problematic that the student receives an "F" for the course. Associate Dean Sloop pointed out that a student could always take the exam and leave immediately thereafter without completing the exam. This would satisfy the condition of the "M" grade "contract," and the student would receive the "default grade" for the course as Professor Weintraub has described it.

Professor Nelson stated that it was her understanding that a faculty member has the discretion to give a student an "Incomplete" grade, an "M" grade, or a "zero" grade for missed work (which would then be averaged with the student's other coursework to calculate the final grade). Professor Weintraub responded that a faculty member does not have such discretion once a student has been granted an "M" grade for a course. If a student does not take the missed final exam within a specified time period, then the student will receive an "F" for the course. This is exactly what is at issue, he continued, and he reiterated his point that the proposed policy is unfair. Dean Bergquist replied that a student can ask for an extension if he or she cannot take the final exam within the specified time period.

Professor Harrington then called the question. His motion was seconded and approved. Faculty then approved the revised temporary grades policy as proposed by CASP, with three faculty members dissenting and two members abstaining.
2. Business from the Committee on Academic Standards and Procedures (CASP).

A. Proposed revision of the Temporary Grades policy.

Professor Lunbeck remarked that the reference to “Associate Dean” in the proposed revision should be more clearly specified. In response, Dean McCarty suggested that the wording of the relevant sentence be changed to “an Associate Dean of Arts and Science” such that the last sentence of the Missing the Final Exam section of the proposal would read “Any student who has sufficient reason for retaining the M grade for longer than the period allotted or for taking the makeup examination at a special time may petition an Associate Dean of Arts and Science for permission.” Council members accepted the amended wording. In reference to the sentence in the current policy, “It is the responsibility of the student who misses a final examination to present an excuse to the dean immediately,” Professor Lunbeck asked why students are allowed to seek permission for missing the final exam of a course after the final exam has taken place. Dean McCarty and Professor Kovalcheck responded that the most common justifiable reason for missing an exam is medical. Council then approved the proposed revision of the Temporary Grades policy as amended.
Temporary Grades

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M: Missing a Final Examination

The grade M is given to a student who misses a final examination and is not known to have defaulted in the course, unless the student could not have passed the course even with the final examination, in which case the grade F is given. The course grade of a student known to have defaulted on a final examination is computed on the basis of a score of zero for the final examination. It is the responsibility of the student who misses a final examination to present an excuse to the dean immediately. If the excuse is considered adequate, the grade M is authorized. In the event that an excuse is not presented to the dean before the first day of the makeup examination period in the next semester, the grade in the course becomes an F. This action is taken regardless of whether the student is in residence the following semester.

A student who secures authorization for an absence at the proper time is obliged to take a makeup examination during the first full week of the next semester, provided the student is in residence. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the Office of the Dean (311 Kirkland Hall) before the second day of classes to schedule the makeup. If the student is not in residence, the grade M must be removed by a makeup examination given within a maximum period of one year from the date of the missed examination and during one of the regular makeup examination periods. Otherwise, the M becomes an F by default. Any student who has sufficient reason for retaining the M grade for longer than the period allotted or for taking the makeup examination at a special time may petition the Administrative Committee an Associate Dean of Arts and Science for permission. The grade M is counted as an F in calculating the grade point average until it is replaced with a permanent grade.

I: Incomplete

Essays, book reviews, laboratory reports, etc. must be submitted no later than the last regular class meeting of the semester or at an earlier date if so specified by an instructor in a particular course. Students are required to make up quizzes or examinations missed during the semester with an authorized excuse by no later than the last class day of the semester (not the date of the final examination). The grade of any student not complying with this schedule is computed on the basis of a grade zero for the missing work, unless an extension is granted by the dean upon petition by the student, with the endorsement of the instructor. These petitions must be presented on a day prior to the date on which the work is due.

Students for whom extensions have been authorized receive the temporary grade I (incomplete), which is removed at the end of the extension period. If the missing work is not completed at this time, it is computed as zero and a final grade is assigned. The grade for a student who misses a final examination and whose work is also incomplete in other respects is
reported as Ml. This grade may not be turned in without prior authorization by the dean. The grade I is counted as an F in calculating the grade point average until it is replaced with a permanent grade.

The grade of I is given only under extenuating circumstances and only when a significant body of satisfactory work has been completed in a course. The I is not intended as a replacement for a failing grade, nor should it be assigned if a student simply misses the final examination. The grade of M is used for the latter purpose. The grade for a student who misses a final examination and whose work is also incomplete in other respects is reported as MI. The request for an I is generally initiated by the student but must be approved and assigned by the instructor. When assigning an Incomplete, the instructor specifies (a) a deadline by which the I must be resolved and replaced by a permanent grade and (b) a default course grade that counts the missing work as zero. The deadline may be no later than the end of the next regular semester. The Incomplete can be extended beyond the next semester only if the student's Associate Dean determines that an extension is warranted. If the required work is submitted by the deadline for removing the Incomplete, the I will be replaced by the grade earned. If the work is not completed by the deadline, the default grade will become the permanent grade for the course.

The Incomplete is not calculated in the GPA, but a student who receives an Incomplete is ineligible for the Dean’s List.

MI: Missing a Final Examination and Other Work

The grade for a student who misses a final examination and whose work is also incomplete in other respects is reported as MI. This grade may not be turned in without prior authorization by the dean. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the Office of the Dean (311 Kirkland Hall) to request permission to take a makeup examination and to arrange for the submission of the missing work. The grade I is counted as an F in calculating the grade point average until it is replaced with a permanent grade.

E: Condition

An instructor may give the grade E (condition) in a course when in the instructor's judgment (a) the work represents a borderline case and additional evidence is necessary to determine whether the student should be given the grade D or F or (b) the results of the final examination are such that they reduce the student’s average in a course from passing to slightly below passing. But if the examination grade reduces the student’s average to considerably below passing, the student will receive the grade F. The grade E must be removed during the regular makeup examination period of the student's next semester in residence or it becomes an F by default. A student who takes a reexamination to remove an E will receive the final grade D or F in the course, depending on whether the grade on the second examination is passing or failing. Only one reexamination is allowed to replace the grade E.
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A student who secures authorization for an absence at the proper time is obliged to take a makeup examination during the first full week of the next semester, provided the student is in residence. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the Office of the Dean (311 Kirkland Hall) before the second day of classes to schedule the makeup. If the student is not in residence, the grade M must be removed by a makeup examination given within a maximum period of one year from the date of the missed examination and during one of the regular makeup examination periods. Otherwise, the M becomes an F by default. Any student who has sufficient reason for retaining the M grade for longer than the period allotted or for taking the makeup examination at a special time may petition an Associate Dean of Arts and Science for permission.

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The grade of I is given only under extenuating circumstances and only when a significant body of satisfactory work has been completed in a course. The I is not intended as a replacement for a failing grade, nor should it be assigned if a student simply misses the final examination. The grade of M is used for the latter purpose. The grade for a student who misses a final examination and whose work is also incomplete in other respects is reported as MI. The request for an I is generally initiated by the student but must be approved and assigned by the instructor. When assigning an Incomplete, the instructor specifies (a) a deadline by which the I must be resolved and replaced by a permanent grade and (b) a default course grade that counts the missing work as zero. The deadline may be no later than the end of the next regular semester. The Incomplete can be extended beyond the next semester only if the student’s Associate Dean determines that an extension is warranted. If the required work is submitted by the deadline for removing the Incomplete, the I will be replaced by the grade earned. If the work is not completed by the deadline, the default grade will become the permanent grade for the course.

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The grade for a student who misses a final examination and whose work is also incomplete in other respects is reported as \textit{Mf}. This grade may not be turned in without prior authorization by the dean. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Office of the Dean (311 Kirkland Hall) to request permission to take a makeup examination and to arrange for the submission of the missing work.
Hi Jonathan: Here is my CASP statement for Faculty Council regarding Temporary Grades.

I am pleased to report that CASP has voted unanimously in favor of passing the new wording and policy about A&S Temporary Grades that are contained in the proposed revised A & S policy on Temporary Grades. We on CASP have reviewed all the helpful documentation that Dean Bergquist provided about this matter to facilitate our decision. We find all the revisions to be reasonable and worthwhile, and we thank Dean Bergquist for her work.

Thank you,
Kathy Gaca, Chair of CASP
Associate Professor of Classics

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Subject: CASP affirmative response re Temporary Grades revision
From: "Gaca, Kathy L" <kathy.l.gaca@Vanderbilt.Edu>
Date: Thu, April 17, 2008 4:29 pm
To: francille.bergquist@vanderbilt.edu (more)
Priority: Normal
Options: View Full Header | View Printable Version

Dear Francille (cc Jonathan Bremer and Michael Muise): Greetings. I am happy to report that CASP has voted unanimously in favor of passing the new wording and policy about A&S Temporary Grades that are contained in the attached ProposedTemporaryGradesUGCat.doc.

We on CASP have all reviewed all the documentation that you provided. We find all the proposed revisions to be reasonable and worthwhile. Thank you very much, Francille, for your careful documentation and the clear explanation in your Memo (a copy of this memo is pasted below).

Would you please have one of your Administrative Assistants update the ProposedTemporaryGradesUGCat.doc so that all the preliminary editorial marks are removed? Then would you please have the clean copy version of this document forwarded to Jonathan, so that he has the needed documents to bring this item before Faculty Council at their next meeting?

Thank you very much,
Kathy Gaca, CASP Chair
MEMO FROM DEAN BERGQUIST

March 31, 2008

TO: Kathy Gaca, Chair, CASP

FROM: M. Francille Bergquist, Associate Dean

SUBJECT: Proposed changes to legislation regarding temporary grades

Over the past two years, an ad hoc committee consisting of an associate dean and a faculty member from the four undergraduate schools has been meeting to address inconsistencies in academic policies and procedures across the schools. In some cases, we have found that these inconsistencies were merely cosmetic and needed only a rewording to bring them into line. However, the issue of temporary grades (Incompletes, Missing a final exam, Missing the final with Incomplete work) was a bit more involved and requires review and approval by the appropriate committee and the faculty of each of the schools.

Attachment A is a copy of the current policy as written in the current Undergraduate Catalog, pages 170-171.

Attachment B contains the highlighted proposed changes to the current policy (the gray indicates portions to delete; the yellow indicates portions to add). There are several changes that are syntactical only but there are two very important substantive changes.

1) The instructor will decide if an Incomplete is warranted and will assign a default grade that will be given if the missing work is not turned in by a time determined by the instructor and the student. The absolute deadline is the end of the following semester.

2) The temporary grades will not be computed as "F" in the student's grade point average pending submission of the final grade. This is a major change for A&S since Peabody and Engineering have not counted these temporary grades as "F" all along.

One other significant change is to delete completely the notion of the grade of "E". It has not been used in some time and really does not accomplish anything that is not covered by the other temporary grades.
ATTACHMENT B

For new text for the 2008/2009 Undergraduate Catalog
Gray highlights indicate deletions; yellow indicate additions/changes

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A student who secures authorization for an absence at the proper time is obliged to take a makeup examination during the first full week of the next semester, provided the student is in residence. It is the student's responsibility to contact the Office of the Dean (311 Kirkland Hall) before the second day of classes to schedule the makeup. If the student is not in residence, the grade M must be removed by a makeup examination given within a maximum period of one year from the date of the missed examination and during one of the regular makeup examination periods. Otherwise, the M becomes an F by default. Any student who has sufficient reason for retaining the M grade for longer than the period allotted or for taking the makeup examination at a special time may petition the Administrative Committee Associate Dean for permission. The grade M is counted as an F in calculating the grade point average until it is replaced with a permanent grade.

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