



FACULTY SENATE

Student Affairs Committee

Minutes

January 12, 2023

8:30-10:00 a.m.

Microsoft Teams

Present: Matthew Carlson (CAS), Terry Delaney (CALS), Steve Gove (GSB), Denise Hersey (LIB), Nathan Kokinda (CNHS), Jennifer Prue (CESS), Sarah Twitchell (LCOM), Devika Singh (LCOM), Scott Van Keuren (CAS)

Absent: Thomas Borchert (Faculty Senate President), Krisan Geary (CEMS), Trish O’Kane (RSENr), Eva Stanford (SGA), Pending (GSS)

Guests: J. Dickinson, Veronika Carter

Co-Chair Jennifer Prue called the meeting to order at 8:30 am via Microsoft Teams.

1. **Minutes.** The minutes of the December SAC meeting are approved with minor edits.
2. **Incomplete Grades Policy. J. Dickinson & Veronika Cater.**

“Incomplete” Grades: Summary of Information and Areas for Discussion

Background:

As part of the Grade Change Audit initiated by the UVM Auditing office, questions arose regarding whether practices for assigning an “incomplete” (I or INC) grade are consistent across academic units and whether faculty are given any guidelines regarding when an incomplete can/should be offered. Veronika Carter and J. Dickinson have had several in-depth conversations with the Student Services Collaborative (representatives from college/school student services offices) and have gathered data on current administrative practices across units. These conversations have revealed some consistency of practice, as well as areas for improvement that could provide additional clarity for students, faculty and advisors.

While current rules and forms vary from unit to unit, all units agree that it is the student’s dean’s office (not the faculty member’s) who approves the incomplete, and that an incomplete may be refused for reasons including number of outstanding incompletes; less than a certain percentage of the work for the course being completed; the student having turned in the final assessment for the course.

Academic units noted a steady increase in the number of incomplete requests during the pandemic, which prompted the Registrar’s office to conduct an analysis of how successful students are in finishing courses for

which they received an I grade. Incomplete grade data analyzed between Fall 2017 and Spring 2022 with the exception of terms greatly impacted by the pandemic shows that on average 25% of all incomplete grades issued to undergraduate students lapsed, meaning the work was not completed. The average for graduate students was 30%. The significant number of incompletes that lapse substantiates the need for additional guidelines.

Lapsed Incompletes issued to UG students

Fall 2017 – 72/272 (26.5%)

Spring 2018 – 79/233 (33.9%)

Fall 2018 – 75/326 (23%)

Spring 2019 – 67/277 (24.2%)

Fall 2021 – 148/536 (27.6%)

Spring 2022 – 65/506 (12.9%)

A summary of relevant policies is provided as an appendix to this review of information. While *Incomplete grades* are defined in the undergraduate and graduate catalogues, only *medical incompletes* are formally defined as part of a University policy. Thus, we recommend that any changes to the incomplete policy should take the form of:

- expanding the catalogue language to offer better guidance on the use of the incomplete grade
- creating standard components for incomplete forms used in each unit throughout the institution and
- clarifying the need for and purpose of specific paperwork for medical incomplete and medical withdrawal from a single course, and consider requiring these only for full medical withdrawal

1. Expanding the catalogue language to offer better guidance

- a) As outlined in the definition of INC grades, the current allowable justifications for an incomplete request are: medical, academic, or personal tragedy. “Academic” justifications remain murky, but in practice Dean’s offices apply “extenuating circumstances.” The SSC recommended either removing “academic” from the list of reasons or replacing the three reasons with “extenuating medical, academic, or personal circumstances beyond the student’s control.” Language could also be added here to reinforce that the student’s Dean’s office decides whether the student meets these criteria; the faculty member decides whether to offer the incomplete option to the student after Dean’s office go-ahead.
- b) Complete list of suggested guidelines for issuing incompletes, restrictions on when an incomplete can be issued (e.g. not before the Withdraw deadline, not after the end of classes, not if the student has handed in the final course assessment. Recommendations (Dean’s offices could still offer exceptions):
 - Incompletes can only be offered after the Withdraw deadline has passed; Dean’s offices can still offer a late withdrawal from a course
 - Incompletes should be requested of the Dean’s office by the last day of classes, unless the extenuating circumstance is only arising after that point
 - Incompletes can only be offered if the student has a passing average for work completed thus far
 - Incompletes can only be offered if it is possible for the student to pass the course once the remaining work is completed
 - If the faculty member will be unavailable to receive the graded work within the period allowed for the incomplete, the chair of the offering department is responsible
 - An incomplete cannot be offered after the student has turned in a final assessment (exam, paper, project) for the course
 - An incomplete should only be offered if the student has already completed X percent of the course work. (recommendations range from 50-75%)

- A student cannot be issued a third incomplete when they have two (or more) incompletes outstanding from a previous semester. Exceptions are at the discretion of the Dean's office.

Additional questions for discussion:

2. Should faculty be allowed to refuse to grant an incomplete without justification? Can the student appeal to the Dean's office, e.g. if the faculty member is not available, going on sabbatical, etc.? Should they follow the existing [grade appeal process](#), or do we need to write a separate process?
 3. How to build in "leeway" in cases of unusual circumstances. All incompletes require extenuating circumstances for justification, so maybe another way of expressing that the circumstances need to be very unusual for the Dean's office to grant exceptions to stated guidelines.
- 2. Possible features for a "standard" Incomplete request form (bold items are not currently outlined on all example forms):**
1. Summary of the Incomplete policy.
 2. Course information
 3. Reason for incomplete request – corresponding to medical, academic, personal tragedy
 4. Summary of missing work (to be filled out by faculty member)
 5. Final date for submission of work
 6. **Minimum expectations for granting an incomplete (e.g. student has completed more than 50% of work; student has a passing grade in the course for completed work/student would be able to pass the course if missing work received a passing grade)**
 7. **Outline of factors considered by Dean's office in granting the incomplete, such as: individual circumstances; outstanding incompletes; record of finishing incompletes**
- 3. Clarify whether there is a need for and purpose of specific paperwork for medical incomplete and medical withdrawal from a single course, and consider requiring this paperwork only for full medical withdrawal. (see appendix for definitions)**
- Currently students seeking an incomplete for medical reasons, or a medical withdrawal from one course only, must complete the medical withdrawal paperwork, which goes to Center for Health and Wellbeing for review and signature.
 - Dean's offices generally agree that there is no advantage to this for individual course incompletes/withdrawals due to medical reasons, and it adds more paperwork and investment of time for students with medical issues, creating a further barrier for these students.

Appendix: Relevant policies regarding incompletes

R/O definition and policy, [INC Grade](#):

INC: This grade may be assigned when course work is not completed for reasons beyond the student's control. Incompletes require the approval of the student's college/school dean. The incomplete course requirement will be satisfied at the earliest possible date, but not longer than the beginning of the corresponding semester of the next academic year. In cases of laboratory assignments, the student must complete all work the first time that the laboratory experience is offered again. Instructors will fill out an electronic incomplete grade exception request to the student's college/school dean and include the reason for the incomplete as well as the completion date agreed to by the student and instructor. It is the student's responsibility to learn from the student's college/school dean whether the request has been approved, the expected date of completion, and, from the instructor, the nature of all outstanding requirements. Incompletes may be approved for the following reasons: medical, personal tragedy or academic.

Undergraduate Catalogue definition and policy, [INC Grade](#):

INC: This grade may be assigned when course work is not completed for reasons beyond the student's control. Incompletes require the approval of the student's college/school dean. The incomplete course requirement will be satisfied at the earliest possible date, but not longer than the beginning of the corresponding semester of the next academic year. In cases of laboratory assignments, the student must complete all work the first time that the laboratory experience is offered again.

Incompletes may be approved for the following reasons: medical, personal tragedy, or academic.

Grad Catalogue [INC grade](#) definition and policy:

INC: This grade may be assigned when course work is not completed for reasons beyond the student's control. Incompletes require the approval of the Graduate College dean. The incomplete course requirement will be satisfied at the earliest possible date, but not longer than the beginning of the corresponding semester of the next academic year. In cases of laboratory assignments, the student must complete all work the first time that the laboratory experience is offered again. Instructors will fill out an electronic incomplete grade exception request to the Graduate College dean and include the reason for the incomplete as well as the completion date agreed to by the student and instructor. It is the student's responsibility to learn from the Graduate College dean whether the request has been approved, the expected date of completion, and, from the instructor, the nature of all outstanding requirements.

Incompletes may be approved for the following reasons: medical, personal tragedy or academic.

Definition of [Medical Incomplete](#):

A standard incomplete that indicates a medical rationale for coursework that cannot be completed by the end of the current semester. Incompletes require the approval Page 2 of 6 [of the Medical Incomplete Form] of the student's college/school dean, and require coursework to be completed within a set timeframe. See University Catalog for standard incomplete parameters.

Medical incomplete policy is part of the [Medical Withdrawal policy](#):

[S]tudents who voluntarily seek a grade of Incomplete for identified courses after the start of a given semester because of a physical or mental health condition must contact the Student Services Office within the Dean's Office of their School or College to discuss their intention to take a Medical Incomplete. The Dean's Office of

the Graduate School, rather than the Dean's Office of the student's academic unit, is the appropriate contact for Graduate Students.

The SAC discussed the above summary (for a complete transcript please e-mail the Faculty Senate Office). This document will be distributed again for the February meeting so that the committee can make continued changes and present for a vote at the March SAC meeting.

3. SAC Spring 2023

- Invite Charles Holmes-Hope new Director of Residential Life to future meeting.
- Preventative and proactive health topics.
- Housing crisis and housing availability for students.
- Residential Learning Committees update.

4. New / Old Business. There was no old business or new business discussed at this meeting.

The SAC was adjourned at 10:00 a.m. The next meeting of the SAC will be on February 2, 2022, at 8:30am on Microsoft Teams.