

In this document are three academic policies ready for review and voting by the Faculty Senate:

#### **A.P.4.2.1 - Definitions of Degree Components**

This policy has been slightly updated based on conversation in the February Faculty Senate meeting. The proposed change affects **only** concentrations (not certificates, minors, or other degree elements). The graduate division has indicated that they wish the 12 unique credits policy to remain as written for graduate programs, so this change only pertains to undergraduate degrees.

#### **AP.3.3 and related policies**

This policy has been reviewed and approved by the Graduate Council and the Policy Management Group. The main changes to this policy are:

- The removal of the B- as a grade in the graduate grading scale.
- The addition of a Satisfactory Withdrawal (SW) grade notation.
- The removal of the Never Attended (NA) option for grading (this change was requested by the registrar and approved by the aforementioned bodies).

Grade Change: There is extensive documentation of the rationale for the removal of the B- provided before the policy revisions below, but the tl;dr version is that the change to 'good standing' from grade-based to GPA-based (AP.6.6) means that receiving a B- may place a student on probation (or dismissal) despite indications that it is a passing grade elsewhere. Data from the Grading Task Force show that it is rarely used in practice, so the effects should be minimal. The kind folks who work on the catalog have indicated they are willing to set up a streamlined process for programs to update any program-level references to B-grades as minimum required or acceptable for maintaining good standing (such updates need not be in place for next year's catalog). The B- will still be accepted for transfer credit (both internally and externally).

SW: Allows students to withdraw from a program but not receive a failing grade on otherwise satisfactory work they have contributed toward a dissertation, thesis, or project that is graded on the NC-IP-S scheme.

**AP.8 Non-Degree Academic Credentials (NEW policy section in the catalog).**

This policy comes from the Provost's office and specifies policies and requirements for non-degree credentials (e.g. certificates offered by Continuing Education and micro-credentials developed by academic programs). The policies aim to ensure quality standards for offerings outside of our regular academic review and assessment procedures. This policy has also been reviewed and endorsed by the Policy Management Group.

## Rationale

Developing dual degree programs (at the undergraduate level specifically) would have to add many more additional credits if the current catalog language focuses on concentrations across degrees rather than within degrees. The updated version of this policy makes it clear that concentration courses overlapping between two separate degree programs is fine as long as each degree program has at least 18 credits that are unique to that degree program, but that that you can't have two concentrations in the same major that are overlapping so much that there aren't 12 unique credits for each concentration (within that major).

## Proposed

### AP.4.2.1 Definitions of Degree Components

- **Concentration:** A second-order component of a degree program. At the undergraduate level, concentrations are approved by the Undergraduate Council and consist of at least 12 hours not applied to any other concentration in the same degree program or major. At the graduate level, concentrations are approved by the Graduate Council and consist of at least 12 hours that are not applied to any other George Mason concentration (whether in the same degree program or in a different degree program).

## Original

- **Concentration:** A second-order component of a degree program. A concentration consists of at least 12 hours that are not applied to any other concentration. Concentrations are approved by the Undergraduate Council at the undergraduate level or by the Graduate Council at the graduate level.

## PMG Cover Sheet

### Policy name and number: Graduate Grading Policy Revisions

- AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit)
- AP.1.5.9 Effects of Non-Attendance without Dropping or Withdrawing for Graduate Students
- AP.3.2 Graduate Grading
- AP.3.2.1 Graduate Grading Scales
- AP.3.3 Additional Grade Notations
- AP.3.9.1 Pending Grade Appeal for Students in Academic Difficulty

### Related Policies

- AP.1.3.1 Course Prerequisites, Corequisites
- AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course
- AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates
- AP.6.8.4.3 Timeline Requirements (for graduate Bridge programs)

**Responsible office or committee:** Graduate Division, Office of the Provost

### Type of policy:

- University Catalog
- University Policy
- Faculty Handbook
- Code of Student Conduct
- Other policy or guidelines (e.g., graduate hiring guidelines, etc.)

### University Policy Type (if a numbered University Policy)

- Academic Policies
- Computing
- Financial
- General Policies
- Human Resources
- Research
- Risk, Safety, & Resilience
- Student Policies

### Policy proposal type:

- New policy
- Substantial revision
- Minor revision
- Renewal with no changes
- Rescind policy

**Emergency approval requested:**

- Yes (must include compelling reason in the “why” paragraph below)  
 No

If you are submitting a revised policy, you should submit them with changes tracked in a Microsoft Word document.

**Why is this policy or revision being proposed?**

The Faculty Senate Graduate Grading Task Force is currently being formed and is charged with examining graduate grading comprehensively once it convenes. In the meantime, changes to AP.6.6 related to Academic Standing for graduate students were approved in September 2025 and will go into effect in the 2026-27 catalog. Under these changes, graduate degree-seeking and non-degree status students shall be considered on Academic Probation if they receive a term GPA below 3.00 and/or if they receive a grade notation of NC or NA in an academic term. Inability to maintain a minimum 3.00 term GPA and/or obtaining NC or NA grade notation for two academic terms of enrollment would result in eligibility for termination beginning in the 2026-27 academic year. The goal of these proposed changes is to address these specific issues now; the Faculty Senate Graduate Grading Task Force will build on this work going forward.

Currently, B- on the graduate grading scale is considered a satisfactory/passing grade and is calculated at 2.67 quality points. Concerns have been raised that with the approved change to the graduate academic standing policy, students who receive what are considered satisfactory grades may be put on academic probation or be terminated from their program. For reference, the B- grade is used infrequently (1.6% of all graduate grades from fall 2018 through summer 2025).

In certain graduate courses graded solely on an S/NC basis, the available grading options are not adequate for all circumstances and may inadvertently result in Academic Probation when a student resigns from a program or selects an alternative degree completion pathway (e.g., chooses to complete a capstone course rather than a thesis).

The proposed changes would remove B- from the graduate grading scale. Academic probation and termination would remain possible outcomes; however, removing the B- creates consistency between the grading scale and the GPA thresholds, helping ensure that satisfactory performance is reflected appropriately in GPA calculations. The proposed revisions would also introduce a new grade (satisfactory withdrawal, SW) to address the second issue.

The suggested edits to AP.1 clarify and reflect policies that have been updated elsewhere in the University Catalog. The suggested edits to AP.3.9.1 clarify the impact of a pending grade appeal for graduate students as it relates to the updated academic standing policy.

**Who has been involved or consulted with in the creation/revision of this policy already?**

Graduate Division, Office of University Registrar, Graduate Council, Faculty Senate Academic Policies Committee, Policy Management Group.

**Questions and feedback raised in and after PMG** (to be added after PMG review):

## **Signature Routing Form**

(to be created by PMG co-chairs for numbered University Policies only)

### **Reviewers & date of review:**

- **Policy Management Group**
- **Graduate Council**
- **Faculty Senate**
- **University Counsel**
- **Compliance and Ethics**

### **Senior approving officials- signatures and dates**

- **Signature 1**
- **Signature 2**

# PROPOSED GRADUATE GRADING POLICY REVISIONS FEBRUARY 2026

## AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit)

Courses normally graded as satisfactory/no credit (S/NC) are annotated in the catalog, however, students may elect to take credit without grade points. Undergraduates may take up to 6 credits to be graded S/NC; this option applies only to electives outside the field of the major, concentration, minor, general education requirement, or certificate program. Graduate students may elect the S/NC grade option for courses not normally graded as S/NC only for courses that do not apply to their degree or certificate requirements. For more information, see [AP.3.3 Additional Grade Notations](#).

## AP.1.5.9 Effects of Non-Attendance without Dropping or Withdrawing for Graduate Students

Graduate students who stop attending classes without dropping or withdrawing should receive a grade of F in those courses.

## AP.3.2 Graduate Grading

The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

Grade	Quality Points	Graduate Courses
A+	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A-	3.67	Satisfactory/Passing
B+	3.33	Satisfactory/Passing
B	3.00	Satisfactory/Passing

C	2.00	Unsatisfactory/Passing
F	0.00	Unsatisfactory/Failing

Graduate students must have a minimum GPA of 3.00 in their degree program(s) in order to graduate from the program(s).

### **AP.3.2.1 Graduate Grading Scales**

Grading scales are indicated on each course. For information on graduate academic standing, see AP.6.6. Scales are listed below and indicate possible grades which may be earned within each:

- Graduate Regular: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB
- Graduate Special: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB, S, SW, NC, IP
- Satisfactory/No Credit: allows for S, NC, SW, AB, IN, IP

### **AP.3.3 Additional Undergraduate and Graduate Grade Notations**

#### **Satisfactory/No Credit (S/NC)**

An S grade reflects satisfactory work that completes course requirements (C or better for undergraduate students, B or better for graduate students); otherwise, the student receives no credit (NC). S and NC have no effect on the student's GPA. Courses normally graded S/NC are annotated in the catalog. Students may also individually elect to take credit without a grade with restriction. For more information, see [AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points \(Satisfactory/No Credit\)](#). For graduate courses that extend beyond one term, S/NC courses have an additional grading option of SW (Satisfactory Withdrawal).

#### **Satisfactory Withdrawal (SW)**

An SW grade is available only for graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, where the graduate student is officially resigning from the graduate program, resigning and transferring to a lower-level program, or electing an alternative program option for completing a degree or certificate. A final grade of SW does not count toward minimum

program requirements and has no effect on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or any previous term grade of NC for the course.

### **Incomplete (IN)**

This grade may be given to students who are passing a course, but who may be unable to complete scheduled coursework for a cause beyond reasonable control. Unless the faculty member has specified an earlier deadline, the student must then complete all the requirements by the end of the 9th week of the next term, not including summer, and the instructor must turn in the final grade by the end of the 10th week. Additional time may be granted upon approval of an *Incomplete Extension* form. Faculty members who choose to require an earlier incomplete deadline will be required to file an *Incomplete Grade Contract* with the local academic unit's office, detailing the work that remains to be done, the general reason for the incomplete, and the student's grade at the point of receiving the incomplete. Students who have filed their intent to graduate have only six weeks from the date of degree conferral to resolve any incomplete grades and have the final grades recorded by the University Registrar's office.

The IN grade has no effect on the GPA and remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is submitted by the instructor. If the work has not been completed and no final grade has been submitted by the established deadline, the grade of IN is changed by the University Registrar's office to the Incomplete Final Grade recorded at the time of the IN grade designation.

### **Incomplete, extended (IX)**

IX is given by the Office of the University Registrar after receiving an Incomplete Extension form signed by the instructor and the appropriate dean. The extension gives students additional time to complete work as specified by the instructor. The final grade must be submitted to the University Registrar's office before the beginning of the final exam period for the semester in which the IN grade was originally due. A grade of IX affects the academic record in the same way as does a grade of IN.

### **In Progress (IP)**

This grade may be given in selected courses, including graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships. IP may also be used when the work of BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, ECON 495 RS: Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core), or if a course that is graded S/NC or A/B/C/NC is not completed within one semester. IP has no effect on the GPA. With the exception of the formerly-mentioned courses, IP remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned. An IP in BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, or ECON 495 RS:

Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core) not changed to a final grade by the last day of classes of the next term, not including summer, is changed by the Office of the University Registrar to an F.

IP grades will be awarded in graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, until successful completion of the requirements. Upon successful completion, the final grade of S will be assigned and IP grades for all prior terms of the course will change to the grade of S. If a student voluntarily resigns from a graduate academic program (See AP.6.4.4), voluntarily resigns and transfers to a lower-level graduate degree or certificate program (See AP.6.4.4.1), or elects, with program permission, an alternative option for completing a degree or certificate, a grade of SW will be assigned for the last term of course enrollment and any prior terms with an IP grade will be changed to SW. Any prior term with an NC grade will remain unchanged.

If progress is unsatisfactory in a term, a student is terminated, or permanently dismissed, a grade of NC will be assigned at the end of that term. In the case of termination, any prior terms will also receive an NC grade. In the case of resignation or resignation and transfer, a grade of SW will be assigned for the term of resignation and any prior terms with an IP grade. A grade of SW has no impact on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or prior terms that were graded NC.

### **Absent with Permission (AB)**

A student who has received permission from the academic dean or director to be absent from a final exam for cause beyond reasonable control may receive a temporary grade of AB. A rescheduled exam must be administered within 10 business days of the original exam date, or the AB will automatically become an F. Final determination of academic status is not complete while the AB remains on the transcript.

### **Special Provision (SP)**

The grade of SP may be given by a dean to students who are unable to complete the course requirements because of extraordinary long-term circumstances, such as major illness or military deployment. SP has no effect on the GPA and remains on the transcript until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned.

### **AP.3.9.1 Pending Grade Appeal for Students at Risk of Graduate Academic Suspension or Termination**

An undergraduate student may request a delay from the dean in imposing academic suspension because of a pending grade appeal that could change the student's status. An approved delay allows the student to register.

If the grade appeal is successful, the official transcript is corrected and the student continues in classes as a student in good academic standing, on probation, or on warning. If the grade appeal is not successful, the student is required to stop attending all classes immediately. No record of registration for the academic period appears on a transcript and the student receives the appropriate refund as of the decision date.

A graduate student with a pending academic exception to termination submission may request that the decision be delayed until after the grade appeal is resolved if that original grade contributed towards the student becoming eligible for termination. The grade appeal must have been submitted by the time the request is made. If the grade appeal is successful, the academic exception to termination request is closed, the official transcript is corrected, and the student continues in their former graduate academic standing. If the grade appeal is not successful, the academic exception to termination request will resume immediately.

## **RELATED POLICY UPDATES**

### **AP.1.3.1 Course Prerequisites, Corequisites**

Course prerequisites or corequisites state requirements for student entry into courses and reflect necessary preparation for attempting the course. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of these as stated in the catalog and to have taken prerequisites recently enough to be of value. The administrator of the academic unit in which the course is taught or the instructor of the course may summarily drop students who have enrolled in a course for which they have not met the prerequisites (required or recommended). Graduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of B or better; undergraduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of C or better. Individual programs may have higher standards. Questions should be addressed to the local academic unit or course instructor.

### **AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course**

Some undergraduate and graduate level courses are annotated in the catalog as "repeatable for credit." These are courses which students may repeat and receive additional credit for each time the course is taken. The maximum number of credits is specified in each course's description. Special topics and independent study courses are

examples. All grades and credits earned are included in the calculation of the student's GPA up to the maximum allowable credits. In cases where the student has exceeded allowable credits in a repeatable class, the grade and credits of the earliest registration of the class for which credit was earned will not be included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA but will remain on the transcript. Effective July 1, 2011, Federal Regulations no longer allow federal student aid funds to apply to courses that a student has already taken twice with a passing grade. This limitation does not include courses that are "repeatable for credit," as described above. Students should contact the [Office of Student Financial Aid](#) to determine how repeated coursework would affect their financial aid eligibility.

Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses. All courses taken, and their grades, remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA will not change the academic standing for the earlier semester. A grade in a George Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

### **At the Undergraduate Level**

Undergraduate students (degree-seeking or non-degree) may repeat undergraduate courses that are not repeatable for credit. There is a limit of three graded attempts for all courses. Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses or restrict students from repeating high-demand courses for the purpose of improving a satisfactory grade. Academic programs may restrict repeats of certain courses by students in their major. Excessive repeats may result in termination from the major. (See [AP 5.2.4 Termination from the Major.](#)) Appeals to this policy begin with the student's academic advisor. The grade received in a repeated course will replace the earlier grade in the calculation of the GPA, even if the more recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. All courses taken and their grades remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the GPA will not change the academic standing or dean's list notations for the earlier semester. A grade in a Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

### **At the Graduate Level**

Graduate students who have earned a satisfactory grade in a course that is not repeatable for credit, as noted in the catalog, are not permitted to repeat the course without approval from the dean or director of the college/school and the Graduate Division. Grades of B or

higher are considered satisfactory unless the academic program specifies a higher minimum satisfactory grade in their program requirements as noted in the catalog. Students must obtain permission from their academic program to repeat a course that is listed in the catalog as not repeatable for credit and in which they have earned an unsatisfactory grade. Each program establishes criteria for granting such permission.

When a course is repeated by a graduate student, the last grade received will replace any earlier grade in the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA, even if the most recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. When a course is repeated, the grades of all credits attempted count towards eligibility for academic warning, probation, termination, or dismissal. Only one grade per course may apply towards a conferred graduate degree; however, the transcript will show grades for all courses attempted. Any earlier attempts of a course listed as not repeatable for credit are excluded from graduate cumulative GPA calculation.

#### **AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates**

Courses numbered 700 and above are closed to undergraduates. Undergraduates in degree programs may enroll in graduate-level courses 500 to 699 only with written permission, which must be obtained before registration. To enroll in graduate courses for credit applicable to an undergraduate degree, under this policy, undergraduates must have completed all course prerequisites. Enrollment in the graduate course is at the discretion of the course instructor and students must submit the appropriate form.

This policy is not applicable, and written permission is waived for undergraduate students admitted to George Mason combined bachelor's/accelerated master's programs (see [AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees](#)). Undergraduates enrolled in graduate courses are eligible to receive only those letter grades applicable to graduate grading. For more information, [AP.3 Grading](#). A minimum grade of B in a graduate course is required to apply graduate credit towards a George Mason graduate degree or certificate. See [AP.6.5 Previously Earned Graduate Credit](#) for further information.

To enroll in graduate courses for credit that are not applicable to an undergraduate degree and are held in reserve to apply later toward a graduate degree, undergraduates must obtain approval through the appropriate [form](#) for reserve graduate credit. Approval is given only to George Mason seniors within 15 credits of completing undergraduate study who have successfully completed all course prerequisites. In addition, this privilege is normally extended only to seniors who have completed at least 12 credits at the university, have a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or better, and have a major in the program offering the course. Approval for reserve graduate credit is limited to 6 credits and does not imply approval for admission into a George Mason graduate program or that credit earned will be accepted at another graduate school.

# PROPOSED GRADUATE GRADING POLICY REVISIONS

## [TRACKED CHANGES]

### FEBRUARY 2026

#### AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit)

Courses normally graded as satisfactory/no credit (S/NC) are annotated in the catalog, however, students may elect to take credit without grade points. Undergraduates may take up to 6 credits to be graded S/NC; this option applies only to electives outside the field of the major, concentration, minor, general education requirement, or certificate program. Graduate students may elect the S/NC grade option [for courses not normally graded as S/NC](#) only for courses that do not apply to ~~the~~[their](#) degree or certificate requirements. For more information, see [AP.3.3 Additional Grade Notations](#).

#### AP.1.5.9 Effects of Non-Attendance without Dropping or Withdrawing for Graduate Students

Graduate students who stop ~~or do not attend~~[attending](#) classes without dropping or withdrawing should receive a grade of F in those courses.-

#### AP.3.2 Graduate Grading

The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

Grade	Quality Points	Graduate Courses
A+	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A	4.00	Satisfactory/Passing
A-	3.67	Satisfactory/Passing
B+	3.33	Satisfactory/Passing

B	3.00	Satisfactory/Passing
B-	2.6 7	Satisfactory <sup>†</sup> /Passing
C	2.00	Unsatisfactory/Passing
F	0.00	Unsatisfactory/Failing

### Grading (Graduate)

<sup>†</sup>Although a B- is a satisfactory grade for a course, Graduate students must ~~maintain~~ have a minimum GPA of 3.00 ~~average~~ in their degree program ~~and present a 3.00 GPA on(s) in order to graduate from~~ the ~~courses listed on the graduation application program(s)~~.

#### AP.3.2.1 Graduate Grading Scales

Grading scales are indicated on each ~~specific~~ course. [For information on graduate academic standing, see AP.6.6.](#) Scales are listed below and indicate possible grades which may be earned within each:

- 1. Graduate Regular: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB
- 2. Graduate Special: allows for all grades listed above in AP.3.2 as well as IN, AB, S, [SW](#), NC, IP
- 3. Satisfactory/No Credit: allows for S, NC, [SW](#), AB, IN, IP

#### AP.3.3 Additional [Undergraduate and Graduate](#) Grade Notations

##### Satisfactory/No Credit (S/NC)

An S grade reflects satisfactory work [that completes course requirements](#) (C or better for undergraduate students, B- or better for graduate students); otherwise, the student receives no credit (NC). S and NC have no effect on the student's GPA. ~~Entire courses~~ [Courses](#) normally graded S/NC are annotated in the catalog, ~~and include doctoral dissertation courses 998 and 999.~~ Students may also individually elect to take credit without [a grade](#); with restriction. For more information, see [AP.1.4.6 Enrolling for Credit](#)

Without Grade Points (Satisfactory/No Credit). For graduate courses that extend beyond one term, S/NC courses have an additional grading option of SW (Satisfactory Withdrawal).

### **Satisfactory Withdrawal (SW)**

An SW grade is available only for graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, where the graduate student is officially resigning from the graduate program, resigning and transferring to a lower-level program, or electing an alternative program option for completing a degree or certificate. A final grade of SW does not count toward minimum program requirements and has no effect on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or any previous term grade of NC for the course.

### **Incomplete (IN)**

This grade may be given to students who are passing a course, but who may be unable to complete scheduled coursework for a cause beyond reasonable control. Unless the faculty member has specified an earlier deadline, the student must then complete all the requirements by the end of the ~~ninth~~<sup>9th</sup> week of the next ~~semester~~<sup>term</sup>, not including summer~~-term~~, and the instructor must turn in the final grade by the end of the 10th week. Additional time may be granted upon approval of an *Incomplete Extension* form. Faculty members who choose to require an earlier incomplete deadline will be required to file an *Incomplete Grade Contract* with the local academic unit's office, detailing the work that remains to be done, the general reason for the incomplete, and the student's grade at the point of receiving the incomplete. Students who have filed their intent to graduate have only six weeks from the date of degree conferral to resolve any incomplete grades and have the final grades recorded by the University Registrar's office.

The IN grade has no effect on the GPA and remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is submitted by the instructor. If the work has not been completed and no final grade has been submitted by the established deadline, the grade of IN is changed by the University Registrar's office to the Incomplete Final Grade recorded at the time of the IN grade designation.

### **Incomplete, extended (IX)**

IX is given by the Office of the University Registrar after receiving an Incomplete Extension form signed by the instructor and the appropriate dean. The extension gives students additional time to complete work; ~~the amount of time is as~~ specified by the instructor. The final grade must be submitted to the University Registrar's office before the beginning of

the final exam period for the semester in which the IN grade was originally due. A grade of IX affects the academic record in the same way as does a grade of IN.

### **In Progress (IP)**

This grade may be given in selected courses, including graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships. IP may also be used when the work of BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, ECON 495 RS: Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core), or if a course that is graded S/NC or A/B/C/NC is not completed within one semester. IP has no effect on the GPA. With the exception of the formerly-mentioned courses, IP remains on the record until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned. An IP in BIS 490 RS: Senior Project (Mason Core), CS 112 Introduction to Computer Programming (Mason Core), CS 211 Object-Oriented Programming, or ECON 495 RS: Honors Thesis in Economics (Mason Core) not changed to a final grade by the last day of classes of the next term, not including summer, is changed by the Office of the University Registrar to an F. ~~IP grades will also be awarded in courses numbered 799, 998 and 999 until successful completion, and then they will be changed to S/NC. Upon successful completion of 799, 998 or 999 and submission of the final grade, grades for all prior sections will be changed to S/NC.~~

~~IP grades will be awarded in graduate courses identified as S/NC that extend beyond one term, such as graduate theses, dissertations, practicums, and internships, until successful completion of the requirements. Upon successful completion, the final grade of S will be assigned and IP grades for all prior terms of the course will change to the grade of S. If a student voluntarily resigns from a graduate academic program (See AP.6.4.4), voluntarily resigns and transfers to a lower-level graduate degree or certificate program (See AP.6.4.4.1), or elects, with program permission, an alternative option for completing a degree or certificate, a grade of SW will be assigned for the last term of course enrollment and any prior terms with an IP grade will be changed to SW. Any prior term with an NC grade will remain unchanged.~~

~~If progress is unsatisfactory in a term, a student is terminated, or permanently dismissed, a grade of NC will be assigned at the end of that term. In the case of termination, any prior terms will also receive an NC grade. In the case of resignation or resignation and transfer, a grade of SW will be assigned for the term of resignation and any prior terms with an IP grade. A grade of SW has no impact on the student's GPA, graduate academic standing, or prior terms that were graded NC.~~

### **Absent with Permission (AB)**

A student who has received permission from the academic dean or director to be absent from a final exam for cause beyond reasonable control may receive a temporary grade of AB. A rescheduled exam must be administered within 10 business days of the original exam date, or the AB will automatically become an F. Final determination of academic status is not complete while the AB remains on the transcript.

### **Special Provision (SP)**

The grade of SP may be given by a dean to students who are unable to complete the course requirements because of extraordinary long-term circumstances, such as major illness or military deployment. SP has no effect on the GPA and remains on the transcript until the work is completed and a final grade is assigned.

### **Never Attended (NA)**

~~The grade of NA (Never Attended) is assigned to a student who is enrolled in a course but has never attended. NA means that the instructor has no evidence that the student ever attended class and no work was ever submitted. The NA will appear on the transcript and count toward attempted hours. The NA has no effect on the GPA. There may be financial aid implications for non-attendance. Tuition is not refunded.~~

### **AP.3.9.1 Pending Grade Appeal for Students [at Risk of Graduate Academic Suspension or Termination](#)**

~~An undergraduate~~ student may request a delay from the dean in imposing academic suspension because of a pending grade appeal that could change the student's status. An approved delay allows the student to register.

If the grade appeal is successful, the official transcript is corrected and the student continues in classes as a student in good academic standing, on probation, or on warning. If the grade appeal is not successful, the student is required to stop attending all classes immediately. No record of registration for the academic period appears on a transcript and the student receives the appropriate refund as of the decision date.

~~A graduate student with a pending academic exception to termination submission, may request that the decision be delayed until after the grade appeal is resolved if that original grade contributed towards the student becoming eligible for termination. The grade appeal must have been submitted by the time the request is made. If the grade appeal is~~

[successful, the academic exception to termination request is closed, the official transcript is corrected, and the student continues in their former graduate academic standing. If the grade appeal is not successful, the academic exception to termination request will resume immediately.](#)

## RELATED POLICIES

### AP.1.3.1 Course Prerequisites, Corequisites

Course prerequisites or corequisites state requirements for student entry into courses and reflect necessary preparation for attempting the course. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of these as stated in the catalog and to have taken prerequisites recently enough to be of value. The administrator of the academic unit in which the course is taught or the instructor of the course may summarily drop students who have enrolled in a course for which they have not met the prerequisites (required or recommended). Graduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of B- or better; undergraduate course prerequisites are normally met with a grade of C or better. Individual programs may have higher standards. Questions should be addressed to the local academic unit or course instructor.

### AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course

Some undergraduate and graduate level courses are annotated in the catalog as "repeatable for credit." These are courses which students may repeat and receive additional credit for each time the course is taken. The maximum number of credits is specified in each course's description. Special topics and independent study courses are examples. All grades and credits earned are included in the calculation of the student's GPA up to the maximum allowable credits. In cases where the student has exceeded allowable credits in a repeatable class, the grade and credits of the earliest registration of the class for which credit was earned will not be included in the calculation of the cumulative GPA but will remain on the transcript. Effective July 1, 2011, Federal Regulations no longer allow federal student aid funds to apply to courses that a student has already taken twice with a passing grade. This limitation does not include courses that are "repeatable for credit," as described above. Students should contact the [Office of](#)

Student Financial Aid to determine how repeated coursework would affect their financial aid eligibility.

Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses. All courses taken, and their grades, remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA will not change the academic standing for the earlier semester. A grade in a [George](#) Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

### **At the Undergraduate Level**

Undergraduate students (degree-seeking or non-degree) may repeat undergraduate courses that are not repeatable for credit. There is a limit of three graded attempts for all courses. Academic programs may have more restrictive limits. A W does not count as a graded attempt. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. Academic programs may restrict all students from repeating certain courses or restrict students from repeating high-demand courses for the purpose of improving a satisfactory grade. Academic programs may restrict repeats of certain courses by students in their major. Excessive repeats may result in termination from the major. (See [AP 5.2.4 Termination from the Major.](#)) Appeals to this policy begin with the student's academic advisor. The grade received in a repeated course will replace the earlier grade in the calculation of the GPA, even if the more recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. All courses taken and their grades remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades and credits from the calculation of the GPA will not change the academic standing or dean's list notations for the earlier semester. A grade in a Mason course will not be excluded from the GPA based on taking an equivalent course at another university.

### **At the Graduate Level**

Graduate students who have earned a satisfactory grade in a course that is not repeatable for credit, as noted in the catalog, are not permitted to repeat the course without approval from the dean or director of the [College/college/School/school](#) and the Graduate Division. Grades of B- ~~and or~~ higher are considered satisfactory unless the academic program

specifies a higher minimum satisfactory grade in their program requirements as noted in the catalog. Students must obtain permission from their academic program to repeat a course that is listed in the catalog as not repeatable for credit and in which they have earned an unsatisfactory grade. Each [unit-program](#) establishes criteria for granting such permission.

When a course is repeated by a graduate student, the last grade received will replace any earlier grade in the calculation of the graduate cumulative GPA, even if the most recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not earned. When a course is repeated, the grades of all credits attempted count towards eligibility for academic warning, probation, termination, or dismissal. Only one grade per course may apply towards a conferred graduate degree; however, the transcript will show grades for all courses attempted. Any earlier attempts of a course listed as not repeatable for credit are excluded from graduate cumulative GPA calculation.

#### **AP.1.4.4 Graduate Course Enrollment by Undergraduates**

Courses numbered 700 and above are closed to undergraduates. Undergraduates in degree programs may enroll in graduate-level courses 500 to 699 only with written permission, which must be obtained before registration. To enroll in graduate courses for credit applicable to an undergraduate degree, under this policy, undergraduates must have completed all course prerequisites. Enrollment in the graduate course is at the discretion of the course instructor and students must submit the appropriate form.

This policy is not applicable, and written permission is waived for undergraduate students admitted to George Mason combined bachelor's/accelerated master's programs ([see: Such students are referred to AP.6.7 Bachelor's/Accelerated Master's Degrees](#)).

Undergraduates enrolled in graduate courses are eligible to receive only those letter grades applicable to graduate grading. For more information, [AP.3- Grading](#). A minimum grade of B- in a graduate course is required to apply graduate credit towards a George Mason graduate degree or certificate. See [AP.6.5.2 Transfer of Credits](#) [AP.6.5 Previously Earned Graduate Credit](#) for further information.

To enroll in graduate courses for credit that are not applicable to an undergraduate degree and are held in reserve to apply later toward a graduate degree, undergraduates must obtain approval through the appropriate [form](#) for reserve graduate credit. Approval is given only to George Mason seniors within 15 credits of completing undergraduate study who have successfully completed all course prerequisites. In addition, this privilege is normally

extended only to seniors who have completed at least 12 credits at the university, have a cumulative GPA of 3.00 or better, and have a major in the [local academic unit \(LAU\) program](#) offering the course. Approval for reserve graduate credit is limited to 6 credits and does not imply approval for admission into a George Mason graduate program or that credit earned will be accepted at another graduate school.

#### **AP.6.8.4.3 Timeline Requirements**

Bridge program students must [apply to graduate](#) and have their certificate conferred in the semester during which their final certificate requirements are fulfilled in accordance with all deadlines. Any certificate courses that the student plans to apply towards the Master's component must be completed by the semester or term of graduation specified on their transition form for the bridge program, be graded B- or better, and be aligned with the respective Master's degree program requirements. Students in bridge programs must submit their transition form to their graduate academic affairs office by the deadline to apply to graduate from their certificate program. Students must enroll in the related Master's program in the academic semester or summer session that immediately follows the term of certificate program conferral. Changes to the progression timeline must be approved by the graduate program director. Students must also adhere to all timelines specified in [AP.6.5](#), [AP.6.8.2](#), and [AP.6.9.2](#). International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the [Office of International Programs and Services](#) for information.

Once matriculated into the Master's program, all students must continue to adhere to all applicable graduate academic policies as detailed in the University Catalog.

#### **Certificate Conferral**

Students who successfully complete all program requirements within [university time limits](#) will have their certificate conferred for the semester in which they have met all certificate requirements and after completing their application for graduation. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the [Office of International Programs and Services](#) for information.

#### **Master's Conferral**

Students who have successfully completed all degree requirements within the university time limits will have their Master's conferred after completing their application for graduate. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have more restrictive time limits; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information.

## **AP.8 - Rationale**

George Mason University has been offering various forms of non-degree credentials, including digital badges, micro-credentials, and stackable certificates, for several years through academic units and the Office of Continuing and Professional Education. AP.8 formalizes these existing practices into a comprehensive institutional policy that ensures compliance with SACSCOC accreditation standards and SCHEV guidance, both of which require institutions to establish clear governance structures, transparent student information, and quality assurance processes for all credential types.

This policy provides necessary clarity by distinguishing between credit-bearing credentials (which are subject to full accreditation standards and appear on transcripts) and noncredit credentials (which are issued as digital badges). It establishes faculty qualifications and assessment requirements appropriate to each credential type, clarifies approval pathways through program, college, and university governance, and defines roles and responsibilities across academic units, CPE, the Provost's Office, and the Registrar. AP.8 is intended to position the university to continue expanding these focused learning pathways as opportunity permits, while maintaining academic quality and accountability.

## AP.8 Non-Degree Academic Credentials

### Policy Scope

This policy governs credit-bearing and noncredit academic credentials developed and awarded by George Mason University academic units and/or Office of Continuing and Professional Education (CPE). It does not apply to degrees, minors, concentrations, or academic certificates governed under AP.5 and AP.6.

### Definition

Non-degree conferring credentials (NDCs) are awarded for completing academic programs that teach focused knowledge or skills competencies. These credentials comprise more than a single course but less content than a full degree; credentials may be composed of for-credit or not-for-credit classes and structured learning experiences. The academic quality standards for non-degree credentials align with George Mason's standards for other institutional credentials, with rigor appropriate to each credential type and purpose, as defined in this policy.

### AP.8.1 Categories of Non-Degree Credentials

George Mason University offers NDCs in two categories: credit-bearing and non-credit. All approved credentials must clearly publish eligibility requirements, completion criteria, credit/noncredit status, transcript eligibility, stackable pathways, and whether credits may transfer to other institutions in program materials and institutional registries per accreditation transparency requirements.

#### AP.8.1.1 Credit-Bearing Academic Credentials

Credit-bearing credentials are earned upon the completion of specified university credit-bearing courses.

Credit Requirements: Credit-bearing credentials range from requiring 3 to 15 credits and must be completable in two semesters or less. Credentials must use a specified curriculum (not menu-style course options) within existing academic program discipline areas with available faculty resources and may not duplicate names of existing degree or certificate programs.

Approval: Proposals must be reviewed and approved through established curricular governance pathways at the program, college/school, and university levels. Credit-bearing credentials follow the same academic standards, assessment, SACSCOC accreditation standards, and quality assurance processes as traditional academic programs. Where applicable, credit-bearing credentials are subject to accreditation substantive change notification requirements.

Degree Applications and Transferability: Credits may count toward certificate or degree requirements only if approved as part of their published existing degree requirements and electives. If multiple credit-bearing credentials can be taken together and combined into a certificate or degree ("stackable credentials"), that information should be published, and advisors must be available to explain the process and procedures for using stackable credentials to complete a degree program. All time limits

and other relevant academic policies apply. Transfer of credit-bearing credentials to other institutions is subject to receiving institution policies.

Flexibility for Professional Requirements: Credentials required to align with specific professional licensure, certification, or industry standards may depart from standard parameters with documented justification and Dean approval.

### **AP.8.1.2 Noncredit Academic Credentials**

Noncredit academic credentials document competency achievement or program completion, but do not earn academic credit. These credentials are not subject to SACSCOC substantive change requirements but must maintain published institutional policies regarding purpose, characteristics, and student rights. Academic credentials documenting competency achievement or program completion that do not carry academic credit and are not recorded on the university transcript.

Credential Types:

- Competency-Based Credentials: Competency-based credentials must require performance-based assessment demonstrating mastery of defined learning outcomes. Assessment evidence must be documented and retained per university guidelines.
- Program Completion Credentials: The program must document satisfactory participation or completion based on attendance and instructional hours but does not require direct competency assessment. Faculty and staff professional development credentials within George Mason may be issued for university training programs and follow the same noncredit credential requirements.

Approval: Proposals that originate in academic units require approval by the Dean of the college or school in which the LAU is housed. Proposals that originate in other units require approval of the Vice President/Provost of that unit. All noncredit academic credentials must be approved by the Continuing and Professional Education Office. Credentials must meet George Mason's standards for skill development and learning outcomes, assessment appropriate to the credential type, and industry or professional alignment.

Issuance: All noncredit credentials are issued as digital badges through the university credentialing platform and include appropriate disclaimers indicating noncredit status and ineligibility for transcript notation.

Credit Conversion and Prior Learning: Noncredit credentials do not automatically convert to academic credit. Students may petition to apply documented learning from noncredit credentials (from George Mason or other institutions) toward academic credit through George Mason's prior learning assessment procedures, subject to faculty review and institutional credit limits. Acceptance of external noncredit credentials follows existing transfer credit policies.

### **AP.8.2 Academic Quality Standards**

Outcomes: All credentials must focus on clearly defined, measurable skill development or learning outcomes with specific earning criteria documented through deliverables, assignments, or performance artifacts, aligned with academic, professional, or industry standards appropriate to the credential type.

Assessment: Credit-bearing credentials require performance-based (or competency-based) assessment meeting the same rigor as equivalent credit courses. Performance-based assessment requires students

to apply their knowledge and skills by solving real-world problems or creating, performing, or producing artifacts that demonstrate specific competencies in authentic contexts. Noncredit competency-based credentials require demonstrated mastery of defined outcomes, with assessment evidence documented and retained for quality review. Participation-based credentials document completion based on attendance and instructional hours and must specify completion criteria.

Faculty and Instructor Qualifications: Credit-bearing credentials must be taught by faculty meeting the same qualifications required for equivalent credit courses. Noncredit credential instructors must have documented qualifications appropriate to the subject matter.

Delivery Modality: All delivery formats (in-person, online, hybrid) must provide equivalent learning experiences with consistent outcomes and appropriate student support services.

Periodic Review: The office of the Provost conducts reviews of all credentials to assess compliance and continuation recommendations.

Student Appeals: Students enrolled in credit-bearing credentials may appeal assessment decisions or credential denial through existing academic grievance procedures to the Office of the Provost.

### **AP.8.3 Oversight and Compliance**

Academic units hold primary responsibility for credit-bearing credentials and appoint a faculty lead to oversee program delivery and assessment. The Office of the Provost oversees compliance for all credential types. The Office of the University Registrar maintains official academic transcript records for credit-bearing credentials and verifies achievements and credential status.

Tuition and fees for credit-bearing credentials are assessed at the standard per-credit rate. Credit-bearing credentials may be eligible for financial aid subject to enrollment status and federal/state requirements; eligible programs are listed separately by the Office of Student Financial Aid. Noncredit credential fees are established by the sponsoring unit and approved by the Office of the Provost. Administrative fees for credentialing platform access and badge issuance are assessed per the university fee schedule.