

# GRADES AND POLICIES

Grades inform students of the level of performance they have achieved in a course. Grades are means whereby students may come to know and appreciate their capacities and abilities. Instructors are responsible for specifying the performances required in their courses; students are responsible for meeting the requirements specified.

Grades earned by students at Canisius University reflect:

1. The extent to which the requirements specified in the course syllabus have been met.
2. The degree to which the requirements completed exhibit mastery of the subject or skills which are the object of the course.
3. Other criteria specified by the instructor at the beginning of the course, criteria such as, but not limited to, attendance at lectures or other course functions, projects voluntarily undertaken in excess of specified requirements, correct use of oral or written English and contribution to discussion or other course activities.

Grades earned by undergraduate students include the following:

A	Superior performance.
A-	
B+	
B	Good performance.
B-	
C+	
C	Adequate performance.
C-	
D	Poor, but passing, performance.
F	Failing performance.
FX	Failure to complete the course.
P or U	P-Passing. U-Failing. The description of the Pass/Fail program is given later in this chapter.

Grades authorized by the deans include the following:

W	Authorized Withdrawal from a course. The description of withdrawal procedures is in a preceding section of this chapter.
I	Incomplete. A student who has failed to fulfill all requirements of a course may petition the instructor to request an incomplete grade. The request must be approved by the instructor and then the appropriate associate dean. An incomplete grade will be granted for only serious and well-defined reasons.
NG	No grade submitted by the course instructor

Final grades are available on the university's online services page at the conclusion of each semester. If an official grade report is needed for any reason, contact the Student Records and Financial Services Center to request a grade report.

Final course grades cannot, in normal circumstances, be altered after they have been recorded on the student academic record. Should an exceptional reason occur that would justify a late grade change, the faculty member can submit to the appropriate associate dean a request to change a student's recorded grade within the following time frame:

- The end of the spring semester following a course taken in the fall
- The end of the fall semester following a course taken in the summer
- The end of the fall semester following a course taken in the spring

Any request for a grade change after these deadlines must be submitted to the dean of the appropriate college with documentation as to why the grade should be changed.

Students who are disputing a grade received in a course must do so under the guidelines and within the timeframes described under grade grievance procedures.

Students who are dissatisfied with their grade in a course may repeat the course once (exceptions may be approved by the appropriate associate dean in consultation with the department chair). In such cases both grades will be entered in the student's record and will show on the student's transcript, but, for the purpose of computing grade point average, only the higher grade will be used for the GPA calculation. Because retaking courses that have already been passed (any grade of D or above) affects a student's financial aid, students should consult with the Student Records and Financial Services Center and their academic advisor before retaking any courses.

## Incomplete Grade

A student who, for serious and well defined reasons, has failed to fulfill all requirements of a course or has failed to take the final exam may petition the course instructor to request from the appropriate associate dean, a grade of "I", indicating "Incomplete Performance."

Only the appropriate associate dean may grant an incomplete grade request. It will not be granted to a student whose only reason is excessive absence during the semester or failure to complete the work of the course before the close of the semester without an exceptionally good reason. Examples of such good reasons might be prolonged illness or hospitalization during the semester, serious illness at the time of the final examination, or other unusual circumstances.

An incomplete grade, when granted, is merely temporary and will automatically be changed to an "FX" grade if a final grade is not submitted by March 1 for the fall, August 1 for the spring and October 1 for the summer.

## PASS-FAIL PROGRAM

Undergraduate students are eligible to elect one course per semester not to exceed four courses total for which they will receive a passing grade "Pass," "P" on the transcript, or a failing grade "Unsatisfactory," "U" on the transcript. The purpose of this plan is to enable students to take more difficult courses than they would normally take or to continue in difficult classes without negatively impacting their grade point average.

The program is as follows:

1. Students may take one course per semester, not to exceed a total of four courses in their college careers, for which they will receive a recorded grade on their transcript of either "Pass" or "Unsatisfactory."
2. Most courses may be taken using the pass-fail option. However, if a specific grade is required in a course as a prerequisite for another

course, a “Pass” grade will not meet that requirement. Additionally, a minimum grade in a specific course may be required to successfully complete a major or program. In both of these instances, the request to take the course pass-fail will not be approved. Students are strongly encouraged to speak to their Academic Advisor and Success Coach before requesting to take a class using the pass-fail grading option.

3. Students interested in pursuing graduate school should realize that some graduate programs may require a standard grade in certain courses. Students should discuss with their advisor before deciding to request “Pass-Fail” grading option.
4. Students must file a request for “Pass-Fail” grading by the last day of classes during a semester. The electronic application form is available under the Forms heading on the myCanisius portal. If the associate dean of their school or college determines that the course meets the requirements to be taken pass-fail, grades will still be assigned for all work done during the course and on the final examination. A final grade will be entered for the student by the instructor. If this grade is “D” or above, the registrar will record a pass (P) grade for the course on the student’s transcript.
5. A student who completes the course with a failing (F) grade will receive a fail (U) grade on their transcript and will not receive credit for the course. The U grade is not calculated in the GPA. Students who do not complete all the requirements of the course as defined in the course syllabus, will receive an FX. A grade of FX, failure to complete the course, will not be recorded as a U grade and will be included in the GPA calculation.
6. After receiving permission to take a course on the “Pass-Fail” option, a student may then request, by the last day of classes and prior to exam week, that they be withdrawn from the pass-fail option and be assigned a conventional letter grade instead. This request is submitted to the Student Records and Financial Services Center at studentservices@canisius.edu. A student who withdraws from the “Pass-Fail” option receives the letter grade assigned by the instructor.

NB: Pass/fail grades are not factored into a student’s GPA. A student who earns a “P” grade also earns the credit hours associated with the course. A student who earns a “U” grade earns no credit for the course. According to financial aid guidelines, a student who receives a “U” has completed the course but with a failing grade. Failure to complete the course will result in a grade of FX and will be included in the GPA calculation.

## Grade Review and Appeal Procedure

### Rationale

In order to foster an environment of intellectual and ethical development, the procedures below have been developed in accordance with Canisius University’s mission and with the Jesuit principle of care for the whole person. Academic integrity is the foundation of intellectual growth. Students, faculty, and administration are expected to interact with honesty and respect for others and for the University when dealing with grade grievances.

### Grounds for Grade Review

A student may initiate this process only if they believe the final grade has been assigned on an erroneous, or a capricious or arbitrary basis. Grounds include situations such as:

- Computational error: The student alleges that the faculty member made a mistake in the mathematical computation of the class grade. If a student believes that a mistake has been made in the computation of their grade, the student must first speak with the faculty member. If the faculty member agrees, the faculty member will submit a “Change of

Grade” form. If the faculty member does not agree, the student may then follow the procedures and deadlines outlined below.

- Arbitrariness or capriciousness: The student alleges that the grade was based on something other than performance in a course (i.e. non-academic criteria); or the grade reflects standards different from those applied to other students in the course; or the grade departs from the standards of evaluation set forth in the syllabi or other written documents in a substantial, unreasonable, and unannounced way. In this case, the student must follow the procedures and deadlines outlined below.
- Discrimination: The student alleges that the grade reflects a violation of the University’s non-discrimination policy as stated in the University catalogs and student handbooks. In this case, the student should follow the “grievance procedures” for bringing a claim of unlawful discrimination as outlined in the University catalogs and student handbooks.

The burden of proving a claim of an incorrect or unfair grade rests completely with the student. A grade review/appeal case has to be based on specific graded items. The student must provide documentation (e.g., graded tests, assignments, etc.) as evidence to support their claim. Any grade review/appeal must be made by an individual student; a grade review/appeal cannot be brought jointly by multiple students.

The grade review/appeal policy cannot be used to review an instructor’s professional judgment in teaching a class section, or in assessing the quality of a student’s work.

The question of whether the grade should be reconsidered is addressed in two stages: a grade review and, if necessary, a grade appeal. The Assistant/Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs may serve as the academic resource officer, who can guide the student and/or the faculty member, by helping to explain the procedure and steps.

### Grade Review

In a situation where a student believes their grade has been assigned on a capricious or arbitrary basis, the student must abide by the following procedure:

1. The student must contact the class instructor, via Canisius email, to request a grade review. The appropriate Department Chair must also be copied on this email. The student must provide the instructor with a formal written statement (250 to 1000 words), which explains the grounds for a request for a grade review. In addition to the written statement, the student will supply any relevant documents to support the request. These documents could include copies of assignment instructions, tests, papers, rubrics, etc. This statement and any related documentation will be the official basis for all stages of the grade review process and the grade appeal process if the review advances to that level; the student may not add any additional material in later steps. The request must state the grounds upon which the review is sought, and must be sent no later than six (6) working days\* from the start of the semester (regular academic session, fall or spring) immediately following that in which the grade was awarded.
  - a. If the review results in a change of grade, a grade change is completed by the instructor.
  - b. If the student and the instructor cannot resolve the issue, the instructor writes an email to the student and the Department Chair, via Canisius email, articulating the reason for the final grade, as well as including the student’s original request (and any related documentation) for the grade review. In some cases, a Program

Director might be the more appropriate person to contact rather than a Chair.

- c. If the instructor does not respond to the student's initial contact within six (6) working days, or six (6) working days from the start of the semester (whichever is later), the student may proceed to step 2.
2. If the student chooses to continue the grade review process, he or she must contact the Department Chair by Canisius email to request further review. This review must be based on the same statement and documentation provided to the instructor; no additional statement or documentation can be added at this time. The instructor must also be copied on the email to the Chair. *If the instructor is also the Chair, a student should contact the Assistant or an Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Assistant or an Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs will assign a senior member of the Department to serve in the role of the Chair in this situation.* The student must send this request within six (6) working days of receiving the instructor's email or, if the instructor has failed to respond, within twelve (12) working days from the start of the semester. The role of the Chair is to facilitate a resolution between the student and instructor. The Chair will review the statement and documentation already supplied to the instructor. The instructor will supply, via Canisius email, a concise explanation of her/his denial of the request (250 to 1000 words), including appropriate documents supporting the instructor's decision. These documents could include copies of assignment instructions, tests, papers, rubrics, etc. If the review results in a change of grade, a grade change is completed by the instructor. It is recommended that the Chair finalize the grade review within six (6) working days of receiving the request of grade review, as outlined in this step. Most grade reviews will end here.

\* A working day is defined as a day when regular classes (fall or spring semester) are in session at the University.

## Grade Appeal

If the student does not accept the results of the grade review, they may initiate a formal grade appeal.

1. The student may appeal the decision to the appropriate Assistant/Associate Dean's office within six (6) working days after the grade review process by the Chair is complete. If the student chooses to continue the grade review process to level of a formal appeal, they must contact the Assistant/Associate Dean by Canisius email to request further review. This request for review must be based on the original statement and documentation first provided to the instructor in Step I. 1. The Chair and the instructor must also be copied on the email to the Assistant/Associate Dean. In turn, the Assistant/Associate Dean must collect the emails from the instructor and the Department Chair written during the grade review process (Steps I. 1. and I 2.) as well as any other information deemed relevant by the Chair, instructor, and/or Assistant/Associate Dean. At this stage, the Assistant/Associate Dean creates a file consisting of the student's emails with evidence, the Chair's email, the instructor's email and other relevant information. No information other than the Assistant/Associate Dean's decision letter can be added to the file after this point. In the event that the Assistant/Associate Dean needs to recuse themselves, the Dean of the appropriate school will fulfill the role. Should the Dean need to recuse themselves, then the Dean of one of the other schools will fulfill the role of the Assistant/Associate Dean, as outlined below.
2. The Assistant/Associate Dean decides whether or not the grade should be reconsidered, writes a letter explaining their decision, and adds it to the file. It is recommended that the Assistant/Associate Dean finalize

the grade appeal within six (6) working days of receiving the request of grade appeal, as outlined in Step II.1. The Assistant/Associate Dean's decision is final and binding. If the decision is not to reconsider the grade, the original grade will not be changed and the grade grievance process is complete. If the decision is to reconsider the grade, the procedure in #3 below is followed.

3. If the Assistant/Associate Dean concludes that reconsideration of the grade is appropriate, the Assistant/Associate Dean, the instructor, and student will each select one tenured faculty member who has not been involved in the process described above. The panel is formed with members from the Department in question and must be formed within six (6) working days of the Assistant/Associate Dean's decision. If the Department does not have a sufficient number of members, the panel will be expanded to include tenured members of the Departments in the division (Humanities, Natural Science, Social Science, Business, or Education) of which the Department is a part.
4. The panel will review the file assembled by the Assistant/Associate Dean in #1 above. Based on their review of the file, the panel will assign a grade for the course in question. That grade may be the same as that assigned by the instructor, or a higher or lower grade, according to the panel's judgment. The panel must reach a decision within sixteen (16) working days of its formation. The Assistant/Associate Dean, student, instructor and Department Chair will be informed of the panel's decision via Canisius email. This decision will include a brief explanation of the outcome. When applicable, the authorized grade change will be submitted by the Assistant/Associate Dean to the registrar. The decision of the panel is final and binding.

## Courses at Other Colleges

Students matriculating at Canisius should plan to complete all their coursework at the University. The rationale for this policy rests in the mission and philosophy of the university and in its concern for the essential unity and integrity of all aspects of the curriculum: the university core, major requirements and free electives. Permission to take courses at other colleges during the regular and summer sessions is granted by the appropriate associate dean, who will consider all aspects of the student's request, including the quality and level of the proposed course and its role in the student's program. Courses intended to fulfill major requirements must also be approved by department chairperson. Permission to take courses at other colleges must be requested on the appropriate form and in advance of taking the course.

Generally, the following guidelines apply:

1. Students are ordinarily limited to one course at another institution for every ten courses taken at Canisius.
2. Junior and senior-level major course requirements are not transferred from community colleges.
3. Courses taken at a four-year college/university will be accepted only if they are offered at a comparable level at Canisius (i.e., freshman-sophomore level/junior-senior level).
4. Students who live outside the greater Buffalo area may receive more lenient consideration in taking a summer course at another college. However, the associate dean may recommend an online web-based course as a preferred option if he/she considers it more appropriate than the off-campus course.
5. Courses used to fulfill Core Curriculum requirements should be taken at Canisius University.

## Study Abroad Course Grades

In keeping with the University's policy on "Courses at Other Colleges," students who wish to study at the universities associated with Canisius must study through the Canisius programs. Grades earned in Canisius-affiliated study abroad programs will transfer back to the University and will be counted toward a student's grade point average.

Students who wish to study at other foreign universities or in other countries than those associated with Canisius should confer with the Study Abroad Office. If one of these programs is approved for a student to use as credit toward a Canisius degree, the credit hours will transfer back to Canisius, but the grades will not count toward a student's grade-point average.