

Committee on Elections, Rules and Jurisdiction

April 14, 2008

Legislative Ruling 4.08

Defining “Passing Quality” With Respect to the Assignment of Incompletes. The grade of Incomplete may only be assigned when the student’s completed work is of “passing quality” (Davis Division Regulation A540(C)). “Passing quality” means “of D- quality or better” whether the student is taking the course for a letter grade or not. The only exception is for courses listed in the General Catalog as being graded on a Passed/Not Passed or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis only, in which case the completed work must be of a quality consistent with a grade of Pass or Satisfactory.

Background

DDR A540(C) states that

The grade Incomplete shall be assigned only when the student’s work is of passing quality and represents a significant portion of the requirements for a final grade, but is incomplete for good cause as determined by the instructor.

Some departments and faculty members have interpreted this to mean that an Incomplete can only be assigned where the completed work is of C- quality or better. In other cases Incompletes have been assigned as long as the student’s work is of D- quality or better. We seek to resolve this inconsistency in grading practices.

Analysis of Relevant Legislation

Systemwide legislation (ASR 780(A)) defines grades as follows:

Except as provided in SRs 778, 782, and 784, the work of all students in the University shall be reported in terms of six grades:

1. passing: A (excellent), B (good), C (fair), D (barely passing)
2. not passing: F (failure)
3. undetermined: Incomplete

The Davis Division implementation under DDR A540(A) is less explicit:

The work of each student shall be reported in terms of the following grades: A (excellent), B (good), C (fair), D (poor), F (failure), I (incomplete), and IP (in progress). Grades of A, B, C, and D may be modified by plus (+) or minus (-) suffixes.

However, all Divisional Regulations, including grading systems, must be consistent with Systemwide Regulations (see ASB 310(A)(1)) unless the Assembly of the Academic Senate provides a variance (per ASR 778(F)). And the variance granted by the Assembly authorizing the Davis Division to define grades at variance with ASR 780(A) reiterates that a D is a passing grade:

In the Davis Division, the passing grades “A,” “B,” “C,” and “D” may be modified by plus (+) or minus (-) suffixes. (Variance approved November 3, 1969.)

The grade of D- is therefore of “passing quality” (albeit “barely passing”). This is consistent with the long-standing definition of a D as “barely passing” in the Davis General Catalog.

The minimum performance required for a grade of Pass under passed/not passed grading is a C- (ASR 778(C)(1); DDR A545(E)). Similarly, the performance required for a grade of Satisfactory is higher than the minimum passing level for letter grades (ASR 778(C)(2); DDR A548(D)). However, this does not alter the general definition of “passing” performance per ASR 780(A) for courses in which letter grades are assigned. Indeed, D grades are counted as “passing” for the purposes of the General Education requirement (DDR 522(B)(1)) and the Minimum Progress requirement (DDR A552(B)). Moreover, D grades are explicitly regarded as “passing” for minimum progress, even if the course is repeated:

If a student receives a grade of D in a course and repeats the course, the course shall be counted as units passed each time the course is passed up to a maximum of 16 units. (DDR A552(B)(1)(b).)

In a course for which letter grades may be assigned the faculty member has no official cognizance of whether a student is taking the course for a letter grade or on a passed/not passed (or satisfactory/unsatisfactory) basis. Because the faculty member submits only letter grades, the letter grading standard must apply in determining whether the work is of passing quality. However, if the course is graded *exclusively* on a passed/not passed (or satisfactory/unsatisfactory) basis then letter grades are generally not computed. In that case the completed work is of passing quality if performance at that level would earn a grade of Pass (or Satisfactory).