



A RESOLUTION TO ENSURE THE CERTIFICATION OF STUDENT ATTENDANCE IN REGISTERED COURSES/PROGRAMS AND THE UNIFORMLY CORRECT USAGE OF GRADE DESIGNATIONS THAT RESULT IN A STUDENT NOT EARNING ACADEMIC CREDIT IN A COURSE (26/3)

WHEREAS, GW wants to ensure that every student who meets eligibility requirements secures all available aid and that individuals who are not active students do not receive aid;

WHEREAS, GW is not required to regularly track attendance; however, federal regulations require GW to have a method to confirm that a student began attendance or engaged at least once;

WHEREAS, given GW does not have a university-wide mandatory attendance policy, federal regulations still require the university to return any ineligible Title IV funds to the department no later than 30 days from 1) the date the student officially withdrew or 2) no later than 30 days from the end of the period of enrollment for unauthorized withdrawals;

WHEREAS, given GW does not have a university-wide mandatory attendance policy, federal regulations still require changes to enrollment status to be reported within 30 days;

WHEREAS, financial aid recipients who have a change in enrollment status (undergraduate students who fall below 12 credits or graduate students who take fewer than 9 credits are no longer considered full-time students) may see a reduction or loss of their eligibility for aid;

WHEREAS, it is in the financial interest of students who are withdrawing from a course or program to do so as early as possible to ensure that they do not have to return unwarranted federal aid or incur university charges;

WHEREAS, faculty who fail to submit grades in a timely fashion will potentially undermine the determination of student eligibility for financial aid in the current and future semesters;

WHEREAS, current course grade assignment instructions and withdrawal policies do not always include a record of the date a student stopped engaging in their course or program;

WHEREAS, the awarding of a particular non-passing grade or notation (W – authorized withdrawal, F - fail¹, I - incomplete, Z – unauthorized withdrawal, or NE - never attended/engaged) is not consistent across the university since current final grade submission instructions and withdrawal policies do not always clearly distinguish between a student who has never participated, withdrawn, or failed a course; and

¹ NP (No Pass) at the undergraduate level and NC (No Credit) at the graduate level are equivalent to the F (Fail) grade.

WHEREAS, EPT endorses the following procedures to ensure both the institution's compliance with the federal government's rules, and additional clarity regarding the awarding of non-passing grades;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE FACULTY SENATE OF THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

That the Faculty Senate hereby endorses the recommendations of the Educational Policy and Technology Committee, attached as *Appendix 1* and *Appendix 2* and that are associated with the changes to the University Bulletin contained in *Appendix 3*.

Educational Policy & Technology Committee
October 27, 2025

Adopted by the Faculty Senate
November 14, 2025

Appendix 1

- (a) The Division of Enrollment and Student Success, the Office of the University Registrar, the International Students Office and the schools of the university will begin an enhanced unified and central message campaign that can be shared and linked to the websites of other relevant units on campus (such as school advising offices) alerting students to the implication of changing their enrollment status and the importance of both being enrolled as a full-time student and of formally submitting a class withdrawal notification in a timely fashion.
- (b) The process for formally withdrawing from a course will be altered as follows: when a student withdraws from a class after the drop/add period, they will be required to submit the appropriate form that is approved by either their instructor or their academic advisor. A school official will be required to both approve the form and to include the date of the student's last known attendance or engagement in the class (see *Appendix 2*). Notification should be sent to the instructor of the class.
- (c) The Office of the Provost in consultation with the Deans of the Schools and both the Senate's Educational Policy and Technology Committee and Appointments, Salary, and Promotion Policies Committee will begin additional messaging and procedures to ensure that grades are submitted in a timely manner.
- (d) The university will make clear to all faculty that the awarding of an "F" grade in a course is to denote more than simply not completing any graded assignments (see *Appendix 3*). Beginning the current academic term, all F's that are awarded will be an earned "F" grade. This grade should only be awarded to a student who (i) is enrolled at the end of the semester; (ii) was actively engaged (see *Appendix 2*) in a course; and (iii) has not demonstrated a sufficient understanding of course material to warrant earning credit in the class (see *Appendix 3*).
- (e) The university will make clear to all faculty that the awarding of a "Z" grade is to denote that a student (i) did not formally withdraw using an authorized withdrawal (W) prior to the end of the semester; (ii) did not earn an F; and (iii) failed to participate in course activities through the end of the enrollment period. It is used when, in the opinion of the instructor, completed assignments and/or course activities were insufficient to make a normal evaluation of academic performance possible. Faculty who award the "Z" grade for a student will also submit a date of last known date of engagement to denote either the date of a student's last known class attendance or the date of the student's last active engagement in the course (see *Appendix 2* and *Appendix 3*).
- (f) The Office of the Registrar will add a "Date of Last Attendance (or Engagement)" column to the Final Grades section on GWeb that will be employed by faculty who award a "Z" or "I" final course grade.
- (g) If a student (i) has not formally withdrawn from a course, and (ii) the faculty member has no knowledge or evidence that the student attended or engaged in the course (see *Appendix 2*), the faculty member will award the student a notation to denote "never attended/engaged" (NE).
- (h) The university will work with the Educational Policy and Technology standing committee of the Faculty Senate to create a university-wide Incomplete contract form. The contract will make clear that an "I" (incomplete) is meant for a student who has completed a substantial amount of work in the course in the opinion of the instructor but has not finished all the work due for the semester. The form will include a last date of engagement and a checkbox to indicate "undergraduate" or "graduate" student.

Appendix 2

For the identification of the date of withdrawal when a student receives a “W” or the last active date of engagement/attendance when a student receives a “Z”, any of the following activities will count as engagement:²

- (a) Student attendance in an in-person course
- (b) Documented student participation in an interactive tutorial, webinar or other interactive or computer-assisted instruction
- (c) Student submission of an academic assignment or an exam
- (d) An email from the student or other documentation showing student-initiated contact with a faculty member
- (e) A posting by the student showing the student's participation in an online study group that is assigned by the institution, a posting by the student in a discussion forum showing the student's participation in an online discussion about academic matters
- (f) An email from the student about the academic subject studied in the course.

² Activities (a) through (f) would demonstrate engagement for an in-person course. Activities (b) through (f) would demonstrate engagement for an online course. These definitions meet the standard of “academic engagement” in 34 CFR 600.2.

Appendix 3

The following new language will appear in the *Graduate and Undergraduate University Regulations* section of the University Bulletin under *Adding, Dropping and Withdrawing from Courses*:

Withdrawing from a Course

When a student secures an authorized withdraw from one or more courses after the conclusion of the add/drop period, they will need to submit a signed form notifying their advising office of their intention to withdraw, and to include on the form the last known date in which they participated in a class activity (a link to a website that defines academic activity to be provided). This form, submitted after the add/drop period, must be signed by a school official.

The section on *Grades* would be renamed *Grades/Administrative Notations* and would include the following:

Grades/Administrative Notations

To be added under the *Undergraduate Grading System* header:

Grades and Administrative Notations of I, Incomplete; NE, Never Attended/Engaged; W, Authorized Withdrawal; and Z, Unauthorized Withdrawal can have impacts to your current financial aid (link to OSFA R2T4 site) and your Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (link to the SAP page) for future aid eligibility.

Never Attended/Engaged

The symbol of NE (Never Attended/Engaged) is assigned when students are registered for a course but have never attended, engaged or participated in the course. The instructor has no evidence that the student ever attended the class and no work was ever submitted. The symbol NE is not a grade but an administrative notation to signify no engagement in the course (a link to a website that defines academic engagement to be provided). The NE will count toward attempted hours but has no impact on a student's GPA. Tuition is not refunded.

Authorized Withdrawal

The symbol of a W (withdrawal) is assigned when students are registered and notify the university that they have decided not to complete a course after the official add/drop period. The symbol of W is not a grade but an administrative notation. Depending upon when a student withdrew, tuition may be refunded in accordance with the university's tuition policy.

Unauthorized Withdrawal

The symbol of Z (unauthorized withdrawal) is assigned when students are registered for a course that they have participated in even if only briefly but appear to have stopped participating during the term even though they have not formally withdrawn. The symbol of Z is not a grade but an administrative notation. A Z is not to be awarded to a student who actively participated in a course, and who would normally fail (receive an F) because of performance on course material or failure to complete one or more assessment activities. A student in this scenario should receive an F. When awarding a Z faculty will denote the last known date of academic engagement (a link to a website that defines academic engagement to be provided). Tuition is not refunded.

F Grade

The university only awards an earned “F” (fail). This grade denotes students who (i) are enrolled at the end of the semester; (ii) were actively engaged in a course; (iii) failed to achieve the course objectives set forth by the instructor; and (iv) have not demonstrated a sufficient understanding of course material to warrant earning credit in the class.

Incompletes

The symbol *I* (Incomplete) is recorded at the option of the instructor when a student has provided a satisfactory explanation for reasons beyond their control has been given for their inability to complete the required work of the course during the semester of enrollment. The instructor must be informed of, and accepts, such reasons before the date when final grades must be reported. The symbol can be used only if the student’s prior performance and class attendance in the course have been satisfactory. If a student does not complete the work of a course, and no satisfactory explanation has been provided to the instructor before the deadline for final grades to be submitted, the grade of *F*, Failure, is recorded for the course.

To assign an *I*, the instructor must enter the symbol as the grade in the Enter Final Grade page within GWeb along with the time frame the instructor, student, and school have agreed upon for the work of the course to be completed, which can be no more than one calendar year from the last day of the semester or summer session in which the course was taken. The instructor also must enter an Incomplete final grade, which is based on the work the student completed by the end of the semester or summer session in which the course was taken.

If completion of the work of the course within the designated time frame results in a grade other than the Incomplete final grade, the instructor submits a grade change form to the Office of the Registrar; the new grade is recorded with the corresponding quality points and the grade-point average is recalculated. If the instructor does not submit a grade change form, the symbol *I* converts automatically to the Incomplete final grade, with the corresponding quality points, and the grade-point average is recalculated.

If the work of the course has not been completed within the designated time frame, the grade converts automatically to the Incomplete final grade, with the corresponding quality points, and the grade-point average is recalculated. If the work for the course has not been completed after a period of one calendar year from the end of the semester or summer session in which the course was taken, and no Incomplete final grade is on record, the *I* changes automatically to the grade of *F*, Failure, 0 quality points, and the grade-point average is recalculated.

All students who receive an Incomplete must maintain active student status during the subsequent semester(s) in which the work of the course is being completed. If not registered in other courses during this period, the student must register for [continuous enrollment status](#).