

A. UMW Grading When Honor Cases are Pending

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The purpose of this motion is to create a change in grading policy for cases in which a student has been accused of the honor violation of cheating in graded coursework. In situations where an accusation is pending on the date final grades are due, current guidance requires faculty to grade according to the Honor Constitution's "innocent until found responsible" maxim. This often feels unfair and unreasonable. It is also of concern that a student's transcript will reflect a grade that a faculty member feels is unwarranted and not earned.

The undersigned therefore request a set of changes to the Faculty Handbook and the Academic Procedures Directory which in totality create a policy whereby a 'G' grade is automatically requested on behalf of each faculty member for a student with a pending honor accusation. When the honor system has rendered a finding, the faculty member will be notified, and the appropriate final grade will be submitted. If the Honor Council sanctions loss of credit, that will be recorded by the Registrar, otherwise, the grade is determined by the faculty member in light of the Honor Council's finding and recorded using the online change of grade form.

Rationale

When a student is accused of an academic violation of the Honor Code, he or she is presumed innocent until found responsible; this is a foundational principle of our community of trust. Therefore, students presumed to be innocent must not be publicly named until they have been found responsible. However, academic work under question of dishonesty should not factor into a student's record until its integrity has been determined by the Honor System. This leads faculty to a conundrum, since final grades are often due before the Honor System is able to render a verdict. It is not appropriate to give any grade in this situation, since that grade is either potentially inaccurate or potentially prejudicial to the student.

In order to resolve this contradiction, we propose that policy change so that faculty do not assign a grade to assignments whose origins are in question, but rather delay grading until the integrity of the assignment (or lack thereof) has been determined by the Honor System.

In cases when the Honor System renders a verdict during the same semester as the accusation, faculty will factor that decision into the assignment grade and the resulting final grade. In cases when the Honor System renders a verdict after the deadline for final grade submission, we propose that a temporary "G" grade be entered on the faculty member's behalf by the Honor Council, that the faculty member be informed when a verdict is rendered, and that the updated final grade be entered at that time. This process eliminates the difficulty of submitting a grade believed to be incorrect by faculty members, creates an accurate transcript of student activity at all times, and adds no stigma, as the 'G' grade has multiple interpretations, most of which have no negative connotations.

This proposal is endorsed by the Faculty Honor Advisors, the Registrar, and the Procedural Advisor to the Honor Council as being fairer, more accurate, and more easily managed than the current policy. In order to effect this change, modifications to the Honor Guidebook, Faculty Handbook, and the Academic Procedures Directory are proposed. Since the motion below creates changes to grading policies and practices, it has been submitted to the Academic Affairs Committee for action. Changes to the Honor Guidebook will be addressed separately by the Honor Council and student body; they are not necessary for the policy change, but will be helpful in clarifying the policy to students.

Motion

The undersigned propose that the Faculty Handbook be amended to reflect the addition in red to section 5.2.3.

5.2.3 Faculty Response to Suspected Violations of the Honor Code Violations of the Honor Code are not to be condoned or ignored by faculty; however, neither are they to be dealt with by unilateral faculty action (such as by simply lowering the student's grade). **Assignments under review by the Honor Council should not be assigned a grade until a final verdict has been determined. In cases where an honor accusation is outstanding on the day final grades are due, the Honor Council will request a 'G' grade on the faculty member's behalf. Faculty will be notified in all instances when this act occurs.** All alleged Honor Code violations are to be reported to and handled by the Honor Council, assuring due process and fairness. A faculty member who has reason to suspect a violation of the Honor System should consult the Honor Constitution (Appendix B) for reporting procedures. Willful failure to support and abide by the Honor Code may serve as a basis for termination of a faculty member for cause.

The undersigned propose that the following section be added to the Academic Procedures Directory:

GRADE DELAYED

This grade may be awarded in one of three cases: (1) if the student's off-campus work (such as on an internship) is not received in time to be evaluated before final grades are due; (2) if the faculty member fails to submit a grade for a student by the time final grades for the term must be processed and posted; or (3) extenuating circumstances (approved by the Registrar) prevent the faculty member from assigning a final grade by the required deadline and the student is not eligible for an incomplete grade. The Registrar assigns the G grade. In all cases when a grade is delayed, the G grade must be removed as soon as it is possible for the final grade to be calculated. The G grade must be removed no later than the last day of class in the semester following the one in which the G grade was assigned. To remove the G grade, the faculty member submits a Grade Correction form to the Office of the Registrar. Grade corrections must be processed as soon as possible in order to avoid complications for the student (for example, loss of financial aid or delayed inclusion on the Dean's List). Failure to submit a grade for a course with a G will result in the grade of F. No student can graduate with a "G" grade remaining on his or her record.

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