

EXAMS AND GRADING

Evening Preliminary Examinations

Evening examinations may be given on Tuesday and Thursday evenings after 7:30 p.m. Large courses (over 30) may schedule evening exams only with prior permission from the Office of the Dean of Faculty. No permission is required for examinations or make-up examinations involving small numbers of students (under 30) if given on Tuesday and Thursday.

Instructors holding evening examinations are strongly urged to indicate this in syllabi and other course materials and must notify students of the dates of such examinations as early as possible in the semester. Exceptions to the regulations on evening preliminary examinations require permission from the Office of the Dean of Faculty. For additional information, see faculty legislation on Evening Prelim Policy, or contact the Office of the Dean of Faculty: deanoffaculty@cornell.edu.

Final Examinations

Advances in pedagogy and variations in practice across fields have broadened the range of commonly used end-of-semester evaluative exercises beyond traditional sit-down final examinations. The rules and guidelines governing exams aim to protect students from unreasonable demands on their time while simultaneously providing instructors the flexibility to design evaluative exercises appropriate to their courses.

The Academic Calendar sets aside, after the last week of classes, a study period followed by a period for final examinations. The Office of the University Registrar assigns a specific day and time for a course's final exam or final deliverable due date within the final examination period.

The designated final exam days and times are scheduled carefully to minimize conflicts and spread students' workloads as evenly as possible over the exam period. In addition, it is university policy to discourage more than two examinations for a student in one twenty-four hour time period. No traditional final examination may be administered at a time other than that assigned by the Office of the University Registrar without prior written permission of the Dean of the University Faculty: deanoffaculty@cornell.edu.

Members of the faculty are urged to grant student requests for a make-up examination, particularly if their course is the largest of the three involved and thus has the strongest likelihood of offering a makeup for other valid reasons.

For additional information, see faculty legislation on Final Exam Policy, or contact the Office of the Dean of the Faculty: deanoffaculty@cornell.edu.

For information regarding the role of the Office of the University Registrar in final exam scheduling, see the University Registrar Final Exam (<https://registrar.cornell.edu/calendars-exams/final-exam-policies/>) website.

Grading Policies

Each semester's work is an entity and grades are to be assigned for work completed during the semester. As a matter of equity, grades must not be changed after the end of a semester because a student may have subsequently done additional work. Only the instructor of the course has the responsibility and authority to judge the quality of a student's work and assess the appropriate grade. No one can overrule instructors and require them to go against their judgment of the work. A grade must not be arbitrary or capricious or influenced by illegal Discriminatory

considerations. It must not contain a punitive element for an offense against academic integrity if the student has been found innocent by a duly constituted board. For additional information, see faculty legislation on Grading Policies.

Grading System

The official University grading system is composed of letter grades with pluses and minuses. Passing grades range from A+ to D-; F is failing. INC denotes a grade of incomplete, NG denotes a non-graded course, NGR signifies no grade reported, and R is the grade given for an in-progress multi-semester course. The grades of INC, NG, NGR and R do not have quality-point equivalents attached. The quality-point equivalents are below:

Letter grade values are combined with course credit hours to produce an average based on a 4.3 scale. Grade point average is calculated by multiplying the credit hour and quality point equivalent for each course and then dividing by the total number of credits taken. The cumulative average is the sum of the products of all the grades at Cornell divided by the total number of credits taken.

Grade	Quality-Point Equivalent
A+	4.3
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D+	1.3
D	1.0
D-	0.7
F	0.0

S/U Grades

The purpose of the Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) system is to encourage students to venture into courses outside their main areas of familiarity without great risk to their academic record. The distinction between S and U is not the same, however, as that between pass and fail in the letter-grade system. In the S/U system, S indicates performance that would be graded C- or higher, and U indicates performance that would be graded below a C-. Students earn credit toward the fulfillment of graduation requirements for course grades of S, but not for course grades of U. Grades of S and U are not given grade point values or taken into account in computing grade point averages.

The various schools and colleges differ in the restrictions they place on the election of S/U grading over letter grading. However, in those courses where college rules and course procedures allow it, the election is a student option that must be exercised prior to the end of the drop period for that course.

Audit Grades

Classes taken as audits, and grades for those classes will appear on a student's official transcript. Audit grade values are "V" and "INC." For more information on auditing classes, see Enrollment and Credits page

(<https://catalog.cornell.edu/enrollment-credit-requirements/course-enrollment-credits/>).

Incompletes

The grade symbol of Incomplete is appropriate only when two basic conditions are met:

1. the student has substantial equity at a passing level in the course with respect to work completed; and
2. the student has been prevented by circumstances beyond the student's control, such as illness or family emergency, from completing all of the course requirements on time.

An Incomplete may not be given merely because a student fails to complete all course requirements on time. Such a practice would be open to abuse; by deferring completion of some major course requirement, a student could gain advantage over his or her classmates by obtaining additional time to do a superior job. This is not an option that may be elected at the student's own discretion.

While it is the student's responsibility to initiate a request for an Incomplete, reasons for requesting an Incomplete must be acceptable to the instructor, who establishes specific make-up requirements. The consequences of failure to complete all course work within the time permitted will depend upon the policy of the student's college. Some colleges convert the incomplete to a grade of F; others let the Incomplete stand on the student's transcript. In either case, the option to make up the work is lost. It is the responsibility of the student to see that all incompletes are made up before the deadline and that the grade change has been properly recorded with the student's college registrar.

Faculty under no circumstances should give an Incomplete due to pressure to meet the deadline for reporting grades.

Changes in Grades

To avoid the influencing of grades by improper consideration or student pressure, a grade, once given, may only be changed if an error in the original grade is confirmed by the instructor. The instructor should be willing to review the basis of an assigned grade with an inquiring student and correct the grade if an error is found. As a matter of equity, grades must not be changed after the end of a semester on the basis of a student's subsequent completion of additional work. For additional information, see faculty legislation regarding Grade Changes (<https://deanoffaculty.cornell.edu/policies-procedures/faculty-handbook/6-academic-policies-and-responsibilities/#Instruction>).

Law School Grading Policy

The Law School adheres to the following grading policy.

Juris Doctor (J.D.) Grading Policy

Faculty grading policy calls upon each faculty member to grade a course, including problem courses and seminars, so that the mean grade for J.D. students in the course approximates 3.35 (the acceptable range is 3.2 to 3.5). Faculty are not obliged to adhere to the 3.35 goal in grading courses with fewer than ten J.D. students receiving letter grades. They are expected, however, to be mindful of the goal. Students who opted for Satisfactory/ Unsatisfactory grading in the class should be awarded a grade of S if they would have received a C- or better. A grade of U should be given to any student who would have received a D+ or worse.

Grades awarded are in the table below:

Grade	Quality-Point Equivalent
A+	4.33
A	4.0
A-	3.67
B+	3.33
B	3.0
B-	2.67
C+	2.33
C	2.0
C-	1.67
D+	1.33
D	1.0
D-	0.67
F	0.0

Juris Doctor (J.D.) Grading Option

Each J.D. student, after the first year, may elect to take up to two upper class courses at Cornell Law School on an S/U basis. Students must make this election to the Law School Registrar's Office during the S/U election period for the semester immediately following the end of the course add/drop period. If made, the election shall be irrevocable. Students may not make this election in courses that they use to satisfy the Law School's upper class writing requirement.

In addition, instructors may designate specific courses that they teach as not eligible for the S/U election. Instructors of courses offered solely within the Cornell Law School program may not require S/U grading for students, except when expressly approved by the faculty for distinctive courses such as directed reading and writing, supervised teaching, multicultural work environment, and full-term externships.

General Master of Laws (LL.M.) Grading Policy

LL.M. candidates are graded on the scale of High Honors (HH), Honors (H), Satisfactory (S), and Unsatisfactory (U), except that an LL.M. student may, after consultation with a Graduate Legal Studies advisor, elect to be graded on the J.D. scale and curve. This election applies to the entire academic year and must be made by notifying the Law School Registrar's Office within the first four weeks of the date fall semester classes begin. A grade of HH is appropriate for students who would have received an A or higher, H is appropriate for students who would have received a grade in the B+ to A- range, S is appropriate for students who would have received a grade in the range of C- to B, and U is appropriate for students who would have received a D+ or lower grade. There is no faculty policy regulating the proportion of HH, H, S, and U grades that faculty may give to LL.M. students. Merit points are not assigned to HH, H, S, and U grades and do not count toward a term or cumulative GPA. For General LL.M. candidates, the Law School faculty determines whether the student's course work meets the necessary standard for the award of the LL.M. degree.

Cornell Tech Master of Laws (LL.M.) Grading Policy

Candidates for the Cornell Tech LL.M. degree shall be graded in accordance with the same standards as J.D. candidates, with the mean grade calculated separately for J.D. students and Cornell Tech LL.M. students in any particular class. Cornell Tech LL.M. students may not take required courses on an S/U basis unless those courses are offered S/U only. (Students participating in the 3-semester Tech LL.M. Program

may also not elect to take courses on the General LL.M. grading scale unless those courses are offered exclusively on that scale.)

Doctor of the Science of Law (J.S.D.) Grading Policy

J.S.D. candidates enrolled in law courses are graded on the J.D. scale.

Non-Degree Exchange and Visiting Student Grading Policy

Exchange students are graded on the J.D. scale, but if allowed by their home institution they have the option to have all of their grades (for that semester and, if applicable, for the following one) converted to the General LL.M. grading scale (HH/H/S/U). A grade of HH is appropriate for students who would have received an A or higher, H is appropriate for students who would have received a grade in the B+ to A- range, S is appropriate for students who would have received a grade in the range of C to B, and U is appropriate for students who would have received a D+ or lower grade. Merit points are not assigned to HH, H, S, and U grades. Students who elect to be graded on the General LL.M. scale must confirm their election within the first four weeks of their first semester at Cornell. Students must receive written confirmation from the home school advisor that the General Studies LL.M. grading scale is acceptable prior to confirming their election to be graded on that scale.