

**PROPOSAL TO THE UIUC SENATE COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATIONAL POLICY**

FOR INFORMATION OF UIUC SENATE

**REVISION OF GRADE NOTATION AND CREDIT DESIGNATION**

**Sponsor:** UI-Integrate Faculty Advisory Committee, David N. Ruzic, Chair, and Bruce Branham, Member of the Senate Committee on Educational Policy and the UI-Integrate Faculty Advisory Committee. April 9, 2001.

**Brief Description:** Two proposed changes brings the University of Illinois into closer alignment with the “best practices” of other peer institutions and benefits our students. Implementation of the UI-Integrate project has provided the impetus to make the proposed changes and drives the timing of such decisions.

- (1) Both graduate and undergraduate courses at UIUC would have credit designated in credit hours instead of “units” for graduate work and “credit hours” for undergraduate work. The class roster would contain other descriptors informing the instructor if the course were being taken for undergraduate or graduate credit.
- (2) There would be one uniform set of grades that would be the only official grades at the University of Illinois. Within this set, UIUC could determine which grades to use and which grades to allow for a specific course. **This proposal contains no substantive change in grading policy or practice.** The definition of the grades would not change, only the notation used. The notation changes that would take effect at UIUC are as follows:

Grades given by faculty:

I = incomplete *replaces* EX = excused  
 DFR = deferred *replaces* Df = deferred  
 ABS = absent *replaces* Ab = absent

Grades used by the registrar on transcripts:

NR = not reported *replaces* Miss = missing grade  
 PS = passing grade *replaces* Pass = passing grade  
 AU = audit *replaces* Visitor = audit  
*Elimination of* IP = in progress, such courses are denoted in a separate BANNER section  
 F = fail *replaces* Fail = failing grade used in classes attempted but not passed \*  
 F = fail *replaces* \*\*F = grade of F has replaced Ex or DF due to time limitations \*  
 CR = credit *replaces* SA = graduate transfer credit \*  
 CR = credit *replaces* \*\* = which is currently used for undergraduate transfer credit, religious foundation courses, study abroad courses receiving a CR taken CR/NC option, and study abroad courses taken for graduate credit \*

\* Note: The academic record of a student would still contain the detailed information in these categories and would still be available to advisors, etc. (See justification or attached documents.)

**Justification:** Each of these changes will benefit students. They will also ease the implementation of the UI-Integrate project.

(1) The practice of using units is virtually unique to UIUC, and UIUC graduate transcripts can be confusing. Potential employers, fellowship committees, departments being transferred to, admission committees to professional school, etc. may wonder at first why the courses taken received so little credit and why so little course work was required. Adopting the almost-universal practice of designating course credit by credit hours would eliminate this confusion and benefit our students.

UIUC has used units for graduate course work for a very long time. The practice likely evolved as a convenient way to distinguish between the type of credit being earned in a particular class which may have both undergraduate and graduate students. In addition, some undergraduates can take classes for graduate credit and some graduate students can take classes for undergraduate credit. Using units vs. hours in the records is one way to track what type of credit was earned. The need to distinguish between graduate and undergraduate credit is faced at UIC, UIS and virtually all other major institutions of higher education. However, they handle and track the distinction without resorting to different course credit designations.

It is a common practice for an instructor to treat students taking a class for graduate credit differently than students taking a class for undergraduate credit. The workloads, academic expectations and grading policies all may differ. The instructor must be able to distinguish what type of credit is being earned. Knowing whether a student is an undergraduate or graduate is not sufficient. The 5-yr BS/MS degree program in accountancy at UIUC is a prime example. In a given semester a student may be taking some classes for undergraduate credit and others for graduate credit. A classmate in the same program may designate the same classes in the opposite manner. Either student could be classified as an undergraduate (if in his or her 4<sup>th</sup> year) or a graduate student (if in his or her 5<sup>th</sup> year). There must be a way to distinguish between these four possible cases:

- (a) Graduate student taking a class for graduate credit.
- (b) Graduate student taking a class for undergraduate credit.
- (c) Undergraduate student taking a class for graduate credit.
- (d) Undergraduate student taking a class for undergraduate credit.

This record-tracking difficulty is not unique to UIUC. Instructors at the 61 other members of the AAU and at UIC and UIS, have mechanisms in place to distinguish between the four possibilities listed above. The UI-Integrate BANNER software will be configured to distinguish these four cases.

Some courses receive more credit if being taken as a graduate course than if taken as an undergraduate course. At UIUC this can be denoted by offering the course for 3 credit hours or for 1 unit. At UIC and other places this same situation is denoted by offering the course for 3 credit hours to receive undergraduate credit or for 4 credit hours to receive graduate credit. Some courses can be taken for a variable amount of credit, say 0.25 to 2 units. There would be no change to that policy. The course could simply be taken for 1 to 8 credit hours instead. The UI-Integrate BANNER software can handle these situations.

(2) The transcript of an institution of higher learning should be easy to understand. Employers, admission committees, etc. expect a certain degree of uniformity. Some grades such as Ab or Df can be misunderstood as being half-way between an "A" and a "B" or a "D" and an "F". Other grades such as SA and \*\* are unique to UIUC and are not readily understood. Since the BANNER program is easiest to implement if a uniform set of possible grades across the three campuses are implemented, an opportunity exists to make University of Illinois transcripts more

easily understood and conforming without incurring additional costs. Note that the grading system is not being changed at all. Only some of the symbols used for the grades are being altered. BANNER allows three characters in a grade, and does not distinguish between upper and lower case.

The current UIUC transcript includes the SA, \*\*, Fail and \*\*F designations which can be confusing to student's potential employers or graduate schools. On the other hand, these distinctions can be very useful to a student's advisor, Dean's office or faculty. **That utility is not lost by adopting this proposal.** The origin of how credit was obtained for a specific course, or how a failure was achieved, will still be kept in the system and be readily accessible by users of the BANNER system.

Each of the other UI campuses are making changes as well. For informational purposes:

*Changes to Springfield's current grading system:*

F = fail *replaces* U = unsatisfactory (failing) or unofficially withdrawn

DFR = deferred *replaces* R = deferred

R = repeated *replaces* Y = repeated

*Changes to Chicago's current grading system:*

F = fail *replaces* E = fail

F = fail *replaces* ER = failure by rule

CR = credit *replaces* P = pass (in pass/fail option)

NC = no credit *replaces* F = fail (in pass/fail option)

PS = passing grade *replaces* Pass = pass for proficiency and special exams

F = fail *replaces* Fail = fail for special examinations

DFR = deferred *replaces* Df = deferred

The complete set of grades at the University of Illinois would become as follows. Note that the second portion of these grades is used exclusively at the UIC medical school and conform with the best practices of other medical schools.

A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-

F = fail

W = authorized withdrawal

DFR = deferred

CR = credit for credit/ no credit courses

NC = no credit for credit/ no credit courses

PS = pass

NR = not recorded for missing grades or in-progress courses

AU = audited

R = repeated

I = incomplete

ABS = absent

S = satisfactory

U = unsatisfactory

*Grades primarily used at UIC's medical school:*

NG = non-graded experience

O = outstanding

HON = honors

ADV = advanced

PR = proficient

AA = above average

AVG = average

BA = below average

**Budgetary and Staff Implications:** The administrative actions and computer services needed to affect these changes are already budgeted as part of the UI-Integrate project. There will be additional costs to the Departments in changing documents describing course work in graduate programs. There is no impact on the library.

**Statement for Program of Study:**

Pages 33 and 34 of the 2001-2003 Program of Study would need to be as follows:  
Occurrences of the phrase "EX-Temporarily Excused" should be replaced with "I-Incomplete".  
Occurrences of the phrase, "DF" should be replaced with "DFR".  
Occurrences of the phrase "Ab" should be replaced with "ABS".  
Occurrences of the phrase "Miss-Missing Grade" should be replaces with "NR – Not Reported"  
Occurrences of the phrase "Pass" should be replaced with "PS".

(A copy of the pages before and after revision are available as an attachment.)

**Effective Date:** The effective date of these changes should coincide with their implementation in the UI-Integrate project. BANNER is scheduled to be fully implemented and in use by May 2004. Curriculum data must therefore be finished by March 2004, ready for Summer and Fall 2004 registration. Though this sounds distant, policy implications such as the ones discussed here need to be largely completed by March 2002 so that the "Design Phase" can begin and run through March 2003. Then the "Implementation Phase" begins and is finished in time for its March 2004 deadline.

**Clearance:**



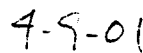
David N. Ruzic, chair of UI-Integrate Faculty Advisory Committee



Date



Office of the Provost



Date