



Proposal to the Senate Educational Policy Committee

PROPOSAL TITLE: Revision to Student Code 3-104 Other Grade Symbols in Use

SPONSOR: Allison McKinney, Assistant Dean, Academic Affairs, Graduate College
(agrindly@illinois.edu)

COLLEGE CONTACT: Allison McKinney, Assistant Dean, Academic Affairs, Graduate College

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: This policy revision seeks to update the description of DFR grades in the Student Code to align with a policy change for grading 599 – thesis research courses for graduate students. I have attached the full policy revision to the Graduate College Handbook in Appendix A of this proposal.

Student Code Revision: <https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article3/part1/3-104>

DFR Grade temporarily deferred. To be used only in those ~~thesis, research, and~~ special problems, or capstone courses extending over more than one semester that are taken by graduate students (excluding 599 thesis research hours) ~~as preparation for the thesis~~ and by undergraduate students in satisfaction of the requirements for graduation with honors, and in other approved courses that extend over more than one semester.

Requests for approval to use the DFR grade in courses that extend over more than one semester, which therefore require postponement of the final grade report, must be submitted in writing by the executive officer of the department offering the courses to the dean of the college for concurrence. A copy of the approval will be sent to the Office of the Registrar, which maintains a list of all courses approved for the DFR grade.

Graduate students: The symbol DFR ~~in courses other than thesis (499/599)~~ must be converted to a permanent grade no later than the end of the next semester in which the student is registered. If no grade change is submitted within that period, the DFR will be converted as follows: for letter graded courses to an F, for courses graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory to a U, and for courses taken on Credit/No Credit basis to an NC. ~~The DFR symbol for thesis courses (499/599) stands indefinitely until a Supplemental Grade Report Form is submitted by the adviser at the completion (successful or unsuccessful) of the thesis.~~

JUSTIFICATION:

The Graduate College Executive Committee has discussed and approved this policy change, please see appendix A for full policy proposal concerning the changes in grading practices for thesis research courses.

BUDGETARY AND STAFF IMPLICATIONS: *(Please respond to each of the following questions.)*

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall 2025

STATEMENT FOR PROGRAMS OF STUDY CATALOG:

Policy revision will appear in the Graduate College Handbook and the Student Code. See Appendix A.

CLEARANCES: *(Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval. These signatures must appear on a separate sheet. If multiple departments or colleges are sponsoring the proposal, please add the appropriate signature lines below.)*

Signatures:

Unit Representative:

Date:

College Representative:

Date:

Allison McKinney

Graduate College Representative:

11/22/24

Date:

Council on Teacher Education Representative:

Date:

Appendix A

Proposal to the Graduate College Executive Committee for New/Revised Graduate College Policy

PROPOSAL TITLE: Revise Policy for Grading of 599 Thesis Research Courses

SPONSOR: Allison McKinney, Assistant Dean Academic Affairs

BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Revision to the Grading Policies for Thesis Research Credit and Recording of Deposit Information on the Transcript.

BACKGROUND: This proposal seeks to change the policy and practice of automatic assignment of “DFR” grades in Thesis Research 599 courses, with final grades of “S” being assigned at the time of deposit. Our long-standing practice has been to automatically assign DFR grades to thesis research courses rather than providing faculty with an opportunity to enter a semester grade based on academic assessment of the student’s progress has presented some challenges that we are seeking to alleviate with these changes.

Additionally, we seek to establish a new practice of recording deposit activity and dates on the transcript. Currently, we record preliminary and final exam activity and dates on the transcript. This proposal would establish a practice of recording the following additional academic milestones on the student’s transcript:

1. Dissertation Deposit/Date
2. Master’s Thesis Deposit/Date
3. Non-Thesis Option

JUSTIFICATION: There are several student benefits that this policy change is seeking to establish.

1. Giving credit for research credit each semester along the way. Under current policy, if a student registers in 599 credit and later decides to change to a non-thesis option for their Masters program, the practice is for those students to petition for those credits to remain as “DFR” permanently on their student record. Without final grades assigned, these hours do not contribute toward degree requirements or completed hours. This has presented challenges for previous students in communicating academic experiences with employers.
2. Prompting academic progress feedback at the end of each semester. Along with the annual review process, faculty would assign grades to students to indicate satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress on research activity. At this time, those conversations may be verbal, but there is no academic record update to provide students with that academic assessment

throughout their program. Through the assignment of S/U grades each semester, the student's academic record more accurately describes their academic progress in the degree program.

3. Providing faculty awareness of their students enrolled each semester in their 599 sections. With current practice, faculty are not prompted to enter grades for these sections and so are not always aware of the students who enroll in their sections. We have had history of students enrolling in 599 credit for many semesters without discussion with their advisors. Additionally, without that end of semester grade entry, we are finding registration issues at the time of graduation for a student that must be corrected (for example, registered in the wrong section of 599). It would be best to catch those issues close to the time of enrollment, rather than creating additional tasks for the student at the time of graduation.

4. Recording deposit information provides a more complete picture of the student's academic record by inclusion of deposit actions or if the student chose the non-thesis option for their masters degree.

BUDGETARY AND STAFF IMPLICATIONS: This change will impact Office of the Registrar staff, initially requiring some system updates, but eventually decreasing work on the part of their team. This will require faculty to assign grades each semester in 599 courses.

COMMUNICATION PLAN: We will communicate this policy revision to all faculty/staff/students as soon as the policy has been approved and grading system updates are in place.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: Fall 2025. We will not require any retroactive grade changes. This process will apply to 599 registrations beginning Fall 2025 and going forward.

Transcript notations for deposit activity could begin as early as Fall 2024.

NEW/REVISED POLICY STATEMENT:

Graduate College Handbook

3.1 Grading System

DFR: Grade deferred. To be used only in courses that extend over more than one semester excluding 599 research credit. those thesis, research, and special problems courses extending over more than one semester that are taken by graduate students as preparation for the thesis, and in other approved courses that extend over more than one semester. The symbol DFR in courses other than thesis (499 / 599). The grade must be converted to a permanent grade no later than 5:00 p.m. on Reading Day of the next semester in which the student is registered. If no grade change is submitted within that period, the DFR will be converted as follows: for graded courses to an F, for S / U courses to a U, and for CR NC courses to a NC. The DFR symbol for thesis courses (499 / 599) stands indefinitely until a grade is submitted by the adviser at the completion (successful or unsuccessful) of the thesis.

4.1 Graduate Degree Requirements

Research Credit and 599

A student cannot deposit a thesis without record of registration in thesis research credit (599). ~~Likewise, students with a record of registration in research credit will be required to deposit a thesis to complete their degree.~~ Graduate students should register for research credit during semesters when they are working on the thesis.

Departments may set criteria that determine at what point in the program students may begin registering for 599 credits. Registration in 599 must always be done with the approval of the student's adviser.

~~Faculty will assign a "S" or "U" grade at the end of each semester to indicate satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress. S/U grades do not impact GPA, but if there is a history of unsatisfactory progress on thesis research, the student may be placed on academic warning status through the department recommended academic warning process. The grade of DFR (deferred) is reported for research credit until the thesis has been completed, successfully defended if required, and deposited in the Graduate College. When a thesis is successfully defended and deposited, the DFR grades will be changed to S (satisfactory). If the student fails the final defense, the grade becomes of U (unsatisfactory) will be assigned for that semester, and the thesis cannot be deposited.~~

~~Students who have registered for thesis research credit and who later decide to complete the non-thesis option of the degree may graduate with graded 599 credit. It may be appropriate to convert some of the thesis research credit into project hours. It will be up to the department to determine if any of the thesis research credit may apply towards non-thesis degree requirements.~~

~~If research credit is taken but thesis work is not completed is not deposited, the 599 registration cannot be removed from the record. If the work will not be completed, the student must successfully petition for grades to permanently remain as DFR in order to receive a degree. Students will not be certified for a degree with any grades of DFR in their academic record unless a petition has been approved.~~

Student Code Revision

<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article3/part1/3-104>

DFR Grade temporarily deferred. To be used only in those ~~thesis, research, and~~ special problems, or capstone courses extending over more than one semester that are taken by graduate students (~~excluding 599 thesis research hours~~) ~~as preparation for the thesis~~ and by undergraduate students in satisfaction of the requirements for graduation with honors, and in other approved courses that extend over more than one semester.

Requests for approval to use the DFR grade in courses that extend over more than one

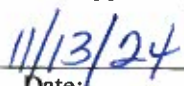
semester, which therefore require postponement of the final grade report, must be submitted in writing by the executive officer of the department offering the courses to the dean of the college for concurrence. A copy of the approval will be sent to the Office of the Registrar, which maintains a list of all courses approved for the DFR grade.

Graduate students: The symbol DFR ~~in courses other than thesis (499/599)~~ must be converted to a permanent grade no later than the end of the next semester in which the student is registered. If no grade change is submitted within that period, the DFR will be converted as follows: for letter graded courses to an F, for courses graded Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory to a U, and for courses taken on Credit/No Credit basis to an NC. ~~The DFR symbol for thesis courses (499/599) stands indefinitely until a Supplemental Grade Report Form is submitted by the adviser at the completion (successful or unsuccessful) of the thesis.~~


CLEARANCES: *(Clearances should include signatures and dates of approval.)*



Graduate College Unit Representative:



Date:



Graduate College Dean:

11/22/2024

Date:

Approved by the Graduate College Executive Committee on November 13, 2024

From: [Hazen, Meghan](#)
To: [McKinney, Allison Ann](#)
Subject: GC grading policy changes
Date: Friday, November 22, 2024 2:21:54 PM

TO: Educational Policy Committee
FR: Meghan Hazen, Registrar
RE: Proposed changes to the Graduate College grading policy
DA: 11/12/2024

I am writing to express my support for the grading policy changes proposed by the Graduate College. These changes will require the Office of the Registrar to make some adjustments to our systems and processes, but ultimately will reduce our workload. Additionally, it is helpful to us when certifying degrees if no DFR grades remain on the record for students who opt to complete a non-thesis option for their Master's degree.

Meghan Hazen
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