Frequently Asked Questions: Interim Grades

For further questions and concerns, please contact:
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What’s the point of these grades?
Interim grades are for two main audiences: Students and advisors.

Students get concrete feedback (visible in SOAR) about how they are doing at this early point in the semester. Such feedback is especially important in larger courses in which students have less interaction with instructors and may be unaware (or trying to ignore) where they stand in the class. If they are performing poorly, it is still early enough for most students to improve their grades dramatically. If the student cannot improve for whatever reason, he or she will still have time to request a W in the class before the deadline (October 30).

Advisors can also see students’ interim grades in SOAR, which can be very helpful for starting a realistic conversation about resources, study habits, and balancing work and school when the student comes to be advised for spring 2016.

Outside of the students and advisors seeing the interim grades, is anything done for students who are doing poorly?
Yes. A variety of study skills workshops, tutoring opportunities, and other upcoming events will be publicized to struggling students through the interim grade process. Students who have an overall interim GPA below a 2.0 will be contacted to call their attention to such resources and to academic support classes on campus that might help them improve their grades (particularly those that are offered in the 2nd 8 weeks of fall). Students will also be reminded of the deadline to drop a class with a W. In addition, Associate Deans in each college will be able to look at students with low grades in core courses (regardless of their overall GPA) and reach out to those students about strategies to improve. Finally, students who receive “Not Attending” (NA) grades
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will be contacted about the need to attend or withdraw and the potential financial aid implications of receiving NA grades.

The students haven’t earned many grades in my class yet. Can I just give everyone a C since I don’t know where they’ll be at the end of the term?
In order for these interim grades to be helpful to students and advisors, they have to be a true snapshot of where the student is academically, given the work he or she has done in the class thus far. Please do not give “placeholder” grades (e.g., everyone in the class is given a B or a C). Instead, give the students as realistic an estimate as you can of how they are performing at this juncture.

What if you don’t have grades to give yet?
I realize that in some courses no grades have yet been given and pressure to submit something has created a problem. Some faculty members have brought to my attention, for instance, that certain courses in the arts are built around performances that will not happen until after the interim grade deadline, so the students have not yet done the work. Clearly, giving a valid letter grade by October 2 in such cases is not possible. If you are an instructor of such a course, give all enrolled students the grade of “Incomplete.” These courses are the exceptions, however. If you have a regular, full-semester course, please give a letter grade.

Why should I give any assignments this early in the semester, anyway?
Research consistently shows that assignments early in the term can improve student performance and increase their likelihood of finishing the course. The University-wide Student Success Committee’s 2013 report emphasized the importance of early grades, and Academic Council supported this idea. We thus encourage you to consider ways to give students early feedback, and we welcome the opportunity to talk about what this might look like in particular courses (or to better understand why it is not appropriate in others).