

The Senate of Michigan Technological University

Superseded

PROPOSAL 1-83

EXTENDED USE OF 'P' GRADE

The letter grade of 'P' for progress may be used in addition to all other appropriate grades in certain undergraduate project courses where projects may carry over for more than one term. Only courses that have received formal departmental approval, with endorsement by the appropriate College Dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs, may use a 'P' grade.

BACKGROUND:

Certain courses in the required Physics curriculum (Senior Laboratory PH411, 412, 413 and occasionally Special Problems in Physics PH490) result in projects which cannot be accomplished in one term. The necessity for providing a term grade often works a hardship on either the student or the instructor. An 'X' grade is unfair since it may not be the student's fault and temporarily, at least, affects his point average. A grade of 'I' both burdens the department head with approval and allows the student an optional year to finish, which is not desirable. Furthermore, it is on occasion partially the student's fault and an 'I' grade is unwarranted while extenuating circumstances may have also contributed to the incomplete so that a grade of 'X' is not correct either. A letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F requires that the instructor give the grade for the wrong reasons. For example, an A or B may be given in the fall term of Senior Lab to encourage the student since the project cannot be evaluated even though the work accomplished thus far may have warranted a lesser grade. Stated another way, projects often proceed at an erratic pace (i.e. waiting for parts, waiting for student time, waiting for the student to understand the entire problem, etc.) while academic terms come on a regular schedule bearing little or no relationship to the project timing. The same reasons that dictate an interim grade of 'P' for graduate thesis work may also prevail for certain undergraduate projects, although the time scale is often shorter. It is not intended that this grade be used for courses other than project courses at the Junior or Senior level nor that this be the only grade used in such a course.

Some attention must be directed to the student who never finishes a project either because he fails to enroll in the next term or because he simply gives up and drifts away. The 'P' grade does not count toward graduation and would at graduation revert to the instructor to replace it with a conventional letter grade for each term. The instructor is now in a position to correctly evaluate the student's accomplishments and does not have to guess at anticipated results.

The suggested change will give teachers better control at the grading process and allow them to do a fairer job. At the same time it recognizes that nontrivial undergraduate projects often take more time than one term and should be graded on the student's overall performance on the project.

Adopted by Senate: 15 December 1982

Approved by Administration: 17 February 1983

See Proposal 13-99