

Veterans Grading Change Policy

- There is no requirement for the institution of higher learning (IHL) to report a conversion from one standard grading practice/policy (A-F, W, or I) to a Pass/Fail practice. However, veteran students must be aware that the conversion may result a non-punitive grade if the student fails the class. Rules concerning non-punitive grades have not changed. Although VA does not typically make payments for classes resulting in non-punitive grades, if COVID 19 is reported as mitigating circumstances for the student's receipt of a non-punitive grade (i.e., Fail in a Pass/Fail class) VA will pay for the class. Additionally, the School Certifying Officer (SCO) Handbook contains more information about reporting non-punitive grades and mitigating circumstances. Veteran students are responsible to report mitigating circumstances to the SUNY Canton SCO.
- Will VA pay for my benefits if my school changes from a standard grade scale (A, B, C...) to a Pass/Fail or other grading system due to COVID-19 national emergency?
 - This will depend on your school's current grading policy, and you will need to check with your School Certifying Official. Rules about failing grades have not changed.

Seminar

Q12) Should IHL's report enrollment changes when they temporarily change from a standard grade scale (A, B, C...) to a Pass/Fail or other grading system due to COVID-19 national emergency?

No, there is no need to report a conversion from a standard grading scale to a Pass/Fail or similar grading systems but there are other implications in doing so. Depending on the IHL's grading policy, classes taken Pass/Fail may result in a non-punitive grade if the student fails the class. Rules about non-punitive grades have not changed.

- Although VA does not typically make payments for classes resulting in non-punitive grades, if COVID 19 is reported as mitigating circumstances for the student's receipt of a non-punitive grade (i.e., Fail in a Pass/Fail class) VA will pay for the class.
- Refer to the SCO handbook for more information about reporting non-punitive grades and mitigating circumstances.

Note: The IHL must make SAA aware of change in grading system.

Q6. Will VA pay for my benefits if my school changes from a standard grade scale (A, B, C...) to a Pass/Fail or other grading system due to COVID-19 national emergency?

It depends on your school's grading policy, and you will need to check with your School Certifying Official. Rules about failing grades have not changed.

SCO Manual -

Non-punitive Grades

A non-punitive grade is a grade that doesn't count as earned credit and isn't considered in progress standards for graduation. A withdrawal after the drop period is non-punitive if it isn't calculated into the student's GPA or it isn't considered in academic progress criteria like probation and suspension. Non-punitive grades have the same effect as an audit. They don't apply to the degree and they don't affect academic progress. Non-punitive repeat grades do not have to be reported under some circumstance. Review the forgiveness policy under Repeating Courses.

Punitive Grades

A punitive grade is a grade assigned for pursuit of a course which is used in determining the student's overall progress toward completion of the school's requirements for graduation, e.g., a failing grade. Unlike the non-punitive grade, the punitive grade does affect the criteria to be met by the student for graduation, i.e., it is a factor in computing the student's grade average or grade point average.

UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS, CONDUCT, AND ATTENDANCE

(38 CFR 21.4203(d), 38 CFR 21.4277, 38 CFR 21.7154, 38 CFR 21.7653(c), 38 CFR 21.7654, and 38 CFR 21.9725)

The law requires that educational assistance benefits to Veterans and other eligible persons be discontinued when the student ceases to make satisfactory progress toward completion of his or her training objective. Benefits can be resumed if the student reenrolls in the same educational institution and in the same program. In other cases, benefits cannot be resumed unless VA finds that the cause of the unsatisfactory attendance, conduct or progress has been removed and the program of education or training to be pursued by the student is suitable to his or her aptitudes, interests, and abilities.

Both accredited and non-accredited schools are required by law to have and to enforce standards of progress and conduct in order for their programs to be approved for VA benefits. Only non-accredited schools are required by federal law to have attendance standards. These standards should be stated plainly in the school's catalog or bulletin. A school's policy and regulations for standards of progress, conduct and attendance must define:

- The school's grading system
- The minimum satisfactory grade level
- Conditions for interruption of training due to unsatisfactory grades or progress A description of any probationary period
- Conditions for a student's reentrance or readmission following dismissal or suspension for unsatisfactory progress
- Conditions for dismissal due to unsatisfactory conduct

The school's attendance policy

All schools are required to maintain an academic record for each student which includes, for a Veteran or eligible person, the credit allowed toward the student's current program due to previous training and experience. The record must also show the results of each enrollment period, to include the unit courses or subjects undertaken and the final result (e.g., grade, passed, failed, withdrawn, test results). The record must be cumulative and document the progress being made toward completion of the program. For those institutions that use a narrative grading system and/or unspecified academic terms, as opposed to the traditional grading system and specified terms, the academic record must contain sufficient information

to permit the recipient of a transcript to make an informed evaluation of the student's educational experience. For those institutions not operating on a term basis, the record must show the student's proficiency at the various stages in the training program.

School officials are responsible for enforcing their established standards of progress. This will require that the school specify intervals between enrollment and graduation (i.e., completion) when each student's progress will be evaluated. Each such evaluation must compare the student's progress with clearly defined progress standards such as:

- For programs offered on a term basis, a minimum grade average or credit level which should bear a reasonable relationship to final attainment of graduation requirements. It is frequently appropriate that separate evaluations be made for overall grade point average and the grade point average attained in courses from the student's major field of study.
- For programs not offered on a term basis, a minimum proficiency level expected of a student if he or she is to successfully complete the program within the number of hours of training that has been approved by the SAA. Measurement of a student's proficiency should be based on instruction appraisals, graded course work, periodic testing, or other techniques that will permit an evaluation of student's progress toward satisfactory completion of the program.

When a student has failed to maintain prescribed standards of progress, VA must be informed promptly so that benefit payments can be discontinued in accordance with the law. The termination date assigned by the school will be the last day of the term or other evaluation period in which the student's progress became unsatisfactory. Schools that provide a period of academic probation may not continue to certify a Veteran or eligible person (who remains in a probationary status) for an indefinite period of time. It is reasonable to expect that an institution will report a termination due to unsatisfactory progress if a student remains on academic probation beyond 2 terms, quarters, or semesters.

Non-punitive Grade

A non-punitive grade is a grade that doesn't count as earned credit and isn't considered in progress standards for graduation. A withdrawal after the drop period is non-punitive if it isn't calculated into the eligible individual's GPA or it isn't considered in academic progress criteria like probation and suspension. Non-punitive grades have the same effect as an audit. If an eligible individual withdraws after the drop period or completes the term with non-punitive grades, the non-punitive grades must be reported to VA if they change training time. Examples of non-punitive grades are an "X" (no basis for grade), "NP" (no pass), or "U" (unsatisfactory) that doesn't count as earned credit and isn't calculated progress standards. Grades such as P (Pass) or S (Satisfactory) aren't calculated into an eligible individual's grade point average, **but** they are counted as earned credit for graduation requirements. Since these grades count as earned credit towards graduation, they aren't non-punitive.