

Contingency Plan for Grading and Final Grades, Fall 2012

Jon Driver, Vice-President, Academic, 9th November 2012

Introduction

Currently the University is experiencing a variety of job actions from TSSU and CUPE 3338. The outcomes of these actions currently include:

- a. sessional instructors and teaching assistants will not teach scheduled classes, labs, tutorials etc., when these are behind picket lines
- b. sessional instructors, teaching assistants and tutor markers will mark submitted work as required by their contracts, but will not provide grades to their supervisors
- c. students may decide not to cross picket lines to attend classes, exams etc.

The University continues to seek agreements with TSSU and CUPE. Although we cannot predict when this will happen, we remain hopeful that agreements will be reached before the end of the semester. Currently, students and faculty members are asking how grades will be assigned if labour action continues into the exam period or past the deadline for the submission of final grades. Therefore, we wish to provide information for students whose courses and grades are being affected by labour actions, as well as guidance for faculty members, department chairs, and Faculty deans, who are responsible for the submission of final grades for student work.

Information on a wide range of issues connected with the labour actions is available at

<http://www.sfu.ca/srs/labourupdate.html>

and regular updates can also be found there. This document specifically concerns grades for student work.

In the following sections “faculty members” refers to lab instructors, lecturers, and professors who are members of SFUFA.

Principles

The following principles help structure the guidelines and advice in this document. They should also be used by faculty members and administrators when trying to make decisions about particular situations.

1. The University will attempt to minimize inconvenience and harm to students that might result from labour actions.
2. All planned assignments, tests, exams etc. described in the course outline will continue to be required of students.
3. Students will be informed as early as possible about the format of assignments, tests, exams, etc.

4. The grading weights established in the course outline should be used to assign a final grade.
5. Students in similar circumstances should be treated equitably.
6. Final grades that contribute to a student's cumulative GPA will not be assigned until there is a sufficient basis for evaluating work and assigning a final grade.

Scenarios and guidelines

The following scenarios cover what we believe will be common situations concerning grading and assignment of final grades if labour actions continue. Each scenario is followed by guidelines on how to proceed. Because we cannot anticipate every circumstance, chairs and deans are encouraged to make decisions based on the above principles and the guidelines below. These scenarios mainly concern events up to the deadline for the submission of final grades. Should new circumstances arise, these guidelines will be modified or further guidelines will be issued.

A. Students are in a course taught by a faculty member, with no TA or no marking to be done by a TA

The grading protocol established at the start of the course should be followed. Grading of work and submission of a final grade will proceed as usual.

B. Students are unable to complete work or attend an exam due to labour action

Students should refer to <http://www.sfu.ca/srs/labourupdate/studentlinks.html>

Faculty members and sessional instructors should try to accommodate students who cannot submit work or attend the exam, and who have followed the instructions provided on the website above.

If major labour action occurs during the scheduled final exam period, more detailed guidelines will be issued.

C. When the faculty member and TA completed the time use guidelines at the start of the semester, the TA was assigned marking duties towards the end of the semester and during the exam period

There are a number of ways to deal with this situation, and faculty members could follow any one of the below, or a combination.

(i) The faculty member may take over responsibility for marking. Faculty members may ask colleagues to help with heavy marking schedules that they have taken over from the TA. Faculty members hired after 29th March 2010 may not do either of the above.

(ii) Although the faculty member may not make significant changes to the types of assessment and their weights advertised in the original course outline, the faculty member may change the format, so as to facilitate marking without the assistance of a TA. For example, if the course calls for a final exam worth 25%, the exam must proceed and the weight must be 25%. But if the faculty member had planned a final exam in which students would provide short answers to be marked by a TA, that format could be

replaced by a final exam in which students were assigned multiple choice questions to be machine marked. Faculty members hired after 29th March 2010 may not make such changes.

(iii) Alternatively, the faculty member may still assign marking to the TA; if the TA withholds grades, students will be assigned a final grade of GN. When the labour action ends, the TA will submit grades and the students' final grades will be revised.

D. Students are in a class where a sessional instructor (SI) has responsibility for submission of final grades, and the TSSU prohibition on submission of grades is still in place when grades are due

The department chair (or equivalent) will assign a grade of GN. When the labour action ends and the SI submits the grades, the students' records will be changed.

E. Students are in an online class for which a tutor marker (TM) has responsibility for submission of grades, and the TSSU prohibition on submission of grades is still in place when grades are due.

The faculty member responsible for the course and/or department chair (or equivalent) will assign a grade of GN. When the labour action ends and the TM submits the grades, the students' records will be revised.

F. Students are in a class taught by a faculty member, and a component of the work (e.g., the midterm exam) has been graded by a teaching assistant (TA) who has not submitted grades to the faculty member.

The faculty member responsible for the course and/or department chair (or equivalent) will assign a grade of GN. When the labour action ends and the TA submits the grades, the students' records will be revised.

G. Students are in a class taught by a faculty member. The grading of some material has been split between the faculty member and the TA, such that grades for some students are available, whereas grades for other students are not.

The faculty member responsible for the course and/or department chair (or equivalent) will assign a grade of GN for all students. When the labour action ends and the TA submits the grades, all the students' records will be revised.

H. A student needs information on a grade that has been withheld by a TA, TM or SI.

The student should ask the TA/TM/SI for information. However, a final grade cannot be provided by the University to an individual student until all the grades in a class have been approved by the department chair or equivalent. Refer to items I and J for special circumstances.

I. A student's future career will be affected by final grades being delayed beyond the normal date for submission of final grades. This might include graduation from SFU, admission to graduate school, an employment opportunity, eligibility to play in the NCAA, obtaining a visa, etc.

The student can contact the Registrar's Office at urecords@sfu.ca and explain the circumstances. The Registrar's Office will provide the student with a letter addressed to the appropriate organization that explains the circumstances.

J. A student is taking a course in fall 2012 as a prerequisite for a course in spring 2013, but submission of a final grade is delayed by labour action.

The registration system will accept GN as evidence that the student has completed the prerequisite. A few departments routinely ask the Registrar's Office to prepare a report on students who have not passed the prerequisite, so that students can be dropped from the course that requires the prerequisite before the next semester begins. This process will be implemented as usual once final grades are known. Students who believe that their performance in a prerequisite course may not have achieved the standard required are advised to discuss their performance with their TA, TM, instructor or faculty member, as appropriate.

K. Labour actions continue into next semester.

Although we believe this is very unlikely, the University will issue further guidelines if the situation changes.

Process for submitting GN grades.

The Grade Not Reported notation may be used if circumstances beyond the instructor's or University's control make it impossible for grades to be assigned for the entire class. The notation has no numerical equivalent and does not affect either the term grade point average or cumulative grade point average. The dean of the Faculty responsible advises the Registrar, in writing, that the notation GN is required for a course until grades can be submitted. GN is a temporary grade that will revert to a letter grade or notation.