Incomplete Grades: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Basics

What is an Incomplete? The University of Oregon defines Incomplete (I) grades as follows: (https://registrar.uoregon.edu/current-students/incomplete-policy)

*An incomplete may be issued when the quality of work is satisfactory, but some minor yet essential requirement has not been completed, for reasons acceptable to the instructor. Faculty and students should develop a contract outlining the requirements and specific deadlines for making up the incomplete.*

In other words, if you are currently passing a course but are prevented from finishing a key requirement (e.g. missing the final exam due to illness), your instructor may be willing to grant you an Incomplete (I)—a placeholder until you can complete the missing work and receive a letter grade for the course.

Consult with your course instructor and your advisor(s) as soon as possible if you are considering an Incomplete.

Q. Is an Incomplete a bad grade?
An Incomplete is nothing to be ashamed of. Life happens, and sometimes situations beyond our control affect our studies. Think of an Incomplete as an opportunity to move past these complications and finish a course into which you have already put hard work.

Q. Can I graduate if I have one or more Incompletes?
It depends. Having Incomplete grades does not automatically stop you from graduating. However, unfinished Incompletes roll over into grades of F or N prior to degree conferral. If those Fs and/or Ns lower your GPA below your major threshold or UO’s cumulative GPA (2.0) required for graduation, these Incompletes could prevent you from graduating.

Q. Should I take an Incomplete grade?
Whether you feel an Incomplete is the right decision for you will depend on your situation. In particular, it can become very difficult to juggle multiple Incomplete grades along with full quarters of coursework and other responsibilities. Here are some questions to discuss with an advisor if you’re considering an Incomplete:

- Am I working on more than one Incomplete?
- What is my coursework & schedule like during the upcoming quarter(s)?
- Have I found the instructor easy to communicate with?
- Do I have a clear, realistic plan for completing the work?
Obtaining an Incomplete

Q. How do I ask for an Incomplete?
Ask your instructor for an Incomplete with as much time before the end of the course as is possible in your situation. We recommend including the following information in an email:

• The reason for requesting an Incomplete
• Your current grade standing or estimate in the course, if you know it
• A list of the work you know you have left to complete
• Any incomplete drafts or outlines for an incomplete paper
• A tentative date or schedule for completing the work

Here is a sample template to get you started:

Dear Prof.,

I am a student in your [course code] class. I am struggling to finish the final pieces of work for this course due to [briefly describe emergency/issue] and I would like to talk to you about the possibility of taking an Incomplete.

Based on Canvas, I think I currently have a grade of ___. I know that the assignments I have left to complete are Assignment C and Assignment D. I think I would be able to complete these by the following dates:
Assignment C: June 15
Assignment D: June 30

I have attached the work I’ve done so far on Assignment C. If you have some time to discuss granting an Incomplete, I would be happy to meet with you to talk about this further.

Q. What if I haven’t done enough work to receive an Incomplete?
If you have not done enough work to achieve a passing grade in the course currently, you may not qualify to receive an Incomplete. You might consider withdrawing from (“dropping”) the course for a grade of W on your transcript. Depending on when you withdraw, you may or may not receive partial refund of tuition for that course.

Always speak with an advisor in OAA and a Financial Aid team member (if you receive federal aid or student loans) about your options before withdrawing.
More information about withdrawal: https://advising.uoregon.edu/registration-decisions

Q. What if my instructor doesn’t grant an Incomplete?
Instructors are not required to grant Incompletes under any circumstances. If your instructor doesn’t grant an Incomplete, it may be because you have missed too much class or too many prior assignments. Talk to an advisor about your options.

Most GEs are not allowed to grant Incompletes without approval from the program director, instructor of record, or department chair. Politely email your GE first with your request and wait for them to respond—don’t go over their head to the chair or director, and don’t take it personally if they can’t give you an answer themselves right away.
Finishing an Incomplete

Q. How long do I have to complete Incomplete work?
Students have one calendar year to make up an incomplete mark assigned by a UO faculty member. Earlier deadlines may be set by the instructor, dean, or department head. Exception: Students approved to reserve credit for a graduate degree follow the graduate student policy for those courses.

Q. What happens if I don’t finish?
Failure to make up the Incomplete by the end of one calendar year will result in the mark of I automatically changing to a grade of F or N.

Q. Can I just enroll in the same course a second time to finish the Incomplete?
If you “retake” the same course to finish an Incomplete, your Incomplete grade from the first course will automatically become a failing (F) grade.

Q. What if I’m having trouble reaching my instructor?
If you haven’t heard from your instructor in a while, send a polite email with an update on the work you’ve done so far. If you still have trouble reaching them, or if they’ve moved on to a different school, check in with your advisor and email the department chair or coordinator as well. Here’s an example of a polite email to a chair:

Dear Prof. Smith,
My name is [Name] and I am a student finishing an Incomplete for [Instructor’s] course from Winter Quarter. I am having a little trouble reaching [Instructor] by email - do you know if they are out of office this quarter? Thank you for any advice you can offer.

Q. What if I lose access to the course Canvas site?
Reach out to your course instructor. Instructors can file a UO support ticket to extend a student’s course access through your established Incomplete deadline.

Q. Where can I get support at the University of Oregon?
As you’re working on your Incomplete, take advantage of all the academic support resources UO has to offer. At the Tutoring and Academic Engagement Center (TAEC), the Learning Specialists (Math/Science, Study Skills, Writing) can meet with you to help develop a plan for finishing your Incompletes on time. The TAEC offers Incomplete-specific support at various times throughout the year as well as peer tutoring (including limited summer tutoring in Math and Writing).

Other academic support options during the year might include AEC, CMAE Tutoring, the Writing Associates and SOJC’s Writing Central, SUPeR Chem, the Math Library, and other programs. Check out the TAEC’s list of partner resources for more by scrolling to the bottom of the Tutoring page.

Q. How do I find out if my Incomplete has been changed to a grade?
Your instructor will submit a Grade Change Proposal to UO. Once the grade has been successfully changed from an I to your letter grade, you should see the update in DuckWeb and Navigate. Note: DuckWeb updates more frequently than Navigate.