

# GRADES

## Grade Reporting

Students have access to their academic records via the Student Information System (SIS).

See St. Olaf College Guidelines for the Release of Student Information under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) for St. Olaf's policy on release of students' academic information to third parties, including parents.

In compliance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), under no condition can grades be reported by telephone or to third parties, including parents, without specific written and signed authorization by the student.

## Graded and Ungraded Credits

A minimum of 24 graded credits out of 35 credits is required for graduation. Graded credits are credits awarded via courses taught by St. Olaf faculty. In most cases, these courses are taught on campus or through approved St. Olaf study abroad and away programs. A course taught at another institution by a St. Olaf faculty member also counts as a graded credit.

Credits transferred from PSEO, CIS, AP, IB, and Cambridge A Level do not reduce the number of graded credits required.

The graded credit requirement is reduced by scale in the following instances:

1. A student is admitted and matriculates at St. Olaf as a transfer student; see scale below.
2. Credits are transferred into St. Olaf from another institution following matriculation at St Olaf. Exception: credits taken on a study abroad or away program through another institution (not a St. Olaf approved program) will not reduce the number of graded course credits required for graduation.
3. Credits transferred from PSEO, CIS, AP, IB, and Cambridge A Level do not reduce the number of graded credits required.
4. St. Olaf approved study abroad and away programs totaling one semester (or less) will not reduce the number of graded credits required. When a student studies abroad or away through a St. Olaf approved program, the graded credit requirement is not reduced for January Term Exchange, summer, or one-semester length programs. A course taught by a St. Olaf instructor on a study abroad or away program is considered a graded course and counts toward the 24 required if taken for a letter grade.
5. St. Olaf approved study abroad and away programs totaling two semesters (or more) in length will reduce the number of graded credits required. The 24-graded-course requirement is reduced as follows:  
 Nine equivalent course credits earned abroad or away — four graded course credits reduced (24 to 20)  
 Eight equivalent course credits earned abroad or away — four graded course credits reduced (24 to 20)  
 Seven equivalent course credits earned abroad or away — three graded course credits reduced (24 to 21)  
 Six equivalent course credits earned abroad or away — three graded course credits reduced (24 to 21)

The following reduction scale by course quantity is used if not all course work is taken at St. Olaf (including non-approved study abroad or away programs):

St. Olaf Courses Taken	St. Olaf Graded Required
34	23
33	22
32	22
31	21
30	20
29	20
28	19
27	18
26	18
25	17
24	16
23	16
22	15
21	14
20	14
19	13
18	12
17	12

## Grade and Marking System

Final letter grades and their corresponding grade point values are listed below along with short descriptions at each grade level. The descriptions give students, faculty, graduate schools, and employers of St. Olaf graduates a general sense of the gradation of academic expectations at a glance.

The benchmarks below are meant only as a guideline for St. Olaf faculty and students. Individual faculty members are free to grade according to their own systems; students should consult with their professors for accurate information about course requirements and expectations.

Grade and marking systems vary on St. Olaf approved study and away programs. See The Smith Center for Global Engagement for more information.

Benchmarks	Description	Grade	Grade Point
Superior Achievement	Outstanding	A/A+	4.0
	Excellent	A-	3.7
Good Achievement	Very Good	B+	3.3
	Good	B	3.0
Adequate Achievement	Generally Good	B-	2.7
	Satisfactory	C+	2.3
Limited Achievement	Sufficient	C	2.0
	Marginal	C-	1.7
Very Poor Achievement	Poor	D+	1.3
	Very Poor	D	1.0
	Extremely Poor	D-	0.7

Inadequate Achievement	Failure	F	0.0
For P/N courses	Meets course expectations	P	no grade points
	Fails to meet course expectations	N	no credit
For S/U courses	C- or higher	S	no grade points
	D+ or lower	U	no credit
Withdrawals		W	no credit
Incomplete		I	no credit
Audits	Successful Audit	AU	no credit
	Unsuccessful Audit	UA	no credit

## Grade Benchmark Achievement Levels

### Superior achievement (A level)

*The grade of A recognizes exceptional performance and achievement that exceeds course expectations and consistently demonstrates, where applicable, many of the following characteristics:*

- Thorough, deep, and mature understanding.
- Genuine comprehension, insight, and synthesis.
- Significant mastery of challenging topics and issues.
- Extensive familiarity with relevant literature and previous work.
- Highly developed communication skills.
- Thorough preparation and extensive, thoughtful class participation.
- Integration of knowledge, concepts, and principles across disciplines.
- Originality of analysis and interpretation.
- Technical competence in skills and procedures.
- Precision of ideas and clarity of expression.
- Thinking that is independent, creative, and focused.
- Understanding of nuance and subtlety.
- Consistent coherence in argument and discussion.

*Students who receive the grade of A consistently demonstrate, where applicable, the ability to:*

- Analyze arguments using specific examples and original sources.
- Think logically, draw inferences, and make predictions in complicated situations.
- Communicate reasoning clearly and concisely.
- Think abstractly.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses in arguments, policies, and practices.

- Integrate information to draw well-founded conclusions.
- Connect course content to issues of other courses and world affairs.
- Use models appropriately; recognize their strengths and accommodate their inherent limitations.
- Foresee and evaluate consequences of proposed policies and actions.
- Use technology creatively and effectively.

### Good Achievement (B level)

*The grade of B recognizes work that meets course expectations and typically demonstrates, where applicable, many of the following characteristics:*

- Clear understanding without much originality.
- Competent grasp of course materials and subject matter.
- Familiarity with relevant literature.
- Competence in communication skills.
- Regular preparation for and participation in class.
- Integration of course knowledge, concepts, and procedures.
- Some evidence of critical and creative thought.
- Clear connections between inferences and evidence.
- Care in the use of evidence and quotations with only occasional thinness in argument, detail, or precision.

*Students who receive the grade of B typically demonstrate, where applicable, the ability to:*

- Extend ideas by connecting with personal experiences, reading, or world events.
- Analyze data in various forms and from varied sources.
- Utilize information to explain events, draw conclusions, and apply results.
- Present comprehensive answers in a clear and logically correct style.
- Understand and compare various models.
- Distinguish inputs from outputs and causes from effects.
- Recognize consequences of complex interactions.
- Use technology effectively.

### Adequate Achievement (C level)

*The grade of C recognizes work that is sufficient to prepare for continued study in the field and generally demonstrates, where applicable, some of the following characteristics:*

- Adequate grasp of course concepts.
- Partial mastery of knowledge and skills required for understanding.

- Incomplete familiarity with relevant readings or references.
- Writing that lists facts rather than develops well-reasoned arguments.
- Frequent neglect of important information.
- Partial appreciation of the meaning or implications of a question.
- Answers that are insufficiently developed.
- Minimally complete assignments with many areas for improvement.

*Students who receive the grade of C generally demonstrate, where applicable, some ability to:*

- Assimilate and communicate simple knowledge and procedures.
- Extend ideas by making simple inferences.
- Make connections among and draw conclusions from course concepts.
- Interpret simple information provided in various formats.
- Organize and display data in tables and graphs.
- Use technology competently.

**Limited Achievement (D level)**

*The grade of D indicates a lack of readiness to continue in the field. Students' work usually demonstrates, where applicable, some of the following characteristics:*

- Minimal understanding of the subject matter.
- Poorly developed communication skills.
- Inability to apply subject matter understanding in other contexts.
- Little evidence of critical or creative thinking.
- Lack of apparent seriousness.
- Frequent carelessness in fulfilling assignments.

**Inadequate Achievement (F)**

*The grade of F indicates that course work is insufficient to merit academic credit. Students who receive an F usually demonstrate some of the following characteristics:*

- Inadequate understanding of subject matter.
- Inadequate or inconsistent preparation.
- Frequent failure to complete assignments in a timely manner.
- Little evidence of critical thought.
- Very poor communication skills.
- Frequent misunderstanding of facts or references.
- Little or no analysis.
- Confused or incomprehensible writing.

- Little or no work offering evidence that course objectives have been met.

**Grade Point Average**

A grade point average of C (2.00) is required for graduation.

The grade point average (GPA) is based upon final grades for all course work taken at St. Olaf as well as for grades earned through inter-registration at Carleton College.

Grades and grade points for courses transferred from other institutions are not computed in the St. Olaf grade point average. Graded courses from St. Olaf approved study abroad and away programs are not computed in the grade point average unless the course is taught by a St. Olaf instructor.

S/U or P/N grades and credits earned through Advanced Placement (AP), Cambridge A Level Exams, International Baccalaureate (IB), College in the Schools (CIS), Post-Secondary Education Option (PSEO), or other pre-college credit are not computed in the grade point average.

The grade point average shows two decimal places (3.15, 2.36, etc.) and is never rounded up or down. It is determined by dividing the total number of St. Olaf and Carleton graded courses into the total grade points.

A course taken prior to graduation but repeated following graduation does not change the student's final GPA.

**Grade Points by Course Credit**

Grade/ Credit	1.00	0.75	0.50	0.25
A	4.00	3.00	2.00	1.00
A-	3.70	2.77	1.85	.92
B+	3.30	2.47	1.65	.82
B	3.00	2.25	1.50	.75
B-	2.70	2.02	1.35	.67
C+	2.30	1.72	1.15	.57
C	2.00	1.50	1.00	.50
C-	1.70	1.27	.85	.42
D+	1.30	.97	.65	.32
D	1.00	.75	.50	.25
D-	.70	.52	.35	.17

**Grade Changes**

Grade changes must be initiated within one year by the instructor issuing the original grade, either because the instructor notices the error or following a student inquiry. The intended purpose of the grade change procedure is to correct an instructor's computational or other error in reporting a grade, not to represent additional work on the part of the student. The only allowable grade changes based on additional student work require formal approval of an incomplete (p. 4). The instructor (both instructors of a team-taught course) submits a grade change request to the registrar for consideration. If the request is approved, the Registrar's Office informs both the student and the instructor.

Students wishing to appeal a grade must write a letter of appeal to the chair or director of the instructor's department or program. Students

wishing to appeal a grade for an approved study abroad or away program/course not taught by a St. Olaf instructor must contact The Smith Center for Global Engagement for appeal procedures.

## P/N Courses (Pass/No-Pass)

P/N credits are earned in courses that are offered only P/N. In other words, every student taking the course is doing so on an ungraded basis. This differs from S/U grades (see below) where each student in a course may elect to take the course graded or ungraded. Courses offered only on the P/N basis, if so designated, may fulfill OLE Core curriculum requirements. P/N courses are indicated in the class and lab schedule.

Courses taken on study abroad and away programs that do not offer students the option of taking the course for a grade will be added to the St. Olaf transcript as P or N upon receipt of the transcript.

## S/U Option (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory)

The intent of the S/U option is to allow students to explore areas in which they have an interest, without the grade counting in their grade point average. Students participating in approved study abroad and away programs must consult The Smith Center for Global Engagement if they wish to take a course on an S/U basis. All formal requests for a change in grade basis must be made in writing.

All graded courses are open to the S/U option as distinguished from P/N (pass/no-pass) courses where the ungraded option is mandatory. Neither an S nor a U grade figures into the grade point average. An S is awarded for a grade of C- or higher; a U is awarded for any grade of D+ or lower. A student awarded a U grade receives no credit for the course. A U grade cannot be assigned another type of grade at a later date.

Students should exercise caution in choosing to take courses on an S/U basis. Some graduate schools, for example, assume that a grade of S replaces a C or C-.

## S/U Provisions for All Students:

Students may take up to 6 credits on an S/U basis as long as the 24-graded-course graduation requirement is met.

Of credits taken to meet OLE Core curriculum requirements, only .25-credit courses may be taken on an S/U basis. 1.00- or .50-credit courses taken S/U **do not fulfill** OLE Core curriculum requirements.

A maximum of one 1.00-credit course taken S/U may count toward the minimum requirements for a major or an interdisciplinary concentration. Individual departments/programs may have stricter rules.

Students may elect to change the grading option from graded to S/U or from S/U to graded through the deadlines designated at the Registrar's Office as posted on the registrar's calendar.

Credits taken S/U on St. Olaf study abroad and away programs count toward the 6 S/U credits allowed. This use of S/U is distinguished from study abroad and away courses offered P/N only.

Students transferring to St. Olaf or transferring work taken at other institutions after entering St. Olaf may be subject to additional S/U restrictions and should consult with the registrar in advance.

A course credit completed on an S/U basis may not be assigned another type of grade at a later date. If a student receives an S grade in a course, that course may **not** be repeated regardless of the actual reported grade.

No indication of S/U registration is made on an instructor's class list.

## Incompletes

A student initiates a request for an incomplete to their faculty member. If the faculty approves the request, the faculty member submits the request to the Dean of Students Office for approval. Incompletes are granted primarily for documented medical reasons and may not be issued by an instructor without prior approval from the Dean of Students Office.

The Dean of Students Office grants an incomplete only if there is a distinct possibility of and commitment to finishing the course no later than four weeks after the last day of class in the term in which the incomplete was granted. The deadline may be extended due to extenuating circumstances with approval from the instructor issuing the incomplete and the Dean of Students Office.

The official grade for an incomplete should be submitted to the Registrar's Office in SIS no later than one week after the due date or the incomplete automatically becomes an F. A student cannot drop an incomplete course from the record at a later date to avoid a failing grade. A student who adds a course after the posted deadline may not apply for an incomplete because of insufficient time to complete the assigned work. A student who has been granted an incomplete in a course cannot subsequently finish the course with similar course credit transferred from another college.

A student with an incomplete on their academic record may participate in commencement if they have met all other requirements for graduation.

Only in the most extraordinary circumstances are incompletes allowed on St. Olaf approved study abroad and away programs not led by a St. Olaf faculty member. Many non-U.S. colleges and universities are not familiar with the practice of giving incompletes, and constraints having to do with distance and time make it very difficult to follow up on incompletes. Consequently, students studying on approved study abroad and away programs should not anticipate being able to avail themselves of this option.