Definition & Purpose of Incomplete

- "Grade" is a misnomer
- Placeholder or symbol that's recorded in the absence of a grade
- Represents an administrative action – not a faculty evaluation of a student's performance
- Most commonly represents an administrative response to a students request for the University to extend the semester based on the endorsement of the faculty

Definition & Purpose – Cont.

- Serves as a contract – the awarding of an "I" indicates that an agreement has been made & that conditions are specified
  - University agrees to extend the semester for a specified time (one semester)
  - Student and faculty have agreed and documented the body of work that remains to be completed
  - Should the faculty be unable to fulfill the contract the department chair has a record and can act in place of the faculty

Existing Incomplete Grade Policy
(Fall 2005 and prior)

An instructor shall assign a grade of "I" if the instructor believes that the student has been unable to complete the course on time because of unavoidable conditions. Any student receiving a grade of "I" must coordinate with the instructor to satisfy all outstanding course work for the course. Students should not register to repeat the course in a subsequent term. Once outstanding requirements for the course are satisfied the instructor will process a change of grade converting the "I" to another grade. The deadline for the grade change is the last day of class of the next full-length (i.e., fall or spring) term. Once this deadline has passed, the "I" becomes an "F."

Why Concerned?

- Number of Incomplete/Failing Grades (falling)
  - Over half during fall, lower in spring
- Student Complaints
  - Claiming a lack of knowledge of why they received an incomplete
  - "Graduated" students with incompleted coursework on their record denied due process
- Increased Awareness of Best Business Practices
  - New University Register
  - Sensitivity towards SAC's Review

Why Change?

- Current EKU policy does not require students to document the agreement between instructors and students for the assignment of an incomplete grade.
- Why is that problematic?
  - No protection or safeguards for the faculty or the student
  - No consistency in practice across the campus
  - Not representative of best business practices or industry standards, including SAC expectations 3.4.5 that indicates the institution (new and) publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice


- Current EKU policy does not qualify/define what or when well
- Why is that problematic?
  - No common understanding/agreement of what types of situations constitute an "extenuating circumstance" or "unavoidable condition" often lends to inconsistency in practice and potential equity issues
  - The absence of a timing qualifier (when) allows for potential abuse of intended purpose.
Proposed Changes Endorsed by CAA

An instructor (lead) may assign a grade of "I" if the instructor believes the student has been unable to complete the course due to illness, personal circumstances, or other extenuating circumstances. The instructor must submit a written petition to the Chair (Director of Undergraduate Studies) explaining the circumstances. The petition should include evidence supporting the reason for the withdrawal. The Chair (Director) of Undergraduate Studies must present the petition and evidence to the Dean of the College. If approved, the "I" becomes an "F".

What's Different?

- Inclusion of Qualifiers
- What is an extenuating circumstance and proof of said circumstances
- Student needs to have completed at least 70% of course
- Student must have been performing at the "satisfactory" level

- Creation of Incomplete Contract
- Confirmation of expectations

- Procedural Changes
- Student initiated process
- Data entry for incompletes shifts from faculty to Registrar's Office

70% Qualifier

- 70% rule may be interpreted in terms of time or task
  - Student completed 70% of assignments
  - Student attended 70% of the scheduled meeting times
  - 70% of the semester has passed (11 weeks)
- Whereas the student has up to the 10th week of the term to withdraw (online via EKUDirect) from the class.
- The "I" need only be reserved for those unforeseen situations that ambush students at the end of the semester

Submission of Contract

- While due at time of final grades, we realize that special concessions may be needed on occasion

  - Example: Student is in a car accident during final exam week and
  - cannot take the final & obviously can't initiate an incomplete contract

    - This is an extraordinary situation and there are ALWAYS mechanisms to accommodate such situations

- Call Registrar's Office, we deal with the unexpected all the time
  - "Problems-R-U-S".

  - Possible options might include:
    - "NR" + later a grade change or "I" contract (with explanation of circumstances)
    - Grade earned at the time of the accident + later a grade change or "I" contract (with explanation of circumstances)

Benefits of Change

- The implementation and use of a standard university-wide protocol would ensure consistency in practice and allow for confirmation of expectations.

- Opportunities for misinformation or different interpretations of policy would be lessened and appropriate university personnel would be better informed should questions arise.

Benefits of Change – Cont.

- In situations where the faculty who assigned the incomplete is not available the next semester, the student and university are protected as there would be a record of expectations regarding requirements to complete the course.

- Establishing a common understanding of what kinds of situations constitute an extenuating circumstance and when are important to institutional and procedural integrity.
Supplemental data to give to Faculty Senate attendees

- Copy of proposal & contract approved/endorsed by CAA
- Survey data & examples of contracts from other schools
- Three year trending data on # of incompletes submitted by term
- Data regarding # of incompletes that turned to failures