

MIDTERM GRADING FAQ's FOR PARTICIPATING INSTRUCTORS

1. What is the Midterm Grading Pilot?

The Midterm Grading Pilot (MGP) project is part of the Gateways to Success (GTS) initiative at UMaine. The goal of GTS is to increase student academic success and degree progress in the first and sophomore years by focusing on “Gateway” courses. The purpose of the midterm grading pilot project is to assist those students who are struggling with course material and have a class average of C- or below, and to determine whether the results of the pilot would warrant broader implementation. The project will run in fall 2025 and spring 2026. It is organized by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) Dean’s Office and funded by the Harold Alfond Foundation through UMS TRANSFORMS.

2. What are “Gateway” courses?

Gateway courses have issued a D, F, W, or L grade to $\geq 3\%$ of the combined first-year and sophomore students on campus during one of the past three years. Gateway courses are prerequisites for other courses, or are required for some other reason, and are typically large, multi-section courses. The MGP involves six of the Gateway courses (CHY 121, CMJ 103, ENG 101, MAT 126, PSY 100, and STS 132) and, in spring only, a couple of follow-on courses (CHY 122, MAT 127).

3. Why has my section been selected for the MGP?

Instructors in the selected Gateway courses were asked to participate if they were teaching at least two sections in the same modality, so that one section could serve as a control. Your section being selected *is not, in any way*, a reflection on your teaching methods or your former students’ performance.

4. What is the difference between “active” and “control” sections in MGP?

For active sections, instructors will record midterm grades on MaineStreet. They will also reach out to the students receiving midterm grades; a template will be provided for instructors to use if they wish. For control sections, instructors will determine midterm grades in the same way, but will report them to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) to be used in assessing the pilot. They will *not communicate midterm grades to the students in the control sections*, except to the extent that they would have done so anyway if they were not participating in the MGP. Instructions for reporting grades to OIRA will be sent to participating instructors via email. Please return the grades as instructed, and do not email grade rosters to OIRA.

5. Do I have to do midterm grades for all students?

No! Only those students who have an average of C- or below will receive a midterm grade. C- grades will be reported as D’s. You should not use any - or + grades, only Ds or Fs. In short, you will give a D to any student whose average is C-, D+, D, or D-; and an F to any student whose average is below D-. Students whose midterm average is C or above are not part of the MGP project.

6. Why is a C- being counted as a D at midterm?

While a C- is technically a satisfactory grade, it cannot necessarily be used as a prerequisite or to fulfill a requirement. Students who earn a C- may need to retake the course. In addition, for students with a C- at midterm, another low exam or assignment grade could bring their average down to a D or even an F. Recording the C- as a D at midterm communicates to the student that they should try to improve their academic performance, but even more importantly, it connects them with support to do that. Students should consult their advisor if they are not sure what minimum grade they need in order to use their course for the intended purpose.

7. How can participating in this pilot project benefit students?

The purpose of midterm grading is to engage students with professors, advisors, and resources to improve academically or make an informed decision to withdraw. Midterm grading can provide students with valuable information about their academic standing in a class so that they can take appropriate action. Often, students will be able to improve their grade so that they are en route to a passing grade at the end of the semester. If that is not possible, they may consider withdrawing from the class to protect their GPA. Students who receive a midterm grade as part of the pilot will receive extra support from Madelyn Kohr, a Graduate Assistant (GA) funded by the project, as well as from advisors.

8. How is midterm grading different from the Black Bear Early Alert (BBEA) in Navigate?

Two ways. First, any student in a participating section will receive a midterm grade. In contrast, the BBEA program is limited almost entirely to first-year students. Second, the MGP project offers extra support in the form of the GA's coaching and personalized connection with relevant resources.

9. When and how will the midterm grading take place?

Midterm grade reporting will occur approximately 8 weeks into the semester, before the deadlines of November 14, 2025 (fall) and April 10, 2026 (spring) for withdrawing from a class with a W. The midterm grading roster for active sections opened in MaineStreet for fall 2025 on October 27 and closed November 3. Tentatively, it will open March 23 and close March 30 for spring 2026. You will receive instructions via email before spring break. Midterm grades for control sections will be due to OIRA on the day the roster closes in MaineStreet.

10. Should I put something about this in my syllabus?

Yes, for active sections only. You should have received an email with an example of language to use in your syllabus and on Brightspace. Here it is:

This semester, our class will be participating in a pilot project to notify students at the midterm of a low grade. Before week 10 of the semester, if you have an average of C- or below, you will receive a midterm grade of **D (includes C-, D+, D, and D-)** or **F** in MaineStreet. You will be notified of this grade via Navigate and you will be contacted by someone in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Advising and Academic Services Center to offer guidance and

resources. Through this process, students who may be struggling with content will receive assistance to utilize the resources available for academic success, or to make an informed decision to withdraw. Midterm grades are not calculated into students' GPA. I also urge any student with questions or concerns about grades to contact me directly.

Because students in the control section will not be affected in any way, they should not receive any notification about the pilot.

11. Who is responsible for all the communication?

Communication for this project will be facilitated by the CLAS Dean's office and Advising and Academic Services Center (AASC). The Dean will send out informational correspondence to instructors and administrators. You will be provided with sample communication that you can use to notify students that they received a midterm grade. GA Madelyn Kohr (madelyn.kohr@maine.edu) will follow up with students to connect them with relevant campus resources and provide additional support. Each college's advising center will receive a list of students with midterm grades so that they can contact students as they see fit.

12. Should I encourage students to withdraw if their average is a D or F at midterm?

When a student is not going to be able to achieve a passing grade in a course, they can protect their GPA by withdrawing from the course before the deadline: November 14, 2025 (fall) and April 10, 2026 (spring). A W will not negatively affect the GPA, whereas an F or an L will. A student should definitely confer with you before they withdraw to make sure they have a full understanding of their situation. If they are not going to be able to pass the class, you might recommend that they consider withdrawing. It's also a good idea for them to check with the Office of Student Financial Aid. Some types of scholarship aid may require a minimum number of credits in a semester.

13. What happens to the midterm grade at the end of the MGP pilot?

The grade will remain in the student's record in MaineStreet. It will not appear on their transcript or be calculated into their GPA.

14. Who can help me if I have a question that is not in this FAQ?

Please email GA Madelyn Kohr (madelyn.kohr@maine.edu). If she doesn't know the answer, she will find out or connect you with someone who does.