How Important Is Grading?

In a word: **Essential!** Semester by semester, the grades you submit are reflected on the official transcript, which students must use for advisement, employment applications or upgrades, transfer or graduate school applications, tuition reimbursement, loan deferment, etc. Grades that are delayed or submitted inaccurately may create serious repercussions for students, and (in these litigious times) for the institution.

Remember that mid-term and final grades submitted on paper are always due no later than 9 a.m. on the "Grades Due" date specified in the Academic Calendar as well as in each semester's Schedule of Classes. RAIL is usually available for some period after that time, while we process.

Thank you for taking this important responsibility to heart. We hope that this information will help you submit grades easily and accurately via RAIL (Remote Access Information Line).

How Do I Begin?

- Access the Internet from any computer. Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser will give you the best results.

- Go to *http://www.shepherd.edu/rail*

- Click on Next Stop—All Aboard!

- At the Login Screen, you will be asked for two numbers to identify yourself. Your User ID is the last nine digits of your Rambler Card ID number. Your PIN is initially set to your six-digit date of birth (March 27, 1958 = 032758). However, the first time you access RAIL, you will be required to change it to a more secure six-digit PIN.

- (First time only) Follow the prompts to establish a new six-digit PIN.

- (First time only) Establish your Security Question and Answer. In the event you forget your new PIN, you can answer your Security Question and RAIL will reset your PIN to its original date of birth setting. Be careful with this question and answer, please. Use a question whose answer you will easily remember (but someone can't easily guess). You will have to answer the question in exactly the same manner that you used when creating the answer.

- (First time only) Read and accept the Terms of Usage.

- Select Faculty and Advisor.

Faculty and Advisor Menu

- Select Mid-Term Grades or Final Grades. *Note: If you are teaching a course that runs for the first 8 weeks of the semester and concludes at mid-term, you should select Final Grades.*

- Select Term, and Submit.

- Select CRN, and Submit. This will bring up the Mid-Term or Final Grade Worksheet.

- Across from each student, select the appropriate grade in the "Grade" column pull-down.

- At the bottom of the grade worksheet, clicking on Submit will save your grades to the database. You can Submit grades as you go and then continue grading (we rec-

ommend this). During the grading period, you can even return to a worksheet and make changes if necessary. Just remember to Submit any changes you make.

- When you are finished, you may wish to print the graded worksheet for your own records. Click on CRN Selection at the bottom of the screen to access other sections.

Special Grading Situations

- **Pass-Fail** Select this only if the student has submitted the approval paperwork by the Academic Calendar Deadline to do so.

- **IF grades** Failure due to irregular withdrawal, given when students stop attending (or never attended) your course without formally withdrawing. Enter the last date of attendance (format: 01/01/2009) in the column to the right of the grade. If the student never attended, leave this information blank.

- **Incomplete (I) grades** Enter a grade of I, but remember that our office needs the Incomplete Grade Form (at final grade time) to track the completion process for the student record.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why isn't student #26 on my Web grading worksheet?**
  Your Web grading worksheet may contain multiple pages of 25 students each. Work page by page. Save/submit your grades for students 1-25, then click on the 26-50 link at the bottom of your worksheet to bring up additional students.

- **Why are some of my students already graded?**
  Students who formally withdrew from the course or the semester will already be listed with a final grade of W. Students who formally requested Audit status will be listed with a final grade of AU. Do not replace these grades!

- **What grade do I give to a student who stopped attending, but never withdrew?**
  The IF grade indicates an irregular withdrawal from the course, and should be assigned in these cases. Even if the student never attended the course, you should assign the IF grade. Never leave a grade blank. Leaving students ungraded will create a whole host of problems with sending accurate transcripts, calculating GPA and academic standing accurately, etc.

- **I've just submitted my grades online. Do I need to come by your office with the paper roster?**
  NO—this is the beauty of using RAIL. The grades you submit are processed immediately into the database, and become the official grade record. You save a trip to campus! (However, you may want to print your graded worksheet for your own records.)

  See more FAQs on our Web site:
  http://www.shepherd.edu/register

If You Have Problems

During business hours, our staff is a quick phone call away to help talk you through any difficult spots. Typically, your very first log-in is the trickiest (changing PINs, setting up the Security Question and Answer, etc.). Once you've gotten beyond that, it's very straight-forward.

If you can order books from *Amazon.com*, you can do this!

One-on-one and in-department training is available by special arrangement.

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Online Grading: A Guide for Faculty