

October Article 1 – Midterm Grades

It may be hard to believe, but here on campus, we're approaching our halfway point of the semester – which, for your student, means the onset of anxiety regarding midterm test and papers, excitement for fall break, and any combination of emotions about the posting of midterm grades.

Midterm grades are given for all 100 and 200 level classes, which should be the majority (if not the entirety) of the courses your student is taking this semester. They will be posted after October 21st, so your student should be checking for grades in Self Serve the week following fall break. Midterm grades provide a good check-in for students to see what their current grades are at the “halfway point.”

One important point to keep in mind is that “midterm” can be a misnomer – meaning that, though we are at the midpoint of the term, the midterm grade may reflect only one test, or even only small quizzes or papers. If that's the case, most of the points available to be earned in the class are still up for grabs, and students have a good opportunity to raise their grades. If your students receive midterm grades they are concerned with, direct them to their syllabi to see how many points there are left in the semester. If they have only taken one midterm test or paper, chances are they have at least one more large-scale project, plus the final exam, to impact their performance.

So what happens if your students receive midterm grades that are alarming, for your students or for you? All students who receive at least one midterm grade of C- or lower will receive an email from the Shepard Academic Resource Center. In that email, we'll first let them know how many midterm grades of C- or lower they have received; we'll also inform them of resources available on campus to assist them, and we'll invite them in to meet with us in the Resource Center to create an academic plan and help them connect to appropriate resources on campus. We recently also provided all freshmen with an Inventory of College Level Study Skills (ICLSS), intended to allow them to assess their own current study skills and offer resources to make improvements. Freshmen interested in making changes to midterm grades can refer to the ICLSS for potential areas for improvement.

Midterm grades are not permanent grades, and so do not go on a student's transcripts, nor are they recorded in a student's academic record. At any point in the semester, however, a student may receive an academic warning, which is placed in his or her academic record. Academic warnings are used by professors to let students know that, if their performance in class does not change, they are in danger of failing that particular course. The professor will let the student know the cause of the low grade (poor quiz and test performance, excessive absences, etc.), and will often give advice on improvement and offer to meet with the student. Academic warnings are received directly by the student, and are not posted on Self Serve.

So how can you know your students' midterm grades? The first and best way is to ask them – you know when they'll be posted and where, so following up with them after fall break with intentional questions is helpful. Have you checked your midterm grades in Self Serve? What grades are posted? If you have a grade of C- or lower, have you taken up the Shepard Academic Resource Center on their offer to meet with you? Additionally, if your student has given you Proxy access, you can also call the Resource Center at 503.943.7895; we can check the grades and share them with you as well.

Remember, your student had four years to study as a high school student, and only about six weeks to figure out how to study as a college student – so midterm grades may bring some surprises. The key is for students to be aware of their current grades, and of the many resources that are available on campus to assist your student in having a successful first semester.