Resolution on Flexible Option Grading

RATIONALE:
The inherently modular and self-paced nature of competency sets in the UW Flexible Option makes it both likely and reasonable that students will only pursue and attempt specific competency assessments within a set in a given subscription period. Instructors and students in the Flexible Option require a grading option that accurately represents for academic record and transcription purposes the student's status in the class at the end of a subscription period. Existing grading options that were designed for traditional credit-based classes with defined periods of instruction and assessment do not fully meet the needs of competency sets in the UW Flexible Option where credit is based on attempting multiple distinct competency assessments. Restricting the use of the PR (“Progress”) grade to the initial enrollment in a competency set will ensure that a final letter grade is awarded when the student repeats the competency set in a subsequent subscription period. Academic programs participating in the UW Flexible Option will develop standards to provide a level of consistency for the use of the PR grade across instructors and competency sets.

MOTION:
Instructors of competency sets offered through the UW Flexible Option at UW-Milwaukee shall be allowed to assign a grade of PR (“Progress”) for students who successfully complete at least one but not all competency assessments within the set. The PR grade shall be a final grade that signifies the enrollment counts as a course attempt for repeat purposes. The PR grade shall not award any earned credit or GPA value. The PR grade only may be awarded for the initial attempt of a competency set.

By January 2015, the Registrar's Office will provide a report to the Academic Policy Committee, specifying information on PR grades assigned to students in the preceding UW Flexible Option subscription periods. The report will include the number of PR grades assigned per subscription period, the number of students who re-enrolled in a subsequent subscription period to complete the competency set after earning a PR grade, and an assessment of the GPA impact of the PR grade. The report also will include standards for the assignment of the PR grade as established by the UWM academic programs offering competency sets.
UW Flexible Option Competency Set Explanation

The UW Flexible Option ("Flex") is a self-paced, competency-based program for pursuing a degree or certificate through UW-Milwaukee, UW Colleges, and eventually other UW campuses. Flex is not course-based, although for the initial iteration of Flex the competencies that make up the degree program are being clustered into "competency sets" that map to existing UWM courses in the Course Catalog used for traditional students.

The primary reasons for clustering the Flex competencies into course-based competency sets include:

- The student information system at UWM (PAWS) only allows for student enrollment into courses, not competencies.
- Mapping specific competencies to an individual course will allow for the transcription of student work in a familiar format for transfer purposes, graduate school admission, employment, etc.
- A course-like structure is well-understood by students, instructors, and staff alike, thereby utilizing that structure in the early stages of Flex allows for a smoother administrative and operational transition to this new format of education.

In spite of the reasons for utilizing course-like competency sets for the delivery of the competencies to Flex students, the core aspect of the Flex modality is the competencies, not the competency sets.

The only students who will be eligible to enroll in competency sets in PAWS are those students who are admitted to the Flex program through UW-Extension (in consultation with UWM academic programs for students pursuing UWM degrees or certificates through Flex). Flex students will have the opportunity to complete traditional courses at UWM that would apply to their program, but they are not allowed to enroll in the two formats in concurrent or overlapping terms. When Flex students are enrolled in traditional UWM courses, they will be held to the same policies, procedures, and expectations as traditional non-Flex students.

As a result of the competency-based nature of Flex, it is necessary to track student progress toward mastery of individual competencies. This is going to be done through the use of “Milestones” in PAWS, where each competency within a Flex program will be represented as a unique Milestone. As students enroll in competency sets, the competencies, as Milestones, that are associated with those sets are automatically applied to the student record in PAWS with a status of “in-progress.”

As students attempt the assessments associated with the competencies, the Milestone status is marked as “completed” or “not completed” in PAWS. The Milestone status is distinct from the grade that is assigned to the overall competency set at the end of the subscription period, although a relationship should exist between the student’s performance on the assessments and the overall grade assigned to the competency set.

If students do not successfully complete all of the assessments associated with the competencies in a set, either because they were unsuccessful or never attempted at least one, those students are required to repeat the competency set in a future subscription period (i.e., the Flex version of a term). The same repeat rules apply to competency sets as traditional courses, whereby students generally are allowed to repeat a class once and only one of the attempts will count for credit and GPA purposes.

In terms of accurately recording student grades for a Flex competency set, there is an important distinction between students who need to repeat a competency set because they were unsuccessful with one or more assessments, and students who need to repeat a competency set because they did not attempt one or more assessments. Due to the self-paced and modular nature of Flex competency sets, as described above, it is both likely and reasonable that students will only pursue and attempt specific competency assessments within a set in a given subscription period. Instructors and students in the Flexible Option require a grading option that accurately represents for academic record and transcription purposes the student’s status in the class at the end of a subscription period. Existing grading options that were designed for traditional credit-based classes with defined periods of instruction and assessment do not fully meet the needs of Flex competency sets where the overall grade and credit is based on multiple distinct competency assessments.
Flex Grading System Proposal

The following represents a proposal for the grading system for competency sets in the UW Flex Option at UWM.

A - F grades
**Usage:** Used in cases where students attempt all assessments in a set within a subscription period (or within a specified time in the event an I grade is given, see below). May also be used in cases where students attempt but fail a significant number of assessments in a set, as determined by the instructor of record within standards developed by the academic programs.

**Final Grade:** Yes
**Earned Credit:** Yes (except F grade)
**GPA Value:** Yes
**Valid Attempt for Repeat Purposes:** Yes

**Special Notes:** Specific grade assigned is based upon the instructor's determination of the student's overall performance on the assessments.

**Milestone Status:** Any assessments (i.e., milestones) that are not attempted should remain as "in-progress," while all attempted assessments (i.e., milestones) should be marked as "completed" or "not completed."

I ("Incomplete") grade
**Usage:** Per existing faculty policy, used in cases where students are close to completing all assessments at the end of a subscription period but are unable to attempt all within the period because of illness or other unusual or substantiated cause beyond the student's control.

**Final Grade:** No
**Earned Credit:** N/A (not final grade)
**GPA Value:** N/A (not final grade)
**Valid Attempt for Repeat Purposes:** N/A (not final grade)

**Special Notes:** Since an I grade is not a final grade and, per existing faculty policy, will lapse to an F grade if a final grade is not awarded by the end of the subsequent subscription period.

**Milestone Status:** Any assessments (i.e., milestones) that are not attempted should remain as “in-progress,” while the I grade is in place, but all should be marked as "completed" or "not completed" when a final grade is awarded or the I grade is lapsed to an F grade.

PR ("Progress") grade:
**Usage:** Used in cases where students successfully complete at least one assessment but do not attempt all assessments in a set within a subscription period.

**Final Grade:** Yes
**Earned Credit:** No
**GPA Value:** No
**Valid Attempt for Repeat Purposes:** Yes

**Special Notes:** Usage of PR grade is distinct from I grade in two ways: 1) the student does not need to be close to completing all assessments, and 2) assessments are not attempted based upon student self-pacing rather than unusual circumstances outside of student’s control.

**Milestone Status:** Any assessments (i.e., milestones) that are not attempted should remain as “in-progress,” while all attempted assessments (i.e., milestones) should be marked as “completed” or “not completed.”

W ("Withdrawal") grade:
**Usage:** Following existing faculty policy, used in cases where students drop a competency set after the 25th day of the first month of the subscription period.

**Final Grade:** Yes
**Earned Credit:** No
**GPA Value:** No
**Valid Attempt for Repeat Purposes:** No

**Special Notes:** The W grade is an administrative grade that is automatically assigned when a drop is processed. Following existing faculty policy, students are able to drop a competency set and receive a W grade prior to the 15th day of the second month of the subscription period. After that point, approval is required for any drops. Students who enroll in a competency set but do not make any attempt at the assessments within the set may appeal for a drop after the deadline. Per existing faculty policy, drops should not be approved after the deadline for reasons of academic difficulty.

**Milestone Status:** Any assessments (i.e., milestones) that are not attempted should remain as “in-progress” while those that are attempted should be marked as “completed” or “not completed.”