

PROCEDURES RELATED TO SPRING 2020 PASS/FAIL POLICY

Approved by Russell L. Moore, Provost

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Transfer Credit Acceptance

Rationale:

CU Boulder and many other colleges and universities around the country have instituted either widespread Pass/Fail options or mandatory Pass/Fail grading for the spring 2020 semester or quarter. We need a transparent and consistent CU Boulder procedure for using these grades in accepting transfer credit.

Our longstanding policy for undergraduate transfer credit is that the Office of Admissions will not accept course work in which the student received a grade lower than a “C-.” For grades of “pass” or “satisfactory” (P or S), Admissions uses the transcript key to determine if that threshold was met. If the grade threshold for a P or S grade at the institution from which they’re transferring is unclear, students can be asked to provide evidence for their underlying grade for a course.

Similarly, Graduate School rules stipulate that CU will not accept course work in which the student received a grade lower than a “B.” In cases where institutions use grades of “pass” or “satisfactory” (P or S), the Graduate School uses the transcript key to determine if that threshold was met. In some cases the threshold is unclear, and students can be asked to provide evidence for their underlying grade for a course.

The special circumstances of spring 2020, however, raise the possibility that our usual mode of evaluating transfer credit will throw up barriers to prospective transfer students. With many institutions adopting P/F or S/U as optional or mandatory grading systems for spring 2020, admissions staff will not necessarily be able to determine what underlying grade the P or S represents on the transcript and will not be able to award credit. The volume of P or S grades from spring 2020 also promises to be much higher than normal, making it difficult for staff to request additional information from students and evaluate transfer credit in a timely fashion. Delays in credit evaluation, we know, tend to discourage prospective transfer students from applying to or enrolling at CU Boulder.

In addition, the mere fact that a student has a number of P or S grades on their spring 2020 transcript could discourage them from applying to or enrolling at CU Boulder if we kept our usual policy for this term’s transfer credit. The spirit of lifting P/F restrictions in spring 2020 at CU Boulder and elsewhere

was to give students some leeway in academic performance in a very difficult time. We should extend similar leeway to prospective transfer students, too.

Transfer credit procedures for course credit earned in spring 2020:

- Assuming a course is eligible for transfer credit, CU Boulder will accept a P or S grade (or equivalent) earned in the spring 2020 semester or quarter in transfer credit, regardless of the underlying grade represented by the P or S.
- Those colleges and schools that use specific letter-grade thresholds for specific courses for transfer admission should accept a P or S grade earned in spring 2020 for any of those courses in lieu of a letter grade.
- All other current restrictions on which undergraduate [courses are eligible for transfer to CU Boulder](#) will continue to apply. All other minimum standards and restrictions related to [transfer of credit](#) for graduate students will continue to apply.

Intra-University Transfer (IUT)

Rationale:

Approaches to reviewing IUT applications for CU Boulder undergraduate students who have opted into the Pass/Fail grading status for spring 2020 are varying by college. This is raising a larger question of how the faculty input grade that underlies the P/P+ can be used.

Our Pass/Fail guidelines for spring 2020 state that the underlying faculty input grade can/may be used *only* for the purpose of prerequisite checking. The idea is that the underlying grade is to be used only to identify students who, if they were allowed to go on to the next course in the prerequisite sequence, would be set up for failure, and to save them from that likely fate. In other words, this is a compassionate provision, not a punitive one.

As it relates to IUT, however, colleges have interpreted “prerequisite” differently. Some colleges plan to look at the underlying faculty input grade for those specific *courses* that are required for IUT. Others plan also to use those underlying grades to recalculate the *GPA benchmarks* that are required for IUT.

The approach of using the underlying grade to calculate GPA for IUT runs contrary to the principles of our spring 2020 Pass/Fail guidelines. We have made clear that a “P” grade does not affect a student’s GPA, and this should apply to IUT-related GPA calculations.

IUT procedures for grades of P or P+ grades earned in spring 2020:

- To establish consistency across campus and across use cases, all colleges/schools/programs examining transcripts for IUT must use the **underlying faculty input grade for prerequisite checking at the course level only**. The underlying faculty input grade **cannot be used for recalculating GPAs**.

Academic Standing

Rationale:

Because CU Boulder has instituted expanded Pass/Fail options for the spring 2020 semester, we need to decide how to manage the academic standing processes that are overseen by deans' offices in our colleges, schools, and programs.

In typical semesters, students are placed on academic alert, academic recovery, academic probation, academic suspension, face dismissal, etc. as a result of final grades earned in a given term. The special circumstances of spring 2020, however, raise the possibility that students facing some type of academic action this semester will earn P+ and P grades that will not impact their GPA. Because our Pass/Fail guidelines for spring 2020 state that the underlying faculty input grade may be used *only* for the purpose of prerequisite checking and not for the purpose of recalculating GPAs, students currently in academic difficulty could face an inequitable burden as compared to students currently in good academic standing and might feel that they do not, in fact, have the option of switching their grading status to Pass/Fail due to their need to raise their GPA.

Procedures for academic standing in spring 2020:

Undergraduate students:

Colleges, schools, and programs will adjust their academic standing processes for degree-seeking undergraduate students for this semester only and will treat the spring 2020 semester as a term that can only help and not harm a student's academic standing. Specifically,

- Students may return to good standing as a result of raising their GPA to meet GPA standards defined by their academic program. P or P+ grades earned in spring 2020, just as P grades earned in any other term, will not be included in that GPA calculation.
- Students will not be placed on academic alert (ALRT), academic recovery (RECY), scholastic suspension (SUSP), etc. or put through dismissal as a result of grades earned in spring 2020.
- Students whose spring 2020 academic performance results in a GPA below the normal standard will have one of two new academic codes applied to their record. This is a placeholder and not a negative code. It will be displayed only on the unofficial transcript.

- EXMC (Exceptional circumstance, Mass impact, Continuing) will be applied for students who are currently on some form of negative academic notification (ALRT, RCVY, etc.)
- EXMN (Exceptional circumstance, Mass impact, New) will be applied for students who would otherwise receive a negative academic notification for the first time.
- Academic actions will be taken according to normal rules and processes when/if these students complete a subsequent fall/spring term.

Graduate students:

The Graduate School will adjust its academic standing processes for degree-seeking graduate students for the spring 2020 semester only. Specifically,

- Students may return to good standing as a result of raising their cumulative GPA to the 3.0 minimum standard. P or P+ grades earned in spring 2020, just as P grades earned in any other term, will not be included in that GPA calculation.
- Students will not be dismissed or newly placed on probation as a result of grades earned in spring 2020.
- Students whose first semester as a graduate student at CU was spring 2020 (and continuing students with a cumulative GPA below 3.0 for the first time following spring 2020) will not be placed on probation. Their cumulative GPA will be reviewed following their next term of enrollment.
- Students currently on academic probation who do not return to good standing as a result of their spring 2020 academic performance will have their current state of probation “roll over” and be applied to fall 2020 or their next term of enrollment.
- Students in their first or second semester of standard Graduate School probation will have an additional semester to meet the original goal placed for spring 2020.
- Students with a program-specific plan in place to return to good standing will be given an additional semester to do so. Students will be required to meet with their advisor to create a new academic plan for their next term of enrollment.

Other College, School, and Department/Program Processes Involving Calculating GPA for Spring 2020

Employing the principle that the underlying faculty input grade for a P or P+ earned in spring 2020, should be used for prerequisite checking at the course level only, not for recalculating GPAs, the following procedures also must be implemented by the colleges, schools, and departments/programs.

- *Dean’s List.* The grades underlying “P” grades will not apply to calculating GPA for spring 2020 dean’s list purposes.

- *Student rankings.* The grades underlying grades of P or P+ will not apply to calculating GPA for purposes of ranking students within a program. (For example, for purposes of awarding scholarships or teaching positions.)