



Professor Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer

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TO: Boston University Faculty, Students, and Staff

FROM: Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer 

DATE: March 27, 2020

SUBJECT: University Grading Policies for Spring Semester 2020

The global COVID-19 outbreak has caused a tremendous amount of disruption at Boston University and around the world. At BU, the need to transition all of this semester's courses to remote teaching has presented our faculty, students, and staff with myriad challenges. I have been both impressed with and moved by how well our faculty, students, and staff have adapted to these challenging circumstances, and want to commend all of you for your patience, understanding, and fortitude over the last few weeks.

In recognition of the disruptive, stressful, and unconventional way in which this semester has unfolded, Boston University will adopt a special set of grading policies for undergraduate, graduate, and non-degree students for the spring 2020 semester. These grading policies have been developed in consultation with the academic deans who gathered input from their faculty, and with the Faculty Council. Three schools with unique disciplinary and accreditation constraints – the Goldman School of Dental Medicine, the School of Law, and the School of Medicine – have developed grading policies that are specific to their schools; these are listed below.

Undergraduate Students

All undergraduate students at Boston University, regardless of their school or college, will be assigned a letter grade by faculty in each of their classes upon completion of their coursework. After receiving their letter grades, students will have the option to designate any, all, or none of their courses taken in spring 2020 as "Credit/No Credit" classes. Students can also choose to retain their letter grade for any or all of their courses. If a student chooses to designate a course as Credit/No Credit, their transcript will simply show "CR (Credit)" or "NC (No Credit)" for that course in the place of the letter grade. For undergraduate courses, any grade of D or above will translate into a "Credit" designation.

The Credit/No Credit option is a unique designation to be used for the spring 2020 semester only and differs from our normal Pass/Fail option in two significant ways. First, unlike Pass/Fail, students can utilize the Credit/No Credit designation in any course, including those that are needed to fulfill major, minor, and Hub requirements; for the spring 2020 semester, a grade of

CR in an applicable course will satisfy major, minor and Hub requirements. Credits earned with a CR designation will be counted towards the total number of credits required to graduate. Second, a designation of Credit/No Credit will not impact a student's GPA. Students who are on academic probation are eligible to use the Credit/No Credit option.

The process through which students will indicate their selection of Credit/No Credit is still being developed. Students will *not* be asked to make this decision until after they have seen their letter grades in May and have had an opportunity to consult with advisors. Thus, students do not need to take any action at this point in time. Detailed instructions will be sent via email later this spring, before April 30, 2020.

This policy does not apply to courses that are, under regular circumstances, graded as Pass/Fail. Courses that are now Pass/Fail will continue to be graded on a Pass/Fail basis and will be reflected as such on transcripts. The policy also does not apply to courses that were completed prior to spring break, or to students who previously decided to audit a class. Students from other institutions who are studying at BU through cross-registration programs should consult with their home institution regarding their grading requirements.

Graduate and Professional Students

Graduate and professional students in all schools and colleges, except for the three listed below, and including those enrolled in online and off-campus programs, will have the option to elect Credit/No Credit for any of their classes this semester. Schools that have their own registrar and unique disciplinary and accreditation constraints – the Goldman School of Dental Medicine, the School of Law, and the School of Medicine – developed and will implement the school-specific policies summarized below. Students in these three schools will receive additional details from their deans shortly.

Graduate and professional students in all other schools may utilize the policy described above for undergraduate students with one distinction: schools and colleges with graduate and professional programs may set their own thresholds for the minimum letter grade required to receive "Credit" in graduate and professional courses. Deans will communicate with their respective graduate and professional students to clarify what letter grade is required to receive Credit in specific courses and programs.

Goldman School of Dental Medicine

For the spring 2020 semester, GSDM will continue to use its existing letter grade format based on criteria previously established by individual course syllabi. There will be no change in the grading process for didactic courses, while grades for preclinical (hands-on simulation/technique courses) and clinical (direct patient care or clinical demonstrations) courses will be based on a percentage of the planned coursework.

School of Law

All spring semester JD courses will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis. LLM students will have the option of electing Pass/Fail for any and all classes after they have seen their

grade in each course. Neither the mandatory Pass/Fail credits for JDs nor the elected Pass/Fail credits for LLMs and other non-JD students during the spring 2020 semester will count toward the maximum ungraded credits allowed in each program.

School of Medicine

The grading policy for most courses in the School of Medicine will not change. There are a limited number of courses in which the clinical activities have been so fundamentally disrupted that accurately determining a grade is impossible; these courses will become Pass/Fail for all students. Specifically, third- and fourth-year MD clinical rotations that were interrupted before completion will become Pass/Fail only. In these cases, a note will be added to students' transcripts indicating the reason for the grading policy change.

Our hope is that these spring 2020 semester grading policies will provide some relief for students who are enduring an unexpectedly difficult semester. We also recognize that many students have worked very hard this semester and want to have that effort reflected on their transcripts. By giving undergraduate and most graduate students the ability to choose whether or not to utilize the Credit/No Credit option for any or all of their courses, we hope to both reduce stress among those who are struggling to adjust to remote learning, and allow those who wish to retain some or all of their letter grades the ability to do so.

I appreciate your patience and understanding as we have developed and vetted this important set of policies. I also want to express gratitude to the faculty and staff who have done an extraordinary job rapidly adjusting to remote teaching and advising in an undoubtedly less-than-ideal situation. Your continued dedication to your students is apparent and very much appreciated.

Cc: Robert A. Brown