

From: [Mokwa, Robert](#)
Subject: Modified Pass/Fail grading option for Spring 2020
Date: Sunday, March 22, 2020 5:59:35 PM



MONTANA
STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of the Provost

Dear Colleagues,

In response to the global health emergency imposed by the COVID-19 outbreak, Montana State University switched from in-person classes to remote delivery modality for all Spring 2020 courses beginning March 23, 2020. I want to thank you for the sense of collaboration and diligence that you have shown since this emergency started.

I am writing to inform you that as part of our emergency coursework accommodations, MSU will implement an expanded Pass/Fail (P/F) grading option for all undergraduate courses, effective Spring 2020 Semester. These unprecedented circumstances necessitate extraordinary measures to accommodate difficulties and challenges faced by students and faculty in managing personal matters during a pandemic, while simultaneously navigating a new course delivery modality. Universities across the country are implementing this measure because it is the right thing to do for students and for faculty who are confronting uncertainty, the likes and scope of which none of us have ever experienced.

These temporary emergency accommodations to the MSU pass/fail policy will allow students the options to transition courses to a P/F grade at the end of the semester. Students not wishing to transition to P/F will still receive the letter grade assigned by their instructor.

Undergraduate students who choose to receive a P/F grade for one or more of their courses can do so by submitting a request to through a form available on the University Registrar's website no later than five calendar days after final grades have been posted by the Registrar. A revised P/F request form and specific guidelines for these emergency accommodations will be available on the Registrar's web page at least two weeks prior to the end of Spring Semester.

The Graduate School will publish specific information about the declaration of P/F grades for students in graduate programs in the 2019-2020 catalog addendum.

Additional details regarding these emergency grading accommodations for undergraduate students will be published in the 2019-2020 catalog addendum and include:

- Faculty will grade students as usual per their syllabi grading structure during the semester with an understanding that the transition to remote learning might impact each student differently.
- The default option for students is the traditional A-F letter grade.

Students may choose to receive a P/F grade in place of a letter grade for any number of their courses. The P/F grade option can be requested by a student no later than five calendar days after final grades have been posted by the Registrar.

- For students who request a P/F grade, the MSU Registrar will record the P/F designation using a rubric in which all grades of C- or higher earn a Pass.
- Course grades converted to a Pass grade in this temporary P/F option for Spring 2020 will count towards curricular, major, minor, prerequisite, progress toward degree, graduation requirements, transfer requirements, scholarships, financial aid requirements and application to MSU graduate school programs.
- MSU's regional accreditor, NWCCU, has approved this modified P/F grading system for our use this semester. Discipline-specific accrediting bodies and professional licensing agencies have agreed to approve P/F grading schemes and will accept Pass grades for required courses, prerequisites and elective courses. This includes nursing, engineering, education and others.
- Under the P/F option, neither pass nor fail grades will be factored into students' Grade Point Average (GPA). Pass grades will count towards earned semester hours. An F grade will not count towards earned semester hours in either the A-F or P/F options.
- MSU will include a designation on students' transcripts, indicating the extraordinary circumstances of the global public health emergency during Spring 2020. It appears this will be common practice at most universities in the United States.

This strategy will ease the necessary transition to remote course delivery in Spring 2020 and promote student engagement with their courses, as together we navigate these extraordinary circumstances.

We realize that there are some programs that require students to earn grades above a C for a course to count towards that major, or to progress to subsequent coursework. Given the extraordinary circumstances we currently face, and after extensive consideration, we believe that this amended pass/fail policy best balances students' and faculty's needs in both the short and longer terms. It will be necessary for faculty, as you always do, to work closely with your students through the remainder of this semester to ensure that they successfully build the body of knowledge that you have so carefully crafted into your courses and curricula.

We urge you to take every measure possible to help students gain traction during these trying circumstances, to encourage students to stick with their course of study, and ultimately to help students build resilience that will serve them well in their future trials and challenges.

While this unprecedented situation requires all of us to think differently about

how students achieve and demonstrate the success that we are collectively committed. As caring compassionate faculty, we will rise to the occasion.

Sincerely,

Eric Austin
Faculty Senate Chair

and

Bob Mokwa
Executive Vice President and Provost
Montana State University

Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Montana Hall | P.O. Box 172560 | Bozeman, MT 59717-2560
www.montana.edu | provost@montana.edu | 406-994-4371