

FAQs: Temporary Pass/Fail Policy

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To: **academicaffairs** <academicaffairs@westfield.ma.edu>

 1 attachments (26 KB)

Pass Fail Spring 2020.pdf;

Dear Academic Affairs Colleagues,

I write to you to provide information regarding the temporary pass/fail option approved through campus governance. For your convenience, the policy is attached. As a reminder, this policy was passed as a temporary adjustment to our current policy and as such holds only for the spring 2020 semester.

As you know, the policy creates additional flexibility for students in selecting a pass/fail option for a final grade in their course. In their discussions, members of the governance committees and others attending these meetings discussed this policy and its complications at length. In response to many questions about how students will understand the implications of their decisions was a consistent refrain of “that should be discussed in advising.”

Thus, in preparation for the many questions you may receive from students seeking guidance on the policy, below is a set of FAQs for your reference. Please know that a similar set has been created and distributed to students via email, and the student FAQs will also be posted on the COVID-19 website. The message to students and the FAQs encourage them to utilize all of the institution’s support systems to ensure academic success and, when making decisions about whether or not to select a pass/fail option, to speak with their advisor.

Thank you to our governance committee participants for moving quickly on the decisions regarding this policy. And again, a special thank you to all of you for your consistent and extraordinary support of our mission in this challenging and unpredictable period.

Take good care of yourselves.

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FAQs: Temporary Pass/Fail Option

What does it mean for a student to take a class pass/fail?

Instead of a letter grade, students receive either a P (meaning the student passed the class and received the credits) or F (meaning the student failed the class and received 0 credits).

Is a D- a passing grade?

Yes. Our current policy (on which the temporary policy is based) considers any grade above an F as a passing grade.

Can a student take more than one class on pass/fail?

Yes, for this semester only, students can take multiple classes with the pass/fail option.

Are there any courses that will be excluded from the pass/fail option?

Yes. The policy states that exceptions can be made based on requirements for licensure and accreditation. Department chairs in areas where licensure and accreditation regulations would prohibit the pass/fail option will need to submit to the college dean a list of courses that should be exempted from this policy, again only for licensure and accreditation reasons. The final list of exempted course will appear on the Registrar's Office website. Notification will be sent when the list of exempted courses is posted, which should be early next week.

Can a student take courses from the Common Core (general education) as pass/fail?

Yes, for this semester only, students may take a common core course as a pass/fail. Some common core courses may also count for the major, and in this case, the option may be restricted if a course grade is needed for licensure or accreditation.

Can a student take a course in the major as pass/fail?

Yes, for this semester only, a student may take courses in the major as pass/fail. This option may be restricted if the major requires licensure or accreditation.

Can having a pass/fail option impact a student's acceptance to graduate school?

This may depend on the field in which the student wishes to study. Many institutions across the country are moving to this grading system for this semester, and Westfield will include a notation about COVID-19 on the transcript. However, advisors will want to discuss the potential effect on graduate school admissions with any students seeking to take a pass/fail option.

Will taking a course on pass/fail have an impact on academic honors?

Taking courses on a pass/fail basis will impact qualifying for Dean's List, as the Dean's List policy requires students to complete at least 12 graded credit hours to qualify for Dean's List.

Taking courses on pass/fail will not impact Graduation Honors, as that policy does not require a minimum number of graded credits per semester.

How does taking a course pass/fail impact student GPA?

Quality points are not assigned to pass/fail grades. That means the pass/fail option does not directly impact a student's grade point average. If a student is taking a course or set of courses to improve GPA, pass/fail is probably not a good option. Advisors should discuss this issue with students when advising them about the pass/fail option.

Does this pass/fail option apply to both day and CGCE undergraduate students?

Yes, this policy does apply to all undergraduate students.

Does this pass/fail option apply to graduate courses?

No, the College of Graduate and Continuing Education has separate policies for graduate level courses. If a student has questions about this policy as related to graduate courses, please have the student contact the graduate program chair.

When do students have to decide if they want to take a class (or more than one class) as pass/fail?


The temporary policy allows students to make this decision up until May 5, 2020 (the last day of regular classes). Students should be advised to keep track of their course grades so they can make an informed decision.

Will faculty know if a student is taking a course pass/fail?

In accordance with our current policy, under the temporary policy, faculty are not notified of the election for pass/fail status. Faculty grade as they regularly would and submit course grades as usual. The registrar converts final course grades of students opting for pass/fail.

How do students take advantage of this temporary policy?

Students should check the Registrar's Office website for both the list of restricted courses and a link to complete the form to elect the pass/fail option for a course. Again, we anticipate both the list of restricted courses and the link to submit the pass/fail option will be available early next week.

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