

University of Sioux Falls Pass / No Credit (P/NC) Policy, Spring 2020

In an effort to support our students, the University of Sioux Falls is making a modification to the university's grading policy for the Spring 2020 semester. Undergraduate students will have the option to convert courses to Pass (P) or No Credit (NC), otherwise known as P/NC grading.

Note that due to licensure and other requirements, the following courses will need to remain on the standard A-F grading scale: all courses with an "NUR" (Nursing) prefix, all courses that are pre-requisites for nursing and pre-nursing courses, all courses in the MBA program, all courses in the Graduate Education program, DCP accelerated spring term courses, Intermediate Accounting I (ACC 325) and Intermediate Accounting II (ACC 326) courses, and the teacher residency courses (EDU 406 Teacher Residency: Elementary sections A, B, and C; EDU 412 Teacher Residency: Secondary section A; EDU 414 Teacher Residency: K-12; and SED 416 Teacher Residency: K-12 Special Education).

Students can make the decision to convert to P/NC on a course-by-course basis, and there is no limit on the number of courses students can convert to P/NC grading for this semester. At the end of the semester, all faculty will submit course letter grades (A,B,C,D,F) for their students to the university's Registrar's Office. For students who have chosen the P/NC option, the Registrar will convert grades of D- or higher to "P" and convert a grade of F to "NC." The student's transcript will show a P (for "Pass") or N (for "No Credit") mark. All transcripts will include a note indicating the unusual circumstances prevailing in spring 2020.

Grades of Pass (P) and No Credit (NC) do not affect the student's grade point average (term or cumulative) as calculated by the University of Sioux Falls; that is, "P" and "NC" grades are not part of the university's GPA calculations.

All courses that receive Pass (P) grades will count toward degree requirements. In particular, credits earned with a grade of Pass (P) will count toward: the 124 total credits required for graduation; course pre-requisites (with the Nursing exception referenced above); Liberal Arts Core requirements; requirements in the major, minor, or concentration; and minimum grade requirements in major courses. The grade of No Credit (NC) will result in no credits being awarded for the course. Courses that receive "P" or "NC" this semester will *not* count towards the maximum 20 hours of P/NC coursework towards graduation as referenced on page 52 of the 2019-2021 Academic Catalog.

Courses passed with a "P" do not count towards GPA-based recognition, including Latin Honors (cum laude, magna cum laude, summa cum laude) at graduation. Additionally, any student choosing the P/NC option for at least one course this spring is not eligible for consideration on the Dean's List for the 2020 Spring Term.

If you choose to remain with letter grades in all of your courses, you do not need to take any action. **Students who wish to convert one or more of your courses to P/NC need to report their declarations via email to the university's Registrar's Office by noon, Thursday, April 30.** To report your declaration, send an email from your USF email address, listing the complete set of course(s) you would like to take P/NC, to the USF Registrar at registrar@usioxford.edu; please cc your academic advisor, and for student-athletes, your athletic coaches, on that email. Then, watch for an email response from the Registrar confirming receipt. That confirmation email will be kept on file at USF as a

documented record of your selection. Note that requests sent after noon on April 30 cannot be accommodated.

Students are strongly urged not to make decisions to switch to P/NC without a full understanding of ramifications of such a decision for their particular academic major, graduate or medical school admission, employment, or career path. Faculty in some academic departments will be sending follow-up email communications with explicit guidance for students majoring in those programs, particularly for those leading to professional, medical, or graduate school; please carefully monitor your USF email for such communications, then follow up with your academic advisor with any questions. Student-athletes should additionally consult with their coach(es) to discuss athletic eligibility and other implications. International Students must consult with USF's Director of International Education. Recipients of outside scholarships should consult with their external scholarship providers.

Moving to P/NC will not jeopardize a student's financial aid eligibility; however, if you are currently on Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) warning or suspension, note that choosing P/NC will not help your cumulative GPA; earning a "P" will boost your completion rate, and a "NC" would hinder it. Students are encouraged to contact the university's Financial Aid Office at 605-331-6623 with questions.

The decision to offer this P/NC option was made by a collaborative team consisting of members of USF's administration, faculty, and staff. It was approved by the university's Management Team and Faculty Association. The modifications to the existing grading policy are in response to this unprecedented situation and are meant to help our students successfully complete the semester. We hope this P/NC grading option will reduce stress and anxiety and facilitate progress toward degree and graduation.

Q&A:

- **Why should I consider switching a course from letter grade to P/NC grading?**

A potential advantage to a final grade of P/NC is that P/NC does not factor into a student's GPA calculation. This will provide more flexibility for students who are worried about maintaining their GPAs during this challenging semester.

- **Why is this needed?**

Many colleges and universities across the country are adopting similar policies this semester due to the extraordinary circumstances that are disadvantaging some students. Additionally, we know that some of our students have limited access to the internet and computers. The university's administration and faculty approved this change to current grading policy to support students during these challenging times.

- **Does this mean the semester is over?**

No. Each course currently in session will continue until its regular completion date. Students are expected to continue to fully participate in their classes, and submit assigned work in order to complete their courses. Faculty members will continue to grade coursework through the remainder of the semester.

- **Does this mean that the grade we have right now in the class will be our final grade?**

No. All classes will continue to have graded assignments and tests, which will continue to be graded as normal. This change to our grading policy only applies to final grades.

- **Is this optional? I do not want P/NC because I have worked hard to earn an A or B.**

P/NC will be entirely optional, and each student's decision to stay with the current letter grade system or to transition to P/NC can be made on a course-by-course basis. No student will be required to change the current grading scheme. Keep in mind that some academic programs (listed below) will not be able to offer this option.

- **Are certain courses exempt from P/NC and must be taken for letter grades?**

Note that due to licensure and other requirements, the following courses will need to remain on the standard A-F grading scale: all courses with an "NUR" (Nursing) prefix, all courses that are pre-requisites for nursing and pre-nursing courses, all courses in the MBA program, all courses in the Graduate Education program, DCP accelerated spring term courses, Intermediate Accounting I (ACC 325) and Intermediate Accounting II (ACC 326) courses, and the teacher residency courses (EDU 406 Teacher Residency: Elementary sections A, B, and C; EDU 412 Teacher Residency: Secondary section A; EDU 414 Teacher Residency: K-12; and SED 416 Teacher Residency: K-12 Special Education).

- **How will moving to P/NC for some or all of my courses impact my GPA?**

The grades of P or NC do not factor into a student's term GPA or cumulative GPA. P/NC grades will neither help nor harm the GPA, which is why it may be preferential for some students to request during this challenging semester.

- **Does this apply to students who were already enrolled in online courses before the health emergency?**

Yes, the P/NC option will be available to students enrolled in any class in Spring 2020, with the exceptions of courses listed above that cannot be taken for a P/NC grade and must remain on the standard A-F grading scale.

- **Will this affect my ability to graduate this semester?**

A grade of No Credit (NC) earns no credit towards any graduation requirements. However, if you complete a course with a Pass (P), it will not impact your ability to graduate this semester or in the future; you will still have earned the credits from that course needed towards the 124 s.h. graduation requirement (as well as relevant Liberal Arts Core, major, minor, and concentration requirements).

- **What about this summer?**

At this time, this policy change is only for the Spring 2020 semester.

- **Will my instructors know whether I have decided to move to P/NC for their courses?**

Instructors will not be informed of your selection during the semester. After the semester has ended and final grades reported, academic advisors and area chairs will have access to this information. Instructors will continue to grade all students according to the letter grade system, through the remainder of the semester. At the end of the term, the Registrar's Office will convert letter grades to P/NC according to the criteria explained above.

- **I am planning on applying to a professional program (e.g. medical, PT.). Should I take my classes P/NC or letter graded?**

Students who are planning to apply to professional programs must consider that some courses should be taken for a letter grade. Watch for follow-up communications (via email) from faculty in those academic programs leading to professional, medical, or graduate school. Then, consult your academic advisor with any questions.

- **I am a nursing/pre-nursing student. Does this mean I can get P/NC in my nursing and pre-requisite nursing coursework?**

No, you will need to stay with the letter grade system for these courses. In particular, and due to licensure requirements, all courses with an "NUR" (Nursing) prefix and all courses that are pre-requisites for nursing and pre-nursing courses will need to remain on the letter grade system. Please contact Dr. Jessica Cherenegar at Jessica.cherenegar@usioxfalls.edu or your Nursing or Pre-Nursing academic advisor, to further discuss.

- **My employer is helping me pay for school. Does this policy affect my employer tuition reimbursement?**

Company tuition assistance programs often have minimum letter grade requirements. Check with your employer's Human Resources department to ensure that a grade of "Pass" will meet their requirements for reimbursement.

- **I am on a Financial Aid SAP (Satisfactory Academic Progress) warning or suspension. How does this policy affect me? Should I P/NC my courses?**

P/NC will not negatively impact your SAP calculation if you are currently meeting all the benchmarks. If you are currently on warning or suspension, choosing P/NC will not help your cumulative GPA (it has no impact on your GPA). Earning a "P" will boost your completion rate and an "NC" would hinder it. Please contact the university's Financial Aid Office at 605-331-6623 with questions.

- **I understand I need to report my changes by April 30. When should I make my decision – now, or closer to April 30?**

It is recommended that you wait until you have gotten into the rhythm of this new style of taking classes online before you make a decision about letter vs. P/NC grading. This will give you time to adapt, for graduate schools to weigh in on what they recommend you do, for you to see how you are doing in each of your classes, and for you to discuss your situation with your academic advisor, coaches, etc.

- **I am a student-athlete. How does this policy affect me? Will there be any issues with declaring P/NC for my classes?**

USF's institutional policy is that a "P" is "neutral" in regards to your GPA (it does not improve or lower your cumulative GPA). If you are a student who struggles and who is trying to improve your GPA to become eligible (2.00 GPA still required), then it would not be advisable for you to take classes P/NC because you cannot improve your GPA with "P's." We have heard across the nation that some schools are NOT giving student-athletes the opportunity to choose the P/NC route. We do not feel like that is a fair way to treat our student-athletes. We just want you to clearly understand the choices you have and their implications. We also want to caution student-athletes who are looking to advance into a professional school (Medical, Law, PT, etc.) that we are not sure how "P's" might be received by those evaluating for admission to those professional programs.

- **I am an International Student. How does this policy affect me?**

Before opting for P/NC grading in any of your courses, International Students must consult with Dr. Randy Nelson, USF Director of International Education, to review your individual situation in light of various legal considerations.

- **I have an outside scholarship. What does this policy mean for me?**

Students who are receiving outside scholarships need to seek clarification from the scholarship provider to determine consequences of a choice to transition to P/NC.