

Credit/No Credit or Traditional Letter Grade- Some Thoughts for Advisors*

Please remember that every student's situation is unique, and that the best option for one student might not be ideal for the next. If you are not sure about how to advise a student about switching the grading option, please speak with your direct supervisor or college advising coordinator. These FAQs and scenarios are not meant to be exhaustive- if you have other questions or examples that need to be added to the list, please contact your college advising coordinator with a cc to Beth Howard. Thank you for all you are doing to support our students.

Q. When should a student KEEP the traditional grading option?

A. If the student is doing well in the course, and believes the grade will be at or above their current cumulative grade point average, they would probably be best served by keeping the traditional grading option. No action is needed from the student in this situation.

Q. When should a student CHANGE the grading option to CR/NC?

A. If the student is earning a grade of less than C- (and has verified this with the instructor!), and the course material is essential to their progress in their desired program, they will probably need to repeat the course in the future. Converting to CR/NC does them no harm, and protects their grade point average. If the course is not required by their desired program, and they anticipate that the grade will be lower than their grade point average, it may be a great option for them to get the credit without risking damage to the gpa.

Q. When should a student absolutely NOT change a course to CR/NC?

A. This will vary from college to college, and program to program. While the university guideline is that for this semester, a grade of CR will satisfy college and major requirements, there may be situations in which a grade of CR may not satisfy a pre-requisite or licensure requirement. Aside from the grading option, it is important to discuss with your student whether they feel prepared to move to the next level of coursework.

Q. Follow up: When might the "rule" not be the rule?

A. Writing courses are a great example of where there might be an exception. In the very unusual situation where the major or department specifically requires a letter grade of C or better in WRTG 1010 or 2010, the student will need the letter grade. In the vast majority of cases, the student can take it on a CR/NC basis and have a passing grade satisfy the requirement for this semester only.

*If the student needs the course as a prerequisite for other courses in the future (for example, a math class), **as it stands now**, they may need to have the prerequisite checked manually in the future. Let's say the student is in Calc I this term and elects the CR/NC option. Before the end of term, that student will be able to register for Calc II. After grades are in, the student's record would be checked to make sure the originally entered grade met the stated minimum. If the student waited until after grade roll to register for Calc II, they would need to request a permission code. Again, if the originally entered grade met the minimum, the code would be granted. Further details will be provided on this as they become available.*

Q. What questions should I ask the student before advising them?

A. The more you know about the student, the better your advice is likely to be. Start with:

- Have you checked on the implications of your action with your scholarship and/or Financial Aid?*
- Have you discussed your standing in the class with your instructor?*
- What are your biggest concerns?*

Q. How will the grade point average appear on the transcript if all courses are taken on a CR/NC basis?

A. If a student takes all of their classes on a CR/NC basis, there will be no grade point average for the semester. It will show on the transcript as a 0.0, with no 0 credits in the calculation. It is not impacting the cumulative grade point average in any way.

Q. What about the usual limit on the number of CR/NC courses that can be counted towards the degree?

A. The university will not count any CR/NC course taken this semester in the current limits on the number of CR/NC courses a student can take.

Q. Are there other situations where a student might experience negative consequences if they convert to CR/NC?

A. For this, I reached out to our campus partners. Their responses are given below:

From Chelsea Wells; Director, International Student Scholar Services:

We have received many questions from international students about how the CR/NC option may impact their immigration status. We sent out an email blast to all international students yesterday afternoon about this, so hopefully students are checking their UMail. The CR/NC option will not impact a student's immigration status. We count these classes towards the full-time class load requirement.

We have informed all of the sponsoring agencies about the conversion to online classes, as well as the CR/NC option. We've received responses from the sponsoring agencies stating that they will continue to pay for the students' courses. However, if you are working a specific student who is experiencing an issue with their sponsoring agency, you are welcome to connect them to me.

From Veterans Services in the Office of the Registrar:

As long as the student does not receive an EU it should not affect their benefits by choosing a CR/NC option.

From Chris Uchacz, Athletic Academic Services:

As an academic services team, we have asked our student-athletes to come to their athletics academic advisors first to discuss the benefits or pitfalls of designating course(s) CR/NC. If further clarification is required, we will ask them to reach out to their major college advisor. I think in most instances it will be OK for our student-athletes. However, for those who are looking to apply to professional programs or to earn various licensures, we need to loop the major college advisors in.

Scenario 1. The student is on Probation and needs to earn a grade point average of 2.0 or higher this term or they'll be suspended. How do you advise the student?

- First, ask the student how they are doing in each of their classes. Ask how they know, and if they've discussed their status with their instructor. This piece is critical! Grading criteria now may be very different from what they were at the start of the term. If the student is at risk of earning less than a C in any class, they should probably consider changing it to CR/NC.
- If it is a class that they previously did poorly in, a grade of "CR" will replace the old grade, eliminating it from the grade point average. However, please note that a grade of "NC" will **NOT** replace a prior grade, so in this instance, there will be no impact (positive or negative) on the grade point average.
- Encourage the student to be realistic about their ability to get grades above the C- level. The term grade point average must be at a 2.0 or higher to avoid suspension, so there are risks associated with keeping the traditional letter grade option.

Scenario 2. The student plans to apply to a really competitive graduate or professional program, and is having trouble adjusting to the online format. How do you advise the student?

- First, consult with the instructor. You may be doing better than you think. If your grade is one or more letter grades below your average, though, the CR/NC option might be in your best interests.
- Students have until April 10th to select the CR/NC option, but they can revoke it and go back to a traditional letter grade until April 17th.
- See the guidance document (attached) developed by Mayumi Kasai, Director of the Preprofessional Advising Office for additional useful information.

Scenario 3. The student reports having a really hard time with all of this, and needs to reduce their stress level NOW. How do you advise the student?

- The withdrawal deadline has been extended until April 10th. Colleges have the standard late withdrawal options until the last day of classes. Students can withdraw from any course through CIS until then. We are past the 60% mark of the semester, so there will not be any Return to Title IV implications, but if a student receives Scholarships, Financial Aid, a Veterans benefit, or any other type of financial assistance, they should check with the funding agency before making any changes to their schedule. The same is true for students who may be subject to other types of restrictions, such as international students with certain types of visas, athletes- they need to check the ramifications before making changes.
- The end of the semester is rapidly approaching. Asking the student to prioritize the courses that are most critical to degree progression might allow them to reduce their stress level without delaying their graduation. The CR/NC option might help achieve that goal.

Scenario 4. The student expresses concerns about how this will "look" on their transcript. How do you advise the student?

- Remind the student that when it is time to apply to that graduate or professional program, all the other applicants in the pool will have been experiencing similar factors this term. One semester of slightly lower grades or a few grades of CR/NC are going to be taken in the context

of the global situation, and how the student has otherwise demonstrated their qualifications for the desired objective. Making good decisions, demonstrating resiliency, an otherwise strong academic record are going to outweigh the impact of one semester of extraordinary circumstances. There is a national conversation happening right now about how to reflect adjustments to term options on the transcript.

Scenario 5. The student is completely overwhelmed. How do you advise the student?

- This is a great opening to help a student connect with a Student Success Advocate. They are expert at helping students navigate the bureaucracy of our institution; they have moved to a virtual platform and are available to support students. Ask the student to go to the SSA homepage and read the bios. Encourage them to contact the SSA they would feel most comfortable with after reading the bios.

Scenario 6. This course is a General Education requirement, and the student is in good academic standing but feels like the grade going to bring down their grade point average. How do you advise the student?

- The CR/NC option can always be applied to lower division General Education requirements, so this would be an example of where converting to CR/NC might be a very good idea. However, the minimum grade need to receive a "CR" is a C-, so it is essential to know where you stand in the course. Strongly encourage the student to think about the remaining assignments in the class and talk to the instructor before making a choice.

* This document is designed for advisors who work primarily with undergraduate students. While some of the same principles apply to graduate students (e.g., looking at the needs and circumstances of the student you are working with), there may be substantive differences. I encourage each of you to use this document as a starting point rather than an end point, and customize it for the needs of your students.

Other resources:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/03/19/colleges-go-passfail-address-coronavirus>

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