

# Message From Provost Wallace Re: Grading Options

Posted from Thursday, April 09, 2020 through Thursday, April 23, 2020

Hello SMSU Mustangs:

I hope this message finds you doing well! You are on our minds and we care about you! We know the circumstances of the past few weeks are unsettling and disruptive. Please know your SMSU faculty and staff are working to find ways to support you.

I am writing today to share some information about some Spring 2020 grading options. read:

## **Some grading options available during this unprecedented time – ONE Time OPTIONS**

Our purpose in establishing flexible grading options for students during this most challenging time is to help keep everyone safe AND support you - SMSU Mustangs - to successfully complete the term and continue to progress toward your academic goals. To that end, please see three options if you are facing an academic situation different from what you hoped for.

**NOTE: *Before making a decision, please discuss your options with your course instructors and advisors. Some options are better than others for certain situations. April 27<sup>th</sup> is a date when any decisions and actions need to be made so plan ahead, consult instructors and advisors to make decision.***

### **1. Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) Grading Option – Undergraduate Students Only**

**What Is It?** Most classes at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) are typically graded with a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F. For the Spring 2020 term, we are giving students the option of choosing to be graded using either CR for “Credit” or NC for “No Credit.” With all of the time and effort you have invested in your courses already this grading option will provide a low-risk way for you to finish the course and continue to make progress toward your ultimate goal of graduation.

**How Does It Work?** Faculty in A-F graded courses will continue to grade you on an A-F scale, but if you choose the CR/NC option, your A-F grade will be converted to either “Credit” or “No Credit”. When you receive a CR grade, this means that you have achieved enough of the essential learning outcomes of the course to qualify for credit in that course. Instructors will determine the level of success required to receive this score; therefore, consulting with the instructor is necessary to make the best decision for your needs. You will have until **April 27<sup>th</sup>** to decide and submit the request to change to CR/NC. This form can be found on the Forms Page on Registration & Records.

<https://www.smsu.edu/campuslife/registrationrecords/forms/form621.html>

## **CONSIDERATIONS to DISCUSS with INSTRUCTORS and ADVISORS -**

Before deciding to choose the Credit/No-Credit option (CR/NC), students should discuss the changes with their academic advisors to ensure there are no unforeseen consequences of switching to credit/no credit.

a) Courses earning a grade of “CR” will count toward credits to graduate, but courses earning a grade of “NC” do not earn credits. CR and NC grades are not included in the calculation of your grade point average (GPA). Thus, if the circumstances of this semester make it harder this semester to get as high a grade as you would otherwise, this will protect your cumulative GPA. Although a CR/NC grade cannot hurt your GPA, it also can't help your GPA. If you determine your GPA will increase by sticking with the A-F grading method, you should do so.

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b) A No Credit (NC) grade will have the same impact on GPA, completion rate, and Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as does a Withdrawal (W).

c) Accreditation requirements and/or SMSU catalog requirements within the major or minor may prohibit CR/NC grades. Many accrediting bodies and other entities recognize the unprecedented nature of this semester across the nation and are adjusting such requirements. Please consult your advisor for guidance.

d) Although many other universities are going through the same changes, we do not know how graduate or professional schools will accept CR/NC grades. If you are planning to apply to graduate school in the future, talk to your advisor about how CR/NC grades might affect your eligibility. We will share information with advisors as we learn more.

e) If a certain GPA is required for admission to a program or major, students should know that “CR” will not be included in the GPA calculation. Students should consult with the appropriate major and other advisors prior to changing their grading option. For example, admission to Teacher Education requires a 2.8 GPA.

f) Students on academic warning should check with the Advising Office, specifically Jill Schlemmer ([schlemmer@smsu.edu](mailto:schlemmer@smsu.edu)) or your academic advisor to determine the effect CR/NC grades might have on their academic standing.

g) SMSU requires a minimum of 12 graded (A-F) credits to be considered for Deans List and a minimum of 32 of 42 graded (A-F) credits to be considered for Honors categories at graduation.

h) SMSU graduation policy allows a maximum of 20 credits of CR coursework toward your degree.

i) If you are repeating a course this semester, SMSU will allow the previous A-F grade earned to be replaced by a CR grade for this semester only. Our repeat policy is to take the grade that has the best impact on GPA.

j) International students are encouraged to contact International Student Services before choosing an option to learn of any potential consequences: call 507-237-6018 or email [ISS@smsu.edu](mailto:ISS@smsu.edu) for assistance.

## **2. Extension of Deadline to Withdraw**

**What Is It?** The Minnesota State system typically sets a deadline for students to withdraw that is set at the point when 80 percent of the term has been completed. The system had extended that point to 90 percent of the term, which means SMSU students in full-term courses will have until **April 27<sup>th</sup>** to decide whether to withdraw.

**How Does It Work?** Students in full-term courses can withdraw (and get a grade of W) at any point between now and **April 27<sup>th</sup>**. If you are in a shorter-term course, please view the course schedule to see the new date.

### **CONSIDERATIONS to DISCUSS with INSTRUCTORS and ADVISORS -**

a) Compared with the earlier withdrawal deadline, this will give you time to determine whether your new learning environment and personal circumstances will allow you to academically succeed in the current term.

b) A Withdrawal (W) grade will have the same impact on GPA, completion rate, and Satisfactory Academic Progress as does a No Credit (NC) grade.

c) A Withdrawal (W) might be particularly useful in some instances but, in general, students might pursue another option such as an Incomplete (I) (see below), which will provide the opportunity for you to complete the course and not have to pay for it again. A “W” at this point in the term does not allow students to receive any tuition dollars back.

d) Students should contact the SMSU Financial Aid Office [financialaid@smsu.edu](mailto:financialaid@smsu.edu) to determine the effect a “W” might have on their financial aid status.

e) This form to withdraw from a class can be found on the [Forms Page](#) on Registration & Records.

f) International students are encouraged to contact International Student Services before choosing an option to learn of any potential consequences: call 507-237-6018 or email [ISS@smsu.edu](mailto:ISS@smsu.edu) for assistance.

### **3. Expanded Use of Incomplete (I) Grade**

**What Is It?** An Incomplete (I) grade gives students a chance to complete coursework after the semester ends when a plan is set up and agreed upon with the instructor.

**How Does It Work?** The instructor may give students a “I” grade at the end of the course, and then change the grade to an A-F or CR/NC grade when the work is later completed. There is a time limit for completing the work; if a student does not complete the work by the deadline, the “I” grade is automatically changed to an “F” on your transcript. Normally, SMSU policy only allows faculty to give students an Incomplete in limited circumstances. SMSU will be expanding options for faculty to use “I” grades in cases where a student or an entire class cannot finish the necessary coursework by the end of the semester as a result of COVID-19.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS to DISCUSS with INSTRUCTORS –**

- a) In some situations, an Incomplete may be a student’s best option. If it comes down to the student withdrawing from a course or being granted an Incomplete, an incomplete should be seriously considered. We want you to continue and succeed.
- b) Incompletes assigned in May of 2020 will automatically become a grade of “F” at the completion of the Fall 2020 semester if nothing is done to change it. Incompletes can be extended by another semester at the request of the faculty member to the Registration Office.
- c) PLEASE NOTE: Many students who receive an “I” end up never completing the work later, and they end up getting an “F”. Therefore, for some students, the best option will be to continue the course through the end of the semester with a CR/NC grade method instead of opting for an Incomplete.
- d) International students are encouraged to contact International Student Services before choosing an option to learn of any potential consequences: call 507-237-6018 or email [ISS@smsu.edu](mailto:ISS@smsu.edu) for assistance.

Be well and let us know how to support you.

Teri Wallace

Interim Provost and Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs