

**Questions and Answers regarding the
Spring Semester Mandatory Credit / No Credit Grading Policy**

April 10, 2020

1. Will the Credit / No Credit Grading Policy apply to the Summer Session or to the Fall Semester in 2020?

No. The Credit / No Credit Grading Policy that the faculty adopted is applicable to the Spring Semester only and was adopted by the faculty due to the unique circumstances that arose during the Spring Semester. The plan for the Summer Session and the Fall Semester is to return to the normal grading policy.

Enrollment in summer school courses is optional and is at the student's discretion. Students experiencing hardships or other circumstances that may affect their academic performance may choose not to enroll for the summer.

Note: Ordinarily, 1L part-time students take Contracts II and Torts II during their first summer. For this summer only, 1L part-time students who began in the Fall Semester 2019 may choose to take either or both of those courses at a later time, rather than this summer, by notifying the Registrar.

2. What grade must a student achieve to receive Credit in the Spring Semester?

Any passing grade. The faculty has determined that any final grade that would have been sufficient to pass the course earns a mark of Credit. Any F receives a mark of No Credit; and, if the course is a mandatory course required for graduation or as a prerequisite, the course must be retaken, and the student must earn a passing grade.

3. Will the Reading Period before Exams be extended?

Yes. All classes previously scheduled from Friday, April 24, through Monday, April 27, are cancelled. This will extend the reading period to a full seven days.

4. Will there be a notation on transcripts regarding this semester?

Yes. All transcripts will contain a notation indicating that the faculty made the decision, due to the disruptions caused by COVID-19, that, with few exceptions, all courses in the Spring Semester would be subject to a Mandatory Credit / No Credit grading policy.

Note: Semester honors that typically are included on transcripts (such as Dean's List) cannot be calculated this semester and will not be awarded.

5. May a student withdraw from a course this Spring without academic penalty?

Yes. The law school already has a policy in place whereby a student may withdraw from one or more courses, even at this late date, because of extraordinary circumstances. The student's transcript will

reflect a “W”, and the course will not factor in the calculation of the student’s GPA or class rank. This policy can be found on page 13 of the Student Handbook. If a student elects to withdraw from a course, the student will not receive a refund on tuition related to that course.

6. Can a student who wants a grade in a particular class defer the exam until the summer or to the fall to take the final, and thus receive a grade and GPA points?

No. As is the case in every semester, a student may defer an exam pursuant to the law school’s standard deferred exam policy if the reason presented is approved by the Registrar. This policy can be found on pages 14-15 of the Student Handbook. If a student is permitted to defer an exam (either to this coming summer or to the next semester or session for which the student is registered and in which the course is offered, unless otherwise approved by the Registrar), the exam will be graded pursuant to the Spring Credit / No Credit Grading Policy. This policy is adopted to ensure that the fairness principles that justified the adoption of the Spring Credit / No Credit Grading Policy are maintained.

7. May a student who deferred an exam to Spring 2020 receive a grade in the course?

No. Because it is impossible to create a normal curve for this semester, there is no practical and fair way to assign a specific letter grade to an exam deferred to the Spring Semester 2020. Students who have deferred an exam to Spring Semester 2020 may not further defer the exam to a future semester to seek a letter grade in the class.

8. Will students who fall below the threshold for maintaining a Dean’s Merit Scholarship (currently, a GPA of 3.10) lose their scholarships?

No. Because students who fell below the requisite threshold at the end of the Fall Semester 2019 did not have the opportunity in the Spring Semester to raise their GPAs, the law school will extend these Dean’s Merit Scholarships so that they will continue to be applied to the Fall Semester 2020. If a student falls below the requisite threshold after grades are calculated for the Fall Semester 2020, the student will no longer be eligible for the scholarship and it will not be applied to the Spring Semester 2021.

9. How will students who started in the Fall Semester 2019 who are below the GPA threshold necessary to remain enrolled be addressed?

None of these students will be excluded from school at the end of the Spring Semester for having a GPA that is below the threshold for remaining enrolled after two semesters of coursework. Please also see Question 10.

Additional Note for students who started in the Spring Semester 2020: These students must achieve the requisite 2.30 GPA threshold for academic good standing at the end of the Fall Semester 2020. South Texas allows students two semesters to demonstrate that they can achieve the requisite GPA (as opposed to after one semester, as at some law schools) because the College recognizes that not all students adjust to law school at the same pace; for those students who do not perform well in the first semester, the second semester is their opportunity to demonstrate that they have improved upon their first semester experience and are now capable of performing work of sufficient quality to remain in law school. While students who matriculated in the Spring Semester 2020 will not have specific letter

grades this Spring Semester, they are strongly encouraged to reach out to their professors to learn where they stand and how to ensure that they are performing at the level necessary to demonstrate proficiency in the Fall Semester 2020.

10. What policy applies to a student whose GPA at the end of the Fall Semester 2019 was below 2.40?

If, after the Fall Semester 2019, a student's GPA was below 2.40, the student will be required to meet with the Registrar or Associate Dean of Academic Affairs before attending their next academic term's classes (either before the start of Summer Session classes or before the start of Fall Semester classes, as appropriate). The meeting is designed to ensure that the student has established a plan designed to achieve success in law school. The Registrar will contact each of these students via their Stanley email in the coming weeks.

11. How will students who are below the GPA threshold necessary for graduation be addressed?

A committee of faculty members will review the exams and coursework of each student whose GPA is below the threshold necessary for graduation. The Committee may seek input from the faculty members who taught each student and may reach out to the students themselves. The Committee will determine whether the work performed by such student demonstrates sufficient quality that the Committee should grant an exception to the requisite GPA threshold necessary for graduation.

12. How will 1L students be assigned to ALA?

This question is applicable to 1L students for whom the Spring Semester 2020 is their first semester. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, after consultation with relevant faculty members, may recommend that students take ALA based on their performance in the Spring Semester 2020.

13. Will students know how they performed in a course with some specificity – rather than just that they did enough to earn Credit? Will they know how they did relative to other students?

In part. Due to the current circumstances, it is not possible for professors this semester to construct a normal curve. The curve is based on a normal distribution of students performing under ordinary circumstances – which does not exist in the present environment. This makes it impossible for a professor to say that a student would have received a particular grade this semester – say, a B or an A-, because such grades depend on a normal curve.

Students interested in receiving specific feedback from their professors this semester should reach out to them.

14. Will faculty still determine/designate students as receiving the "Highest Grade" in each course at the end of the semester?

Faculty will have the discretion to determine whether to identify students who performed best in the course.

15. Do attendance rules and participation still matter?

Yes. Participation in, and attendance at, class remain important to a student's education. In addition, faculty retain the right to incorporate attendance and participation into a student's final grade – which, could make the difference between Credit and No Credit. Please refer to the Online Learning: Expectations and Attendance Policy (March 22, 2020).

16. There are a few graduating 3Ls who are on the line between Latin Honor distinctions or ranking percentiles that were anticipating shifts in their GPA points this semester. Will those be adjusted to support those who are within a narrow range?

No. While the law school would like to be able to provide students with an opportunity to increase their GPAs to achieve a particular distinction, there is no mechanism to do so fairly and accurately.

17. Will Law Review admission standards be adjusted?

Yes. This summer, the Law Review will offer a summer write-on opportunity that will be open to all students with a GPA of 3.00 or higher (rather than the usual 3.25) at the conclusion of the Fall Semester 2019.

18. What counts as a class completed substantially before spring break that is excluded from the Credit / No Credit Grading Policy?

A course will be graded using the normal grading standard applicable to the course if it meets all of the following characteristics:

- The course is an upper-division course;
- The course does not have a final exam or, if it does have a final, the final was given prior to March 12, 2020;
- The course has a significant focus on skills and / or is a paper class; and
- At least 2/3 of the course grade is based on work that was substantially prepared and turned in prior to spring break.

Faculty will notify students during the week of April 13 if their course is not subject to the Credit / No Credit Grading Policy.