



April 1, 2020

Dear Clark Atlanta University Community,

Extraordinary circumstances of the Spring 2020 semester upon the nation and the world dictate that difficult decisions be made in the best interests of our students, faculty and staff. After careful consideration of input from students, faculty, Department Chairs, Deans, and other members of the Academic Affairs Leadership Team as well as consideration of Covid-19 responses at other institutions, the Offices of the President and Provost have made an executive decision to implement a limited term policy (applying only to Spring 2020 semester), that will allow students to make a choice regarding the form of their final grades for each course they complete. Thus, the following decision will stand for Spring 2020 semester.

All undergraduate courses in the Spring 2020 semester will be graded Pass/No Pass, unless the student elects to receive an earned letter grade for the course. *Grading of Graduate courses and courses in the Professional Schools will be determined by the Dean of each School, upon consultation with the Provost, secondary to accreditation guidelines, licensing requirements, and the Department of Education policies.*

The Clark Atlanta University mission highlights our commitment to prepare and transform the lives of students. During this time of crisis and upheaval, our students, faculty, and staff are facing a number of disruptions in spite of everyone's best efforts to sustain active teaching and learning in all classes. Clark Atlanta University students will be afforded the opportunity to make thoughtful decisions about their grade preferences for each course in the context of the temporary implementation of the Pass/No Pass grading system. Faculty and academic advisors should provide students with as much information as possible to help students make the best choice for their situation.

Considerations in Pass/No Pass Decision

Several considerations were taken into account in reaching this decision.

1. Students being required to complete their coursework via remote instruction raises the issue of fairness. Giving students the option to receive a grade of Pass/No Pass, helps mitigate this fairness issue. A “Pass” will not factor into the GPA but would count toward earned semester hours and toward curricular, matriculation, and graduation requirements. A “No Pass” will not factor into the GPA but will not count toward earned semester hours and if the “No Pass” is earned in a required course, students would have to retake the course in a future semester.
2. There is no easy decision to be made about grading during a pandemic. The decision to adopt the policy or to reject it will have supporters and detractors on both sides. However, in the interests of fairness to students during an upheaval of learning, any reasonable accommodation that the University can make should be considered. Also, it should be noted that the survey of faculty indicated an even divide amongst opinions.
3. The impact of Pass/No Pass grades on student-athletes (including their eligibility) is still unclear as the NCAA is currently considering the matter. We cannot implicate our student-athletes; accordingly, student-athletes may be excluded from the Pass/No Pass option depending on decisions rendered by the NCAA.
4. External merit-based scholarships, may still require students to meet GPA requirements that cannot be met with Pass/No Pass grades. The University will be pleased to assist students correspond with external funders as necessary.
5. The grade decisions made by students will be final and will not be reversible.
6. Students who are unable to complete their course of study this semester due to an illness related to COVID-19 can request an Incomplete with a letter grade to be assigned when they complete the requirements. The Pass/No Pass option will not apply in this instance.

Implementation Details

1. The implementation of the Pass/No Pass grade default only applies to undergraduate students. Undergraduate students enrolled in the School of Education and the Whitney M. Young School of Social Work may be eligible for the Pass/No Pass default, for some of their courses. Due to licensing and certification requirements, these students must consult with Dean Turner and Dean Jones to confirm whether they must elect standard letter grade. All International students must consult with Ms. Gwen Wade, Director of International Programs prior to making their decision.
2. In instances where courses may have licensure and certification implications, the Dean or a designee would be required to validate the option for Pass/No Pass and could declare that the option is not available for a specific course. Internship, Field Experience, and Clinical Practice courses will continue to be graded with standard letter grades.
3. In Graduate and Professional Programs, the Pass/No Pass option will be determined by the Dean of each School, in consideration of accreditation guidelines, licensing/certification requirements, and the Department of Education policies.
4. **Faculty will need to record letter grades for all students as usual**, but these will be converted to Pass/No Pass on the transcript by the Office of the Registrar, unless the student elects to retain the letter grade for one or more of their courses.
5. Students will submit their election to retain letter grading electronically via a web form by April 30, 2020 (specific directions for accessing and submitting this form will be outlined by April 2, 2020).
6. Students will have the option of choosing to make a course Pass/No Pass or a letter grade on an individual course basis. In other words, students may opt for a letter grade in one course and a Pass/No Pass in another course.
7. A "Pass" will not factor into a student's GPA but will count toward earned semester hours as well as toward curricular, matriculation, and graduation credit hour requirements. A "No Pass" will not count toward earned semester hours nor will it be factored into the student's GPA. If the "No Pass" is earned in a required course, students will have to retake the course in a future semester.

Students earning a “No Pass” in an elective may repeat that course in a future semester or may choose to enroll in a different elective course that will enable them to meet the requirements of their specific program of study.

8. Assignment of a “Pass” will be consistent with the current criteria for letter grades, e.g., a letter grade of A, B, C, D, would count as a “Pass” if such has been the case historically. In instances where a D grade has not historically counted as a “Pass” (upper division courses in Theater and Communication Studies, for example), a “Pass” requires a grade of C or better.

9. Students must declare their preference to earn letter grades via a web form no later than April 30, 2020 (specific directions for accessing and submitting this form will be outlined by April 2, 2020). This time line allows students time to acclimate to the online/remote instruction environment and to make an informed decision in consultation with their faculty members and/or advisors. This also allows time for Deans to validate the option for Pass/No Pass grades for Graduate courses as well as courses in programs with licensure and certification implications.

10. Students will not be able to reverse their decision regarding the Pass/No Pass or standard letter grade election after they have submitted the web form. Thus students **MUST** be sure to make this decision thoughtfully and only after consultation with your faculty advisor.

11. Students may not request an Incomplete unless they elect the letter grade option.

12. All transcripts will include a notation explaining the use of Pass/No Pass for the Spring 2020 semester, and articulating the COVID-19 pandemic as a major disruption to the academic experience and cause for the temporary change in grade designations.

13. Students on academic probation who do not elect to accept letter grades will be continued to the next semester, since they cannot raise their GPA with Pass grades.

14. The University moving to Pass/No Pass will not jeopardize an undergraduate student's financial aid or scholarship eligibility. Please note that all SAP (Satisfactory Academic Progress) guidelines from the Department of Education will be followed. It should be noted that under the recently approved CARES Act, the Secretary of Education will not implement SAP rules for Spring 2020 semester.

15. Clark Atlanta University will return to our established letter grading system after the Spring 2020 semester.

16. Undergraduate student recipients of University scholarships are eligible to receive Pass/No Pass grades, where applicable. However, scholarship recipients should be reminded that the criteria to maintain scholarship eligibility will remain in effect, and will be reassessed following the Fall 2020 semester.

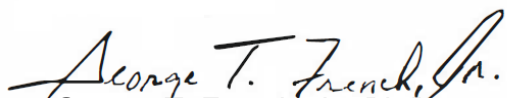
17. The impact of Pass/No Pass grades on student-athletes (including their eligibility) is still unclear as the NCAA is currently considering the matter. We cannot implicate our student-athletes; accordingly, student-athletes may be excluded from the Pass/No Pass option depending on decisions rendered by the NCAA.


Let us maintain diligence in ensuring the safety and well-being of the Clark Atlanta University community while continuing to provide an excellent learning experience that our students expect and deserve.

Finally, let us consider how we can help our neighbors during this time of crisis, even as we remain concerned and attentive in protecting our own health and safety.

Let us continue to navigate these challenging times, together.

Sincerely,


George T. French, Jr., Ph.D.
President


Dorcas D. Bowles, Ed.D.
Interim Provost
Vice President, Academic Affairs