

March 31, 2020

Dear Students,

As I've previously shared with you, the College of Law faculty voted on March 20 to switch to elective Pass/Fail grading for Spring 2020. Both before and after that meeting, our faculty Academic Standards Committee met to evaluate student concerns about Spring 2020 grading and to weigh options for moving forward.

On March 27, the full faculty met again to discuss and adopt specific details for how the Pass/Fail grading system will work, as well as how it will impact other related academic policies for Spring 2020. I appreciate the faculty's service and all they continue to do to help us navigate this complex and constantly changing situation.

As you will see in the Memorandum below, we have made a number of changes to our grading and related policies for Spring 2020. Please take time to carefully review and absorb the changes described in the Memorandum.

If you have questions that you believe are not addressed in the Memorandum, please feel free to submit them to me, via email to [LawPreparedness@law.syr.edu](mailto:LawPreparedness@law.syr.edu). All answers (assuming they are not about a specific student's unique situation) will be posted on our [College of Law Preparedness](#) page.

I wish you all continued safety and good health.

Best regards,

**Craig M. Boise**

Dean and Professor | College of Law

## MEMORANDUM ON SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY GRADING POLICIES FOR SPRING 2020 SEMESTER

March 31, 2020

On March 20, 2020 the College of Law faculty voted to switch to elective Pass/Fail grading for Spring 2020. Specifically, the faculty determined that the most appropriate remedy for the dislocation caused by moving to online classes for the balance of the Spring 2020 semester is to give students the opportunity to make the final decision about whether to accept the letter grade received for a course (“Actual Grade”), or take a “Pass” grade for the course in lieu of the Actual Grade, after the Actual Grade has been posted to MySlice.

Under this approach, for each course, a student will first receive an Actual Grade and then will have the **option** of electing to keep that grade or convert it to a Pass grade for that course. The election to take a Pass grade must be made within 5 business days of the posting of grades for the particular class. Information about the process for making the election will be disseminated prior to final exams in a message from the COL Registrar’s Office.

### **Provisional Changes to the Academic Rules for Spring 2020**

At its meeting on March 20, and at a subsequent meeting on March 27, the faculty discussed and adopted specific procedures for how the elective Pass/Fail grading system will work, as well as other related academic rule changes for Spring 2020. Following are the changes to the Academic Rules for Spring 2020.

#### *Suspension of Normal Pass/Fail Rules*

The restrictions and limitations contained in current Academic Rules 13.4.1, 13.4.2, and 13.4.3 will not apply with respect to elective Pass/Fail grading for the Spring 2020 semester.

Specifically:

- The restriction of the Pass/Fail option to certain courses is suspended and all courses are eligible for elective Pass/Fail grading (Academic Rule 13.4.1);
- The limitation of the Pass/Fail option to a total of seven (7) credit hours of courses is suspended (Academic Rule 13.4.2); and
- The requirement that a course grade must be a “C+” or higher in order to be eligible for a Pass election is suspended (Academic Rule 13.4.3).

#### *Academic Dismissals and Probation*

For the Spring 2020 semester, Academic Rules 15.1.1 through 15.1.5, governing dismissal and academic probation, shall be suspended.

### Structured Curriculum

For the Spring 2020 semester, the Academic Rules governing the Structured Curriculum (Rules 2.1.7, 2.1.8 and 2.1.10) shall be modified as follows:

- Students who obtain a grade-point average (GPA) below 2.90, calculated by the combination of previously received and recorded letter grades and the students' Spring 2020 semester Actual Grades in the Required Lower-Division Courses listed in Academic Rule 2.1.5.1, shall be required to take all eight (8) of the Structured Curriculum courses listed in Academic Rule 2.1.8; and
- Each such student shall be required to participate in the course and activity planning process set forth in Academic Rule 2.1.8.2.
- A student who fails to satisfy the GPA cutoff, stated above, may petition the Academic Standards Committee for a waiver from inclusion in the Structured Curriculum Program based on a showing that the failure does not reflect the student's academic ability and was caused by extreme hardship or other extraordinary circumstances. Petitioning students shall have no right of personal appearance before the Committee and the Committee's determination shall be final.

### Repeating Courses

The suspension of Academic Rule 13.4.3 for the Spring 2020 semester shall not relieve students from the requirements regarding the repeating of courses as set forth in Academic Rule 16.1.1.

Accordingly, an Actual Grade in a Spring 2020 semester Required Lower-Division Course, Required Upper-Division Course, or Structured Curriculum Course may require the repeat of the course prior to graduation pursuant to Academic Rule 16.1.1.

### Eligibility for Employment by the College of Law

For the Spring 2020 semester, Academic Rule 4.1, governing eligibility for employment by the College of Law, shall be modified as follows:

(1) Students must obtain a grade-point average (GPA) of 2.90 or above, calculated by the combination of previously received and recorded letter grades and Spring 2020 semester Actual Grades in the Required Lower-Division Courses, in order to be eligible for College of Law teaching assistantships, research assistantships and academic fellowship positions.

(2) A student who fails to satisfy the GPA requirement, stated above, may petition the Academic Standards Committee for a waiver of the requirement based on a showing that the failure does not reflect the student's academic ability and was caused by extreme hardship or other extraordinary circumstances. Petitioning students shall have no right of personal appearance before the Committee and the Committee's determination shall be final.

#### Eligibility for Joint Degree Programs

For the Spring 2020 semester, Academic Rules 4.2 and 6.1, governing eligibility for Joint Degree Programs shall be modified as follows:

(1) Students must obtain a grade-point average (GPA) of 2.90 or above, calculated by a combination of previously received and recorded letter grades and Spring 2020 semester Actual Grades, in the required Lower-Division Courses in order to be eligible for admission to a College of Law Joint Degree Program; and

(2) A student who fails to satisfy the GPA requirement, stated above, may petition the Academic Standards Committee for a waiver of the requirement based on a showing that the failure does not reflect the student's academic ability and was caused by extreme hardship or other extraordinary circumstances. Petitioning students shall have no right of personal appearance before the Committee and the Committee's determination will be final.

#### Relief from Earlier Pass/Fail Election

For the Spring 2020 semester, Academic Rule 13.4.2 shall be modified such that students who earlier in the semester elected to take a course Pass/Fail shall be relieved of that election and shall be entitled to take advantage of the Pass/Fail grading approach described in this memorandum.

Specifically, in the case of a student who previously made a Pass/Fail election for the Spring 2020 semester, the grading basis for that course has been changed back to its original grading basis by the College of Law Registrar's Office. After the final grade in that course has been posted, the student may elect to receive a Pass grade for that course.

#### Minimum Graded Credits for Curricular Programs and Graduation Honors

For the Spring 2020 semester, Academic Rules 7.1 and 17.1.2, respectively governing Curricular Programs and Graduation Honors, shall be modified such that Pass grades shall be counted in determining the minimum credits required for completion of a Curricular Program or the receipt of Graduation Honors.

*Academic Dismissal and Probation in the Second and Third Years*

Letter grades replaced by a Pass in the Spring 2020 semester shall not be calculated in a student's GPA for the determination of academic dismissal or probation pursuant to Academic Rule 15.1.3.

Accordingly, letter grades replaced by a Pass grade in the Spring 2020 semester courses will not be used in determining whether a student is subject to academic dismissal or probation in the second or third year of study.