

To: WUCL Community

From: Dean Bridgeman

Date: March 31, 2020

Re: Grading Policy for Spring 2020 in light of COVID-19

Earlier today, the faculty adopted the policy below for grading that will apply for the current semester. It has been an extraordinary couple of weeks, and we would all like to thank you for passing along your ideas, concerns, and support. In addition to the petition signed by just over a quarter of the student body, we've received literally dozens of individual messages arguing for or against a pass/fail system for the spring, including a surprising range of possibilities. We have considered them all carefully and have also studied what other law schools across the country are doing. Although there is not universal agreement about how we should face these times, and indeed it quickly became clear there is no one solution that would please everyone, there is agreement that we all want what is best for students as a whole. We acknowledge that many of you are, and will be, facing uniquely difficult circumstances due to the events that are unfolding around us, and please know that we want to do all we can as a law school to support you through those difficulties. Through this policy, we hope to give students the choices they need to dampen the worst effects of the changes we are facing while also recognizing that we remain an institution committed to individualized learning and professional development so that you can be truly excellent attorneys on the other side of this crisis.

In essence, the approved policy adopts a Credit / No Credit approach that allows students to decide, after seeing their assigned grades for this semester, whether they want their Spring 2020 grades to appear on their transcript or not. If not, your grades will all be converted to Credit (for C- and above) / No Credit (for D+ and below), and the spring grades would not be used to alter your cumulative GPA. The Cr/NC for graded classes would not count against the 20 ungraded credit limit for graduation.

In addition, as long as you pass your classes, we will not academically exclude any student after this semester, even if your GPA is below the normal exclusion line.

We will, however, include the spring 2020 grades in the determination of who is on academic probation, and for purposes of determining which courses you are required to take (i.e., ALA / LAB, Bar Courses, etc.). In the end, we concluded that the support that these courses provide – which are designed to ensure that you are in the best possible position to be successful in law school and on the bar -- are too important to defer to future semesters.

Finally, as you know many students received one-year scholarships that are renewable if the student achieves a certain GPA. We will include the Spring 2020 grades in the determination of whether to renew scholarships. This will allow students who were below the mark in the fall semester to use the spring grades to rise above the mark. Although we cannot renew every scholarship, we are committed to doing all we can in the coming months to alleviate the scholarship impact on students who were on track to renew their scholarship before the disruption caused by the pandemic. We will provide more information on how we will do that in the coming weeks.

These have been a difficult couple of weeks in so many ways, and we recognize that they will continue to be difficult in ways that we do not quite yet recognize. While we have attempted to anticipate a wide variety of circumstances through this policy, please note in the end, this is intended to address the unique overarching circumstances we face. We also note that, if you find it necessary, the withdrawal period has been extended through the end of classes.

We have attached an FAQ document, and are happy to answer additional questions if you have them. We look forward to continuing to see you (albeit remotely) through the semester.

Grading Policy for Spring 2020 (applicable to Spring 2020 only)

- 1) Optional Cr/NC After Grades for Transcript:** Students may choose by a date to be determined after grades are available to students to have all Spring 2020 courses represented on their transcript as Credit / No Credit. For those choosing Cr/NC, Spring 2020 grades would NOT count for purposes of CGPA (and therefore not for ranking or honors at graduation). If a student elects Cr/NC for Spring 2020 classes, credit for the classes that were originally graded will not count against that student's 20 ungraded credit limit for graduation. Once made, this election is final. Grades will remain on the transcript for students who do not opt out of grades by the announced deadline.
- 2) Grades Assigned; Cr/NC Conversion:** All courses will still be graded as if this policy were not in effect (this includes Cr/NC for students who opted into that choice in LRW). Students opting for Cr/NC on transcripts will receive Cr for all courses in which their grades are C- and above; grades of D+ and below will be designated NC. High paper designations will be available whether students choose grades or Cr/NC.
- 3) Students choosing graded option:** Spring 2020 grades count for all purposes for students opting out of Cr/NC for the semester (but see (7) and (8) re exclusion and graduation).
- 4) Transcript Notation re COVID:** We anticipate that there will be a transcript notation for the semester (for all students) indicating that pandemic closures caused academic disruptions during the semester. Details will be determined by the registrar.
- 5) Class Placement / Academic Probation:** For all students, whether the transcript reflects grades or Cr/NC, Spring 2020 grades will count to determine course placement / bar tiers, and whether a student is placed on or removed from academic probation.
- 6) Scholarship Renewal:** For all students, whether the transcript reflects grades or Cr/NC, scholarship renewal will include Spring 2020 grades. If a student's CGPA, including the Spring 2020 grades, would not entitle the student to scholarship renewal, however, the law school may nevertheless exercise its discretion to alleviate all or part of the impact of scholarship non-renewal based on the Spring 2020 CGPA (before Cr/NC election) by considering a variety of factors, including a student's GPA prior to Spring 2020 and other factors unique to each student's circumstances.
- 7) Academic Exclusion:** Students who fall below the relevant GPA for academic exclusion based on reported Spring 2020 grades will not be excluded in the Spring so long as (a) the student receives a Cr in all ungraded classes (if any) and a C- or above in all graded classes, and (b) the student schedules and completes a meeting with the Associate Deans to evaluate whether continuing for an additional semester is appropriate in light of their cumulative performance to date. To comply with ABA policy, however, students who fall

below the relevant GPA for academic exclusion and did not pass an ungraded class or received a D+ or below in a graded class in Spring 2020 will be excluded subject to normal procedures for student petitions. For students who do continue, normal exclusion policies would apply to grades and the CGPA for students at the end of the fall semester of 2020.

- 8) Graduation:** Students planning to graduate in May 2020 may do so notwithstanding the provisions of Section 3.VII.D of the student handbook (requiring a 2.3 to graduate). However, all such students must still meet other graduation requirements (i.e., if a student does not receive a passing grade for courses needed for graduation, that student would not be eligible to graduate. A passing grade means earning a D- or above if letter grades are chosen, or earning a CR if choosing the CR/NC option.