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*Chair of the Assembly of the Academic Senate
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May 4, 2020

ACADEMIC SENATE DIVISION CHAIRS

Re: Divisional Flexibility for Grading Options for Summer 2020

Dear Colleagues:

In March 2020, in response to the rapid pivot to remote learning under COVID-19, the Academic Council issued a letter from the University Committee on Educational Policy (UCEP) providing guidance to divisions around the use of the P/NP grading option during Spring 2020. Council has endorsed a new UCEP letter providing guidance on the issues to keep in mind when considering whether to extend divisional flexibility for grading options to all summer sessions in 2020. Council echoes UCEP's statement that the guidance does not imply support for any particular option or divisional decision about P/NP. UCEP's letter states:

UCEP recognizes that there may be reasons for extending flexibility at least for some students but also cautions that potential unintended consequences should be weighed carefully by each Division.

Some believe that the factors motivating the need for flexibility are still relevant during Summer 2020, while others suggest that students are now informed about remote instruction, and the need for flexibility is much less. I also remind Divisions, as stated in the letter from UCEP, that the policies that cover the use of P/NP are almost entirely under Divisional control.

I ask that Senate Division Chairs send the UCEP document to respective Committees on Education Policy/Undergraduate Councils for follow up.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kum-Kum Bhavnani".

Kum-Kum Bhavnani, Chair
Academic Council

Cc: UCEP Chair Serences
Senate Directors
Hilary Baxter, Executive Director, Academic Senate



UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (UCEP)
John Serences, Chair
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Monday, May 4, 2020

RE: Guidance about P/NP grading for Summer Session(s) 2020

Dear Kum-Kum,

In March 2020, UCEP provided guidance around the use of the P/NP grading option during Spring 2020 in response to the rapid pivot to remote learning (link [here](#)). Below, we offer Divisions guidance on issues to consider when deciding whether to extend P/NP flexibility to 2020 summer sessions.

We would emphasize that UCEP does not hereby endorse a particular option but aims to help decision makers at the campus level.

Recommendation:

UCEP recognizes that there may be reasons for extending flexibility, at least for some students, but also cautions that potential unintended consequences should be weighed carefully by each Division.

As outlined in the Appendix, the policies that govern the use of P/NP grades are almost entirely under Divisional control.

The one exception is [SR782](#), which sets an upper limit on the number of courses that can be taken P/NP, with campuses adopting either a 25% or a 33% upper limit (see Appendix, point 1).

Examples of Campus Actions:

At several campuses (UCSD, UCB, UCD), local regulations were adopted to exclude P/NP courses taken in Spring 2020 from the numerator and the denominator when calculating the percentage of graded courses.

At UCM, P/NP courses taken under the [Emergency Course Continuity](#) (ECC) protocol can, by petition, be excluded from the calculation of the percentage of P/NP courses (policy [here](#)). The delineation of terms into ECC and non-ECC categories has several features: (1) there is clear messaging about when flexibility is to be granted and when campuses should revert to operating under previously established policies, and (2) this mechanism may be useful during extended campus closures due to wildfires, power outages, or other disasters.

Whether the exclusion of courses from P/NP totals is done proactively or by petition, these policies allow students who opt to take courses P/NP in the current emergency situation to avoid exceeding the upper limit imposed by [SR782](#).

ELWR:

A [one-time policy exception](#) was requested by UCEP/UCOPE for allowing a P grade to satisfy the ELWR (which normally must be satisfied with a C or better, not a C- per SR636). System-wide Academic Council endorsed this one-time exception on April 14, 2020. UCEP and UCOPE recommend Divisional control over extending this flexibility during any term where flexibility around the P/NP grading option is also adopted. We further recommend that, on campuses where a grade of C- qualifies as a passing grade, a course taken for a letter grade would also satisfy the ELWR if a C- or better was earned. On campuses where a grade of C qualifies as the passing grade (P), no change is needed; a letter grade of C or better (P) continues to satisfy the ELWR.

Other considerations:

End of flexibility to use the P/NP grading option: At the discretion of each Division, it may be reasonable to expect flexibilities to remain in place until students have a chance to acclimate to remote instruction or until students again have the option of attending in-person classes. However, not all students may be able to start attending in-person classes at the same time, so each Division's decision about extending flexibility should take this into account.

More generally, the present crisis highlights the need to work towards developing policies that don't require adoption of special emergency measures every time a disruption occurs, but instead account for shifts in instructional delivery modes as expected periodic occurrences.

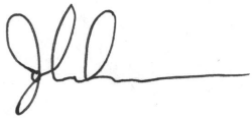
Potential consequences of P/NP grades: As outlined in UCEP's March memo, there are potential consequences for students who opt to take courses using the P/NP option. These include but are not limited to: financial aid (particularly from the VA), problems with later admission to professional/graduate/medical school, and problems staying in or re-obtaining good standing due to a low GPA.

Academic probation and disqualification: The conditions for academic good-standing and disqualification are covered in [SR900.A](#):

“An undergraduate student is subject to disqualification for further registration in the University (a) if at the end of any term the student's grade-point average for that term is less than 1.5 (however, see paragraph (E) below), or (b) if the student has completed two consecutive terms on academic probation without achieving a cumulative grade-point average of 2.0 as provided above.”

Thus, a student is subject to disqualification from future enrollment after two subsequent terms out of good standing. However, this determination is ultimately under Divisional control so there is flexibility (per recent UCEP/UCRJ consultation). [SR902.C](#) further underscores faculty discretion over disqualification. That said, some caution may be warranted: given that P/NP grades cannot impact a student's GPA (SR782), allowing students to take a significant proportion of their courses P/NP might have long-term implications for their ability to raise their overall GPA before graduation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Serences', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

John Serences,
Chair UCEP
jserences@ucsd.edu

Appendix

Policies that govern the use of the P/NP grading option.

- 1) Limit on number of P/NP courses of total course units. Some campuses have adopted a limit of one-fourth of total units and others have adopted a limit of one-third of total units graded as P/NP. This policy follows from [SR782](#), which states that:

“Under such regulations as each Division may determine, a student in good standing is authorized to undertake up to an average of one course per term on a Passed or Not Passed basis. A grade of Passed shall be awarded only for work which would otherwise receive a grade of C or better. Units thus earned shall be counted in satisfaction of degree requirements.”

Analysis: The policy states that students can “undertake up to an average of one course per term on a Passed or Not Passed basis”. On most campuses, this would imply an upper limit of 25% of courses taken with the P/NP grading option (e.g. 1 out 4 courses at a quarter campus). However, some Divisions allow for 33% of courses to be taken P/NP, so there is precedent for some flexibility in the interpretation of SR782.

- 2) Departments may not allow P/NP for courses that count for your major.

Analysis: This is a local Division/department decision, it is not set by system-wide Senate Regulations.

- 3) A student must opt for P/NP within the first four weeks of a quarter.

Analysis: This deadline is at the discretion of Divisions, and semester campuses have a different deadline in place.

- 4) A student’s course work must be equivalent to C- or better to receive a P.

Analysis: The determination for setting the threshold at a C or a C- is set at the Division level based on regulation 778.C.1.:

“For Passed/Not Passed grading, determination of whether the minimum standard of performance for a grade of P shall be the grade of C or C- shall be made by the Division.”

However, if a Division wishes to change their threshold for a passing grade (e.g. from a C to a C-), the request needs to be certified by UCRJ under 778.C.

“Modifications of a Divisional grading system that are authorized by subsections (1) through (2) below shall be submitted to the University Committee on Rules and Jurisdiction for certification of consonance with the Code of the Academic Senate. If certification is received, the proposed modifications become effective as provided by Divisional action. (En 9 May 84)

1. For Passed/Not Passed grading, determination of whether the minimum standard of performance for a grade of P shall be the grade of C or C- shall be made by the Division.
2. For Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grading, determination of whether the minimum standard of performance for a grade of S shall be the grade of B or B- shall be made by the Division.”

- 5) P/NP courses count for unit requirements but not toward your GPA. This is set by SR 782:
Units thus earned [P/NP] shall be counted in satisfaction of degree requirements, but such courses shall be disregarded in determining a student's grade-point average.