

Flexible Grading Policy: Faculty Information Sheet

COVID-19-related struggles threaten every student's success and may disproportionately impact the CUNY community of under-represented minority, low socioeconomic status, first-generation, single-parent, and female students. Ultimately, the new CUNY Flexible Grading Policy approved for Spring 2020 will advance equity for our students. CUNY students may consider not electing the CR/NC option for fear that their choice may reflect negatively on them or may be uninformed about considerations of this grading option for their specific program or discipline. Therefore, **it is critical for faculty to be actively engaged in informing and advising students on the Policy and related implications of the CR/NC option.**

The following are **10 THINGS FACULTY SHOULD KNOW** to successfully implement the new Flexibility Grading Policy:

1. **The CR/NC option is available to ALL students for ALL CUNY courses** in the current semester in response to conditions created by COVID-19. The policy supersedes all local policies, and explicitly states that **no student may be denied the option of a CR/NC grade in any course.**
2. Ultimately, **students make the final decision to apply the CR/NC option** on a per course basis and elect the non-letter grade option without counting it against their maximum allowed number of non-letter grade courses.
3. **A faculty member does not award a CR/NC grade to the student**, nor are students required to inform their professors that they are opting for CR/NC prior to the end of the semester, unless seeking guidance on the implications of the grading option for program or professional considerations. **CR/NC is a choice students make in CUNYfirst after they have seen the letter grades that they have earned.** Students have up to 20 business days after the University's final grade submission deadline to make this irreversible decision.
4. The policy also states that **no student with a CR grade in a course will be prevented from taking a subsequent course**, even if a particular grade in a course taken in the Spring 2020 semester is normally required for entry. In the cases of subsequent courses with prerequisites or students seeking admission to competitive professional programs leading to licensure, we strongly suggest faculty **consult with the licensing board and/or accreditors** to verify considerations in response to COVID-19 and advise students accordingly of implications and options for CR/NC. Students may want to consider asking for a W or INC grade if they do not meet the required proficiency level and are concerned about being adequately prepared for the next course or their desired program. The University has extended both the withdrawal and INC deadlines for all impacted Spring 2020 courses.
5. **Faculty advising is strongly recommended** to advise students on the implications of selecting a CR/NC option and to verify letter-grade dependent policies that impact their funding, academic career progression, or professional goals. Individual programs may choose to develop a decision tree or a "pros and cons" list that students can use to guide their thinking. **Advising is especially important for those courses in programs that typically do not allow a Pass/Fail option.**
6. Students should also be **referred to relevant specialized academic and financial aid advisors** to evaluate how the CR/NC option may affect meeting program requirements (e.g., in pre-health), future graduate school applications, as well as financial aid eligibility. Faculty are encouraged to consult with relevant accrediting bodies and licensing boards, as appropriate, to determine the repercussions of non-letter grading on degree progression within programs with programmatic accreditation or that lead to licensure or certification.
7. **Use your college's COVID-19 information webpage** to help students identify the relevant specialized program advisors and financial aid counselors for assistance to evaluate implications of selecting the CR/NC option.
8. For advising on implications of the CR/NC option for future career and graduate training considerations, a key, yet difficult-to-answer question is, **"To what extent will the current semester be recognized as an exception (an "asterisk semester") by your discipline's graduate and professional programs when reviewing the transcript in the future?"** In these cases, students are encouraged to check with respective graduate and professional programs on admission requirements and considerations for COVID-related policies before making a final decision.
9. **Clearly review with students the requirements for earning a CR in your course.** This information may already be on your syllabus, but given the tumult of recent weeks, it may help to refresh students on the minimum course requirements for a CR if they are considering the CR/NC option.
10. Note the **3 grading options for students to consider if they are not doing well** in a course--a) the W, to withdraw from the course by the appropriate deadline (which may have financial aid implications), b) the INC to complete course requirements by the end of the following semester, and c) the CR/NC option.