



OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

March 24, 2020

Dear CUNY Community,

The nationwide move to distance education necessitated by the coronavirus crisis has served to spotlight disparities that stratify the higher education landscape. In the days since CUNY re-opened classes under distance learning instruction, these matters of equity and access have already begun to surface on our campuses.

Motivated by these concerns, and in consultation with CUNY college presidents and deans, we have decided to institute a recalibration period beginning this Friday, March 27, through Wednesday April 1. Distance learning will resume on Thursday, April 2.

This period, which we are calling CUNY's Recalibration Period for Educational Equity, will allow our colleges to continue their efforts to provide their students with access to the equipment they need to complete their semester requirements under these uncommon and unforeseen circumstances.

The Recalibration Period will also afford faculty time to consider ways to better support learning through, for example, the asynchronous delivery of classes and other best practices emerging across our University's virtual classrooms. We are making this move before we get deeper into the semester, to ensure that we are upholding the University's mission and giving each and every CUNY student an opportunity to thrive.

When we moved to distance learning, we sought to create safe conditions based on the best social distancing guidelines available at the time for students who needed computer equipment and broadband internet access to do their coursework in their campus computer labs. The fast-evolving nature of this pandemic, however, compelled Governor Cuomo to issue the [New York State on PAUSE](#) executive order, necessitating drastic density reduction measures that have effectively brought campus life to a halt.

To make sure that all students are equipped for distance learning, campuses have been purchasing and distributing additional hardware to students who need it in order to continue to fully participate in distance learning.

Now that we have had some time to identify aspects of distance learning that could stand to be improved, faculty will be able to use the Recalibration Period to fine-tune their practices, which should serve to improve educational outcomes. We're also asking teachers to grant extra flexibility to students who might have had limited access to laptops and tablets since the rollout of distance learning on March 19. My most sincere thanks to all the faculty and staff who keep the University going while facing disruption, fatigue and anxiety in their personal lives.

The University's previously scheduled Spring Recess will now run from Wednesday April 8 through Friday April 10, encompassing the beginning of Passover and Good Friday. For faculty, staff and students whose religious observation extends into the week of April 13, as always you have the right to request a religious exemption to observe the holiday and we will offer maximum flexibility in addressing the requests. CUNY's guidance for religious exemptions can be found [here](#) and we will remind faculty and staff about our guidance as we get closer to that date.

The Recalibration Period for Educational Equity will be in place throughout CUNY with some important exceptions: Schools that offer programs and courses that were being taught online before the broader move to distance learning can proceed with the authorization of campus presidents and deans.

Guttman, LaGuardia and Kingsborough Community Colleges, which operate under a two-part, 18-week semester, rather than the more-common 15-week semester, will not be impacted, nor will our graduate and professional schools, which are smaller and reported less concerns with their students' access to computers. These include the School of Professional Studies, the Graduate Center, the School of Law, the Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism, the Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy and the School of Labor and Urban Studies. These schools will observe the spring recess as scheduled.

These extraordinary circumstances have prompted us to enact a [flexible credit/no credit policy](#), under which students will have 20 days after they receive their grades to decide if they want to convert any or all of the letter grades they earn in their classes to Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) grading. The University will support

students with pertinent information about the impact of CR/NC on their financial aid and academic progress.

Pending approval by the CUNY Board of Trustees, the policy will go into effect April 1, 2020 and applies to all CUNY institutions except the School of Law and the School of Medicine, which will implement their own policies. For additional details, visit the University's comprehensive [Coronavirus Updates page](#).

I want to close by thanking all of you for your continued perseverance in these uncertain and often troubling times. I've said before that CUNY is showing its resilience, and I know that will continue to be the case. As we walk together, it is equally important that we demonstrate our unfailing commitment to the imperative precepts of equity, access and opportunity for all.

Sincerely,

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