



320 STEPHENS HALL

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

DIVCO Comments on Pandemic Grading Policies
Approved November 2, 2020

Remote instruction due to COVID-19 has been challenging for many students. Student welfare and quality of learning are central concerns for the Senate, particularly during this period of remote instruction. **The Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate encourages the faculties of the schools and colleges to enact flexible and compassionate policies and practices in these challenging times, both in grading and through the implementation of other tools that enable students to manage their workload to meet our high Berkeley academic standards while also managing their stress and maintaining their well-being.**

Under Berkeley Division Regulation A204.B, “Courses which are required in, or are prerequisite to, the student's major may be taken Passed or Not Passed or Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory only upon approval of the Faculty of the student’s School or College.” That is, the Division has delegated authority over the use of P/NP for major requirements and prerequisites to the faculties of the schools and colleges. The Divisional Council may, however, offer advice as to how that delegated authority should be used. In that vein, the Division Council makes the following specific recommendations to the faculties of the colleges and schools in support of student learning and the reduction of student stress:

1. We recommend for Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 that P grades be accepted by all colleges and schools to meet any undergraduate degree requirements associated with a course (major, minor, Reading and Composition, Quantitative Reasoning, Foreign Language). Many majors are capped and have declaration of major requirements which may include a GPA. We understand that these departments cannot absorb a large influx of new students admitted on the basis of prerequisite coursework completed with a P grade without adversely affecting the experience of their cohort as a whole. We therefore recommend that these departments consider supplementary, alternative, or flexible pathways to major declaration. We encourage them to communicate their decision to the student population in as timely a manner as possible.
2. We recommend that colleges and schools push back their deadlines to select a grading option to December 4, matching the decision made by L&S.
3. We recommend that students taking all their courses P/NP in Fall 2020 or Spring 2021 not be automatically placed on academic probation.
4. We recommend that students be made aware of the potential harmful effects of P/NP elections. For example, P/NP may have a negative impact on students’ admission to a major, on instructors’ ability to provide students with substantive letters of recommendation, or on how graduate schools evaluate students’ qualifications; possibility of students hitting the 1/3 cap on total number of P/NP courses; once grades are posted, they are final and students cannot change a P back to a letter grade. This

should ideally be conveyed both through advisors and electronically at self-service enrollment.

5. We recommend that units also consider other compassionate policies and messages to reduce the barriers to students asking for extensions or accommodations as needed. In recognition of the diversity of units, we encourage faculty-student dialogue to identify policies and practices that enable students to have more control and flexibility over their learning as needed in these challenging times, while maintaining the integrity and quality of each unit's educational mission.