Pass / Fail (Credit / No Credit) Option for Spring 2020
Faculty and Staff FAQ

Why are there three levels of notations and why is the CRT set at C or above?

The option we are offering students is not a true Pass / Fail option, but rather a Credit / No Credit Earned option. In a Pass / Fail option, a Fail factors into a student’s GPA. In this Credit / No Credit model, a failing grade converts to a No Credit Earned (NCE) or a Withdrawal (W) and does not factor into a student’s GPA. Students will make this request through MyCommnet.

Our community colleges attach a grade glossary to every transcript. This grade glossary will clearly describe the meaning of each notation. The equivalents for spring 2020 courses converted to the Credit / No Credit Option are:

- A grade of C or better will convert to CRT, or Credit for Transfer, with credit for the class being awarded.
- A grade of D- to C- will convert to CR, or Credit, with credit for the class being awarded.
- A failing grade will convert to NCE, or No Credit Earned, for a reported F and W, or Withdrawal, for a reported UF, with no credit being awarded. We include the W notation since Title IV and other programs make a distinction between completed and non-completed courses, a distinction that can affect financial aid for students and compliance for the colleges.
- In a course for which a student had previously selected a Pass / Fail option, a Pass will remain a Pass and a Fail will follow the failing grade guidelines directly above.

Concerns for transfer and prerequisite requirements are among the most common raised in the feedback and recommendations we received and in the policies across the country that we reviewed. These requirements pose significant challenges to developing a Pass / Fail (Credit / No Credit Earned) procedure for community college students. Nationally, many schools offer two-tier Pass / Fail policies, but differ in where they set the break point. Pass / Fail can indicate any passing grade at one school and C or above at another. A smaller number of schools have developed a three-tier notation similar to the one we are adopting. We have chosen to follow the three-tier option and to follow C or above for the following reasons:

**Transfer:**

For transfer, receiving institutions have different minimum grade requirements, most commonly C or C- in a course. Some institutions will accept any passing grade, usually when that grade is part of a completed associate degree. Such is the case for our CSUs. COSC accepts all passing grades, but requires a C or above in concentration and major courses. Granting the same notation for all passing grades D- or above does not provide necessary information to the receiving schools.

Transfer and two- or three-tier grading options:

Many colleges across the country that use a Pass / Fail two-tier option set passing at C or above and award a Fail for grades of C- or below, but that would exclude courses that would otherwise transfer to a CSU with a completed degree, not to mention not counting for completion of a credential at the community college. CRT indicates a grade of C or above, which communicates in most likely all cases...
that the course is transferrable. If we set it at C- or above, schools such as UConn, who will accept spring 2020 “Pass / Fail” courses if Pass indicates C or above, would not accept a Pass awarded for C- or above, or simply for a passing grade. In the past, about 15% of our students who transfer do so to UConn. The CR grade allows us to award completion credits towards a credential. The three-tier notation and the CRT at C or above seems the best solution to meet most needs.

Please inform students that if they earn a C- and plan to transfer, they might be best served retaining that letter grade depending upon the school to which they plan to transfer. While UConn will not accept a C-, the CSUs will, for instance.

**Prerequisites:**

Many of the same concerns apply to prerequisite courses. A grade of C or above is a common requirement for meeting a prerequisite, but some course sequences have C- or above. In some cases, any passing grade suffices. Again, the three-tier notation with CRT awarded for C or above seems the best solution to meet most needs.

Courses that are prerequisites for subsequent courses:

- If a grade of C or better is required: the converted Credit / No Credit notation will indicate the student can move on since C and above grades convert to a CRT.
- If a grade of C- or better is required: Please inform students that if they earn a C-, they might want to retain the letter grade to be able to move on to the next course in the sequence. If they convert a C-, it will be notated as a CR and not count as meeting the prerequisite of C- or above.
- If specific grades above a C might give the students an advantage – for example, if a B+ or higher in Math 137 or its equivalent would allow the student to bypass one level and move to a higher-level math – please inform students so that they can make a good decision for that course. In that case, students who earn that B+ or above would be better served retaining the letter grade.

**How will this procedure affect students who are enrolled in or plan to apply to selective admission and/or accredited programs that may have specific course grade requirements?**

**Students enrolled in selective admission / accredited programs:**

For students enrolled in these programs, clear advice from faculty will be critical to help students make the best decisions. In most of these programs, students belong to a cohort that receives careful and consistent advising. In those cases, program advisors can provide strong guidance.

**Students intending to enter or apply to selective admission / accredited programs:**

For students who plan to apply, advising continues to be critical, but it will be challenging to identify and advise all students. Please refer any students entering or intending to apply to a selective admissions program to the appropriate Program Director at your college.

**What information will students have available to them and how will they request this option?**

We are developing a landing page for students (available April 22) that provides a basic description of the option and includes FAQ for students, a link to MyCommnet and instructions for completing requests, and a link for a contact email for each college.