

FAQ for COVID19 and Final Grade Mode Decision

Q: Why did the faculty opt not to follow other UT schools?

UTM is different from UTK and UTC in that the catalog policy does not allow for students to opt to take any course on a Pass/Fail basis. Keeping to the standard letter grade format also keeps in line with catalog provisions. It would have been very difficult to anticipate all possible roadblocks and pitfalls to the change, which could have resulted in largescale errors that needed to be corrected. The faculty at UT Martin believe that it is better to work effectively within the system we have, than risk massive problems, and associated anxiety, among the student body –and our faculty and staff that could result from sudden and unproven changes in catalog policy.

Q: What complications would a P/F system have meant for students?

- Letter grades can affect many kinds of financial aid negatively such as scholarships, grants, and loans.
- Some prerequisites require minimum grades and could cause repeated problems with registration. UT Martin could not guarantee that a course with a P/F grade would be accepted in other classes, thus forcing the student to retake a class before being able to move on in their major or minor.
- Students require letter grades to bring up their GPA, especially repeated courses. Going to Pass/Fail would only remove the bad grade from their GPA and not raise it with the new grade.
- Letter grades are required to calculate Graduation Honors and Chancellor's Honors. These students could -lose the recognition for all their hard work.
- Professional and Graduate schools do not always look favorably on Pass/Fail grades, as it does not give a true accounting of a student's aptitude. In some cases, a "P" grade might transfer equivalent to a "C", making it more difficult to compete with others (who earned an A or B) for admission to a desired professional/graduate program. The possibility exists that a professional school might reject those student's application, or at best delay admittance, until the student could arrange to retake the class. Most importantly, UTM faculty want their students to succeed professionally. Moving to Pass/Fail could potentially harm their future.

Q: Wouldn't a P/F option insulate students from negative grade outcomes?

The only students who would generally benefit from a P/F system would be those likely to earn a "D" in a class (which for many courses would require repetition to continue in any case). For students failing a course, the F would remain the same regardless. For UTM, a "P" grade does not count in (and thus cannot improve as an A, B, or even C possibly can) the semester and cumulative GPA. And when seen by other institutions, the "P" would at best equate to a "C" in normal grade terms if a standard letter grade was required.

Q: I am having a hard time with some of my courses. What options do I have regarding my grade?

You and your professor should be in dialogue about your course performance and the issues affecting your ability to meet course requirements. You may in extreme circumstances request an “I” (an incomplete), but that should be a remedy of last resort for you.

Q: What are appropriate accommodations to ask a professor about?

Faculty should be contacted as soon as possible so that they can be made aware of individual student circumstances. The sooner the contact takes place, the more options are available. A student is always free to request extensions on due dates and alternative arrangements for assignments, along with individual consultations through electronic means. The individual faculty member has the prerogative to grant student requests, though of course this cannot be guaranteed.

Q: When is the deadline for contacting your professor for accommodations?

Requests should be made as soon as possible if they have not been made already. Although every professor has the right to set their own schedules and accommodations, expediency is your best option. We recommend that you set as a personal, absolute deadline the last class day of the semester. Do not wait until exam week.

Q: As a student, what recourse do I have if a professor refuses my requests for accommodations?

A student should attempt to contact the professor first, but if there is no response or if the faculty member is unwilling to make adjustments, the student may contact the department chair for further guidance. It is best to contact the department chair first instead of the college dean.

Q: What if a professor is unresponsive to a student’s requests for accommodation?

Students who do not receive responses from instructors should contact the department chair or center director.

Q: How will different types of accommodation affect my GPA?

Your GPA is determined by the cumulative effect of all your letter grades when all your college credits are taken into account. Under the current policy, your GPA will be determined in the usual way. Your requests for accommodations from professors will help you resolve issues in completing course requirements, but should not affect your GPA depending on the grade you earn in a given class. Note that if an

(I)ncomplete is given, the course will not count in your semester nor cumulative GPA until you complete your coursework and earn a permanent letter grade.

Q: Will my scholarships be affected if I choose to make accommodations with my professor?

Your scholarships are dependent on GPA. As long as you are able to do reasonably well in this semester's courses, your scholarship should not be affected by whatever arrangements you make with your professors. For those with the Hope/Lottery scholarship: for Spring, your lottery GPA will be what is calculated for Spring, or your prior enrolled term (Fall 2019), whichever is higher. The same thing will be done for Summer. Hope/Lottery GPA calculations will return to normal in the Fall 2020 semester.

Q: What if I want to drop/withdraw from my class(es)?

It is important to keep in mind that certain scholarships (such as Hope/Lottery) require full-time enrollment, and dropping below full-time could adversely affect you. Be sure to talk with Financial Aid before dropping/withdrawing below full-time.

Q: What is an incomplete? What does getting an "I" in a class mean? What possible negative consequences could there be? How can it help me?

An "I" is typically assigned when a student encounters insurmountable difficulties in completing course requirements (medical or personal issues usually come into play here). This means that the student is required to complete the course requirements to the faculty member's satisfaction during the following regular semester (for Spring or Summer, that will be Fall). If those requirements are not met, then at the end of the following semester the "I" automatically converts to an "F." This is an imperfect solution, because this means regular work is added to the makeup work, for both the professor and student.

Q: What happens if I am put on probation?

We will follow the policy in the academic catalog.

Q: What happens if I am suspended?

For Spring 2020, Suspension will automatically be changed to probation.