

Frequently asked questions about the Pass / No Pass policy

What is the impact of Pass / No Pass on GPAs?

Pass / No Pass is a GPA neutral designation. If you pass a course, you will earn the credit for the course, but your GPA will not be altered. If you earn a No Pass, you will not earn credit for the course, and your GPA will not be altered.

Will we still have exams?

For courses in which a final exam was planned, yes, there will still be a final exam. We are exploring options for the way that final exams will be proctored. Final exams will not take place at the School of Law; rather they will take place remotely.

Why did the school make this decision?

The school made this decision after considering several factors. Consistent with our other decisions in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, our first priority has been the health and safety of our students, including mental health and well-being. Students from all years and programs reached out with suggestions for how we should move forward, which we considered. We also reviewed how other law schools across the county were responding to the transition to online learning. Finally, we considered the real possibility that we may have faculty or administrators who are ill or caring for ill family members in May, and we tried to make a plan that would allow us to ensure that students could be evaluated at the end of the term even if there were faculty or administrators were unable complete the process themselves.

Why can't we have the option of earning a grade if we want to?

The P/NP grading scheme is a shift in the way that we assess students. For this term, we are making assessments about whether a student has demonstrated competency, rather than creating a stratified rubric for different levels of achievement within the competent range. We are making this shift to recognize that students will have stresses added to their life at varying levels during these next several months and will be dealing with these stresses with vastly different resources. As such, assessing students in a way that differentiates student achievement is would be counter to the goal of reducing the stress that comes along with academic competition.

Professors may still use rubrics in their individual courses, as a way of objectively determining basic competency with respect to the material and to assist those students who may wish to review their exams later.

This decision makes it so that I can't boost my GPA, which I need to do (because I'd like to earn honors at graduation, because my post-graduation employer expects me to, because I need to in order to keep my scholarship, because my current GPA would require me to be dismissed at the end of this term). Why weren't these issues considered in the decision to go Pass/No Pass?

Faculty considered the issue that students had expectations for this term that included being able to raise their GPAs with strong academic performances. We understand that the reasons that students

wanted this opportunity are legitimate and real concerns. We also considered the immense pressure that students will be under this term as you adjust not only to online learning, but to the realities of social distancing, caring for children and parents, and conducting all of your academic life within your homes. Ultimately, we believed that this policy is the more humane approach, and one that better allows our students to demonstrate competency while also attending to non-academic, critical matters.

The school policy says that students are limited to 11 P/NP credits. How does the decision for this semester interact with that policy?

P/NP credits that are earned this semester will not count toward the 11 P/NP credits in which a student is permitted to enroll.

I am repeating a class because I failed it the first time. Can I earn a letter grade for the class?

There is not an option to earn a numeric grade for a course for the winter term.

Is the standard for earning a grade of “pass” a 1.5 or a 2.2?

Students will be assessed on a pass / no pass basis for this term, which means that faculty will be determining whether a student has demonstrated competence. Because classes are not being graded on a numeric scale, there is not necessarily a numeric cut-off for passing. Rather, faculty will determine in their grading rubric what would demonstrate competency and will assess on that basis.

Must a certain number of students receive a no pass any given course?

No. If all students in a course demonstrate competency, all students may pass.

Will there be an adverse academic decision made for me if I have a GPA below the required level at the end of this term?

We will be suspending adverse academic decisions that would typically be made at the end of the winter term. No adverse academic decisions will be made until the end of the fall term 2020.

What happens if I get a “no pass” in a required course?

If the course was a “hard” requirement, meaning a specific course that is required for graduation, the student would not earn the credit for the course and would need to repeat the course. If the course was a floating requirement, the student would not earn the credit for the course and would need to take another course that fulfilled that floating requirement. So, if a student received a “no pass” in Property II, they would need to repeat Property II. If a student received a “no pass” in an LFP, they would need to take another LFP and earn a passing grade in the course in order for the graduation requirement to be fulfilled.