Spring 2020 Pass/Fail Considerations/FAQs for Students/Advisors

In recognition of the COVID-19 disruption to the current semester, a decision was announced on Sunday evening, March 22, that all students are now eligible to elect any or all of their spring 2020 courses to be graded on a Pass/Fail (P/F) basis through the last day of classes on May 6. The information and resources below have been compiled to assist students in making informed choices. No action will be needed if a student chooses to earn traditional letter grades in all of their spring courses.

What does it mean to elect a spring 2020 course to be graded on a Pass/Fail (P/F) basis?

When an undergraduate student elects to take a course on a P/F basis, this means that the final course letter grade entered by the professor will be converted by the Registrar’s Office to a grade of “P” except when the final grade is “A” or “F.” When a graduate or Post-Bacc student elects a course P/F, grades of A-, B+, B, B- C, and C+ are converted to “P,” and all other grades remain unchanged. For all students, the election is confidential, and professors will not know if a student elected to take their course on a P/F basis. A final “P” grade does not impact a student’s semester or cumulative GPA, but course credit hours are still earned. Final grades of “A” will not be converted to “P” and will count in GPAs. Final grades of “F” result in no course credit and will impact GPAs. Courses with a final “P” grade (this semester only) will be allowed to satisfy requirements in ASC general education, majors, minors, and specializations.

What are some important things to know about effects of P/F grades on GPAs?

- Students who elect all spring 2020 courses to be graded on a P/F basis (and receive all “P” grades) should know that their current cumulative GPA would not change at all after final grades are posted. Therefore, in this case, calculations done to determine financial aid eligibility would be based on the current cumulative GPA. Some scholarships or federal aid eligibility have specific minimum GPA requirements. So, students who do not currently meet minimum GPA eligibility for financial aid may need to limit electing the P/F option. A student’s cumulative GPA is shown on AscAgnes in two places: the “Current Earned” total GPA on the degree audit and on the “Unofficial Transcript” cumulative GPA.

- Students who elect some (1 or more, but not all) spring 2020 courses on a P/F basis should understand how doing so will impact their semester and cumulative GPA. If a student is trying to raise a GPA, then taking courses on a P/F basis could slow progress until grades of “A” are earned.

- Students can use the Agnes Scott GPA calculator to plug in “what-if” grade scenarios and see impacts of certain grade combinations on the cumulative GPA. Students are encouraged to use it to help them make informed decisions before electing to take 1 or more courses on a P/F basis. The calculator file is attached to the email from which you received this Q&A document. If you do not have access to Excel, please email registrar@agnesscott.edu and we can share it as a Google-Sheet for you individually.

How does a student elect to take a spring 2020 course on a P/F basis?

Between now and May 6, undergraduate and graduate students can submit a pass/fail election using this link to the online form https://forms.gle/NL97NfivoBFxUcELA. This form allows students to submit P/F elections for 1 or more spring courses. If there are questions about accessing or submitting the form, please send an email to registrar@agnesscott.edu. Notifications will be sent by the Registrar’s Office to students’ advisors (for graduate students, to Dean Kelly Ball).

Are there special considerations for undergraduate students who plan to pursue a Dual Degree Program with Emory or Georgia Tech?

We do not recommend a student take any prerequisite courses for these programs on a Pass/Fail basis.
Are there special considerations for undergraduate or Post-Baccalaureate students who plan to apply to medical school or graduate programs that depend upon GPA?

We do not yet know how other schools will take into account this extraordinary situation but many other institutions (Duke, Vanderbilt, MIT) have also opted for P/F grading this semester. The ASC official transcript will include a special spring 2020 semester-specific notation denoting the COVID-19 disruption for any student who elects 1 or more courses on P/F basis. Students are encouraged to consult the websites of post-Agnes programs under their consideration for updated information about how those programs will manage the spring 2020 semester. Post-Bacc students are encouraged to speak with the Health Professions Advisor for guidance.

Can a student elect the P/F option for 1 or more spring courses if they are on a Financial Aid “Satisfactory Academic Progress” (SAP) plan?

For undergraduate and graduate students, “Satisfactory Academic Progress” (SAP) is based on a cumulative GPA that meets or is above minimum standards at Agnes Scott and completing at least 75% of credits attempted (enrolled in). Students who do not meet one or both of these criteria were placed on financial aid probation and had to file a SAP plan. If the SAP plan is related solely to the 75% completion ratio rather than cumulative GPA, successfully completing courses as P/F is fine as long as the student passes the course/s. A failing “F” grade will count as a course attempted but not successfully completed and could bring down the completion ratio. When a student is trying to raise the cumulative GPA, changing all classes to P/F would not be recommended. Undergraduate students should work with their SUMMIT Advisor to determine the impact of electing a course P/F and how it may impact the GPA. Graduate students should consult their Graduate Faculty Advisor.

If a student elects a course to be graded P/F, can they change their mind later?

For spring 2020, the P/F election deadline has been extended until May 6. This extension gives students extra time to decide if the P/F option is the right decision for 1 or more of their spring courses. The P/F policy does not allow for a student to cancel the election once it has been submitted. However, post-deadline appeals may be accepted on a case-by-case basis when unusual circumstances warrant.

Can a student elect the P/F option for a course that usually requires a minimum grade of C- or above to progress to another course (ex. CHE-150 to progress to CHE-220 or -240)?

Yes. However, in this instance, the student should contact the chair or program director for that academic area and ask if they will require a student to obtain special permission to add the next course in that sequence.

If a student elects to take 1 or more spring 2020 courses P/F, will there be a transcript notation to indicate exceptional P/F policy for the semester in light of COVID-19 disruption?

Yes. To follow best practices taking place across the country, the ASC Registrar’s Office plans to apply a spring 2020 semester-specific transcript notation for any student who elects to take 1 or more spring courses on a P/F basis to denote semester-specific student pass/fail option.

Students in one or more of the following situations should contact the appropriate office indicated or their advisor for further discussion:

- Students on academic probation (contact the SUMMIT Advisor or Graduate Faculty Advisor)
- Student Athletes and NCAA eligibility (contact the Director of Athletics)
- Students with financial aid or scholarship questions (contact the Financial Aid Office)