

## Spring 2020 Mandatory Credit/No Credit Policy Frequently Asked Questions

March 26, 2020

### General FAQs

1. *What is the reason for the mandatory credit/no credit policy?* The COVID-19 virus has upended the lives of the entire UCI Law community, including our students. We recognize the unprecedented nature of the events that are unfolding in our state, our country, and around the world. Law school is already stressful for many students. We understand that the transition to online learning has made it even more stressful for some. We know that well beyond a new learning environment, our students are also facing unforeseen additional challenges—such as moving off campus in the middle of a semester, caring for children whose schools have closed, caring for friends and family members, and personal and family financial insecurity. These are incredibly anxious times for all of us. The Dean, after extensive consultation and consideration of diverse student perspectives, and with the support of a very strong faculty consensus expressed by faculty vote, decided that a mandatory credit/no credit policy is the most equitable and compassionate policy under these extraordinary circumstances.
2. *What courses are covered by the mandatory credit/no credit policy?* The policy covers all spring 2020 law school courses, including Lawyering Skills, clinical courses, first-year courses, upper-division courses, LL.M. courses, and spring quarter courses cross-listed with the law school. The policy does not cover January 2020 short-session courses or winter quarter courses cross-listed with the law school. It also does not cover non-law school courses, as they are governed by the school offering those courses.
3. *What is the mandatory credit/no credit policy?* Instructors will not give letter grades. Instead, they will give the grade “credit” (which appears on transcripts as “S” for “satisfactory”) or “no credit” (which appears on transcripts as “U” for “unsatisfactory”).
4. *What is the standard for a “credit” grade?* Instructors will give a grade of “credit” for performance that is the equivalent of a C- or higher. Otherwise instructors will give a grade of “no credit.” The C- standard is the normal standard in the Academic Rules.
5. *Will instructors post “shadow” letter grades before assigning “credit” or “no credit” to students?* No. Instructors will not post letter grades. They will only indicate “credit” or “no credit” for each student.
6. *Will the normally required median grade and grade distributions apply?* No, they will not apply. There is no required number of “credit” or “no credit” grades for any course.
7. *What about year-long courses with an “In Progress” grade at the end of the fall 2019 semester?* The final grades for year-long courses ending in spring 2020 will be credit/no credit. For some year-long courses (such as Legal Profession), students may have received a

“shadow grade” at the end of the fall 2019 semester. Those shadow grades will not appear on transcripts.

8. *What if my course was originally listed as a grade-only course?* The mandatory credit/no credit policy applies to spring 2020 courses even if they were originally designated as not available on a credit/no credit basis (i.e. “grade only”).
9. *What about Directed Research courses?* The mandatory credit/no credit policy applies to directed or independent research courses even if the student and the instructor did not agree in advance that work on the project would be evaluated on a credit/no credit basis.
10. *What kind of feedback can students expect from their instructors?* Notwithstanding the mandatory credit/no credit policy, all instructors are expected to give their students personalized feedback on their final exams and other assignments and on their overall performance in the course. Instructors should do so in the manner that they find most appropriate, using their best judgment and keeping in mind the importance of meaningful feedback to students.
11. *What other support can students expect from their instructors?* Instructors understand that their students need support now more than ever. Instructors are expected to provide their assessments of students’ spring 2020 performance to prospective employers when requested. Instructors are urged to support their students in other ways that they are able to and find appropriate, including writing letters of recommendation, serving as references, making introductions, and mentoring.
12. *What other support is available for students?* All law school departments that provide student services—including career development, academic skills, financial aid, student services, and student affairs—are more committed than ever to help our students.
13. *What if I have questions about the mandatory credit/no credit policy?* Please contact Elizabeth Schroeder, Assistant Dean for Student Services ([lschroeder@law.uci.edu](mailto:lschroeder@law.uci.edu)), with questions about grades and final exams. Please contact Jasminde Deol, Assistant Dean for Career Development ([jdeol@law.uci.edu](mailto:jdeol@law.uci.edu)), with career-related questions.

## **FAQs for Students**

14. *I have already taken credit/no credit courses. Will I exceed the maximum number of self-selected credit/no credit units due to this policy?* No. Credit/no credit units earned in the spring 2020 semester will not count toward the self-selected 8-unit limit (for J.D. students) or the self-selected 3-unit limit (for LL.M. students).
15. *What about the median grade and grade distribution requirements (or “curve”)?* These requirements do not apply to spring 2020 courses.

16. *Will I have too many credit/no credit units to be eligible for Latin Honors?* Credit/no credit units earned in the spring 2020 semester will not be included in the calculation of the 75% graded unit requirement for eligibility for Latin Honors.
17. *What about Faculty Awards or Dean's Awards?* Instructors may give a Faculty Award and/or a Dean's Award in their courses. However, they are not required to do so, even in first-year courses.
18. *What if I originally self-selected credit/no credit for a spring 2020 course?* Some students self-selected credit/no credit units earlier in the semester. Like other spring 2020 credit/no credit units, those units will not count toward the limits on self-selected credit/no credit units.
19. *What if my grade-point average at the end of the fall 2019 semester was below the minimum 2.5 grade-point average?* No first-year student will be placed on academic probation at the end of the spring 2020 semester based on the student's grade-point average. No student will be academically dismissed from the law school at the conclusion of the spring 2020 semester based on the student's grade-point average. Grade-point averages will be recalculated for those purposes at the end of the fall 2020 semester.
20. *What if I have an "Incomplete" from a prior semester?* The mandatory credit/no credit policy applies only to spring semester 2020 courses. It does not apply to courses from a prior semester. Therefore, an "Incomplete" from an earlier semester will be converted to a grade according to the normal grading policies in the Academic Rules.
21. *Can a spring 2020 course fulfill the Upper-Level Writing Requirement even though it will be graded on a credit/no credit basis?* Yes. A spring 2020 course otherwise eligible to satisfy the upper-level writing requirement will still satisfy that requirement even though it will be graded on a credit/no credit basis.
22. *How will prospective employers know that being graded on a credit/no credit basis was not my choice?* There will be a notation on your transcript indicating that. In addition, a letter from the Dean explaining the mandatory credit/no credit policy will be made available for students to use.
23. *How will prospective employers react to credit/no credit grades on my transcript?* UCI Law is one of a growing number of law schools across the country implementing spring semester 2020 credit/no credit policies. Employers know this and they understand the situation law students are facing nationwide and around the world. The Career Development Office continues to monitor developments in order to best provide career support for all UCI Law students. If you have career development questions, please contact Jasminder Deol, Assistant Dean for Career Development ([jdeol@law.uci.edu](mailto:jdeol@law.uci.edu)).
24. *Will the mandatory credit/no credit policy affect my ability to sit for the bar exam?* No. The California Bar is monitoring the situation and no decisions have been made about the administration of the July 2020 bar exam. The National Conference of Bar Examiners, which is responsible for the MBE (multiple choice) for the California bar and the UBE (Uniform

Bar Exam), announced that it will work with each state individually to support its decision regarding administration of the bar. If you have any bar exam-related questions, please contact Elizabeth Schroeder, Assistant Dean for Student Services ([lschroeder@law.uci.edu](mailto:lschroeder@law.uci.edu)).

25. *What if I have additional questions?* Please contact your instructor with questions specific to your course. Please contact Elizabeth Schroeder, Assistant Dean for Student Services ([lschroeder@law.uci.edu](mailto:lschroeder@law.uci.edu)), with questions about grades and final exams. Please contact Jasminde Deol, Assistant Dean for Career Development ([jdeol@law.uci.edu](mailto:jdeol@law.uci.edu)), with career-related questions. If you are a LL.M. student, you may also contact Khary D. Hornsby, Assistant Dean, Chief Global and Executive Programs Officer ([khornsby@law.uci.edu](mailto:khornsby@law.uci.edu)) (for the LL.M. program in American Law) or Natascha Ryan Fastabend, Executive Director, Graduate Tax Program ([nfastabend@law.uci.edu](mailto:nfastabend@law.uci.edu)) (for the Graduate Tax Program).

### FAQs for Instructors

26. *Will there be any in-class final exams?* No. All final exams will have a “take home” or similar format that does not require students to come to campus.
27. *Can I give a closed-book exam?* Final exams cannot be “closed book” because that condition cannot be enforced remotely. Therefore, instructors who planned closed-book exams should instead use an open-book exam format.
28. *Can I include multiple-choice questions on my final exam?* Yes. However, there is no way to guarantee that those questions will be kept secure, which may raise concerns about using the same questions in future years. We therefore anticipate that some instructors may wish to change from multiple-choice to a different format. This is allowed.
29. *When should I inform the Registrar of any changes to my exam format?* Instructors should fill out the online exam information form in the Grades & Rosters System online by Friday, April 10 at noon. For more information and a link to the form, please refer to the March 25 email from Stephanie M. Santoro, Registrar, or contact her by email ([ssantoro@law.uci.edu](mailto:ssantoro@law.uci.edu)).
30. *When should I inform my students of any changes to my exam format?* Instructors should notify their students in writing as soon as possible, and no later than Friday, April 10 at noon.
31. *What is the deadline for instructors to submit grades?* The normal deadline for submitting course grades remains in effect. Grades are due Tuesday, May 26, 2020.
32. *What if I have questions about administering exams or grading?* Please direct all questions about final exams and course grades to Elizabeth Schroeder, Assistant Dean for Student Services ([lschroeder@law.uci.edu](mailto:lschroeder@law.uci.edu)) and Stephanie M. Santoro, Registrar ([ssantoro@law.uci.edu](mailto:ssantoro@law.uci.edu)).
33. *What kind of feedback should I give my students?* Notwithstanding the mandatory credit/no credit policy, all instructors are expected to give their students personalized feedback on their

final exams and other assignments and on their overall performance in the course. Instructors should do so in the manner that they find most appropriate, using their best judgment and keeping in mind the importance of meaningful feedback to students. ABA Standard 314 requires formative as well as summative assessment. See Standard 314. See also Interpretation 314-1 (“Formative assessment methods are measurements at different points during a particular course or at different points over the span of a student’s education that provide meaningful feedback to improve student learning.”).

34. *Do I need to grade final exams and remaining assignments?* No. There is no requirement that instructors assign letter grades to final exams or any remaining assignments. Whether to do so is up to each instructor based on their pedagogical best judgment. However, as noted above, meaningful feedback to students remains essential. Letter grades are not necessary to accomplish that, and many instructors may find that giving students letter grades on a final exam may not be consistent with the spirit of the mandatory credit/no credit policy. Instructors are discouraged from suggesting to students what their letter grade for the course “would have been” absent the mandatory credit/no credit policy.
35. *May I give a Faculty Award or a Dean’s Award?* Yes, you may give a Faculty Award and/or a Dean’s Award, but you are not required to do so (even in first-year courses). If you give these awards, you should give the Faculty Award to the highest performing student and you should give the Dean’s Award to the second-highest performing student, based on your instructor’s best judgment of student performance. Presumptively, instructors will give no more than one Faculty Award and no more than one Dean’s Award. However, an instructor may give either two Faculty Awards or two Dean’s Awards (for a total of no more than three awards) if, based on the instructor’s best judgment, the performance of two students is indistinguishable.
36. *How else can I support my students?* We know you understand that your students need your support now more than ever. Instructors are expected to provide their assessments of students’ spring 2020 performance to prospective employers when requested. Instructors are also urged to support their students in other ways that they are able to and find appropriate, such as writing letters of recommendation, serving as references, making introductions, and mentoring. However, instructors are discouraged from suggesting what a student’s letter grade for a course “would have been” absent the mandatory credit/no credit policy, as this would tend to create the kinds of unfairness the mandatory credit/no credit policy is intended to avoid. If you have questions about how you can support your students seeking employment, please contact Jasminder Deol, Assistant Dean for Career Development ([jdeol@law.uci.edu](mailto:jdeol@law.uci.edu)).
37. *How can I support LL.M. students?* Some LL.M. students may apply for advanced graduate programs in law or apply to transfer to UCI Law’s J.D. program. Instructors are urged to support their LL.M. students who are so applying by writing letters of recommendation, serving as references, and otherwise providing their assessments of their students’ performance to these programs when requested. If you have questions about how you can support your LL.M. students, you may contact Khary D. Hornsby Assistant Dean, Chief Global and Executive Programs Officer ([khornsby@law.uci.edu](mailto:khornsby@law.uci.edu)) (for the LL.M. program in

American Law) or Natascha Ryan Fastabend, Executive Director, Graduate Tax Program ([nfastabend@law.uci.edu](mailto:nfastabend@law.uci.edu)) (for the Graduate Tax Program).

38. *What if I have additional questions?* Please contact Elizabeth Schroeder, Assistant Dean for Student Services ([lschroeder@law.uci.edu](mailto:lschroeder@law.uci.edu)), with questions about grades and final exams. Please contact Jasminde Deol, Assistant Dean for Career Development ([jdeol@law.uci.edu](mailto:jdeol@law.uci.edu)), with career-related questions.

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