

Course Grading Options Offered in Response to COVID-19: Requesting Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory (“S/U”) Grading, Incompletes, or Withdrawal

FAQs for Academic and Student Success Professionals

1. I heard that students can take courses for an “S/U” grade this spring. Is that true?

Yes. Due to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19, all restrictions on the use of “S/U” grading options are lifted for all courses for which it is permissible.

Can all students request the “S/U” grading option?

All students can request the “S/U” grading option except for students in the Doctor of Pharmacy program in the Taneja College of Pharmacy. Questions should be directed to the Dean of the Taneja College of Pharmacy.

Is the “S/U” grading policy the same for students in all degree programs?

The policy is the same for almost all degree programs. There are some small differences in the policy for students in three graduate professional programs in the Morsani College of Medicine: Undergraduate Medical Education, Physical Therapy, and Physician Assistant. Students in these programs should consult with their respective program directors for information on the specifics of the “S/U” policy adopted.

Do students have to request the “S/U” grading option?

Yes. Students will be required to submit an online application that will be submitted directly to the Office of the Registrar. Requests will be made on a course-by-course basis.

Why are students being allowed to request the “S/U” grading option?

We are making the “S/U” grading option broadly available to students as a result of the unprecedented disruptions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of removing all restrictions of the use of the “S/U” grading option is to reduce students’ uncertainty and stress while encouraging a focus on the successful achievement of student learning outcomes.

Will Instructors or Advisors have to approve a student’s request for the “S/U” grading option?

No. All restrictions on the “S/U” grading option, including the current requirement of Instructor approval, are lifted for the Spring 2020 term.

How will Instructors know which students are taking courses for “S/U” grades?

Unless a student self-discloses, you will not know. Instructors should continue with their grading policies as stated in their syllabi. They will submit each student’s letter grade as they would normally through CANVAS.

How will letter grades be converted to “S/U” grades?

Based on current catalog language, the following equivalencies will be used for the majority of courses.

- **Undergraduate courses:** The letter grades of A, B, C (+/-) are equivalent to a grade of “S” and letter grades of D (+/-) or F are equivalent to a grade of “U.”
- **Graduate courses:** An “S” grade is equivalent to letter grades of a C or better, and a “U” grade is equivalent to a grade of C- or less.

Some programs require higher letter grades for successful course completion than used in the catalog for “S/U” equivalency. Will the higher letter grades be used by the Office of the Registrar?

No. We are facing extraordinary circumstances, and the transition to remote learning coupled with daily stressors prompted us to extend the published catalog criteria for “S/U” letter grade equivalencies to all eligible courses through Spring 2020. The primary focus for many students will be on the achievement of student learning outcomes rather than a specific letter grade. All “S” grades will allow students to progress in their programs of study.

How was the decision made to allow students to utilize the “S/U” grading option?

Guidance from USF’s regional accrediting agency (SACSCOC) and consultation with key stakeholder groups led to this temporary action. The “S/U” grading option was thoroughly discussed and endorsed unanimously by the Faculty Senate Presidents on all campuses, the President of the USF System Faculty Council, College Deans across all campuses, members of the USF Academic and Student Success leadership team, the Senior Vice President for USF Health, the Provost and President. It is the right thing to do and the right time to do it.

Will students be able to select an “S/U” grading option beyond Spring 2020?

No. At this time, there is a limited window of opportunity to select the “S/U” grading option for courses being completed in the Spring 2020 semester ONLY. The application window will be from March 30 to April 10, 2020.

Can students change back to a letter grade after they request an “S/U” grading option?

No. One goal of expanding the temporary use of the “S/U” grading option is to decrease students’ uncertainty in the short term and not to prolong their anxiety. We believe requiring a well-informed decision that cannot change back and forth is a way to accomplish this goal for USF’s high achieving students.

Can students still ask for an incomplete (I) grade?

Yes. The current plan is to manage incomplete (I) grades the way they are done normally. We strongly encourage Instructors to carefully consider the extraordinary circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and make every effort possible to support students requesting (I) grades. Students should consider the increased burden that multiple Incompletes will place on their future semesters.

Will there be any special notations on transcripts for Spring 2020?

All students’ academic records for Spring 2020 will denote “Extraordinary circumstances encountered (COVID-19)” after end of term processing is completed.

2. **What if a student wants to withdraw from a course or multiple courses?**

We hope that students will not have to withdraw from courses, but we know that sometimes a student will have no other choice. Before students make that choice, they should speak to their Financial Aid Advisors and their Academic Advisors or Graduate Program Directors. Students utilizing VA Educational Benefits or Tuition Assistance should consult the Office of Veteran Success before withdrawing. Students on a USF issued F-1 Visa should consult an advisor in the Office of International Services (USF World) before withdrawing. Student-athletes should consult their academic advisor in the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics before withdrawing. Students need to be aware of potential impacts on current and future financial aid and scholarship eligibility (<https://www.usf.edu/financial-aid/know-this/drop-credits.aspx>). Withdrawal will also impact a student's progression in a degree program. To provide students with the time to speak to advisors, we have extended the date for withdrawal through Banner from March 28 to April 3, 2020.

If students withdraw from courses because of COVID-19, what will show in their academic records and transcripts?

Withdrawals made after March 24, 2020, through the end of the spring 2020 term on May 7, 2020, **are automatically coded** as *Withdrawal in Exceptional Circumstances Cause (WE)* in the student's academic record. All students' records for spring 2020 will denote "Extraordinary circumstances encountered (COVID-19)" after end of term processing is completed.

If all course withdrawals between March 24, 2020, and May 7, 2020, are automatically coded as *Withdrawal in Exceptional Circumstances (WE)* does that mean students will get their tuition and fees reimbursed?

WE grades do not automatically result in approval for refunds of tuition and fees. Requests for refunds are subject to current policy requirements, including submission of a Fee Adjustment petition [Fee Adjustment Request](#), with the Office of the Registrar, accompanied with objective, verifiable documentation.

Are there any restrictions about how many withdrawals a student can take?

Between March 24, 2020 through the end of the Spring 2020 term, May 7, 2020:

- The limitation on the number of courses from which a student can withdraw without submission and approval of a petition will be lifted.
- The limit on withdrawal from all courses in Banner without submission and approval of a petition will be lifted.