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Coronavirus Community Updates_FAQ_Pass/Fail and Other Academic Questions

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Published: April 01, 2020

Pass/fail and other academics questions

Note: These UMaine/UMM FAQs are subject to change at any time. Please check this site regularly for the latest information as it becomes available. The most recent additions and changes are at the top of this page. Last modified April 2, 2020.

Other Academics questions

What is the UMS policy regarding summer 2020 study abroad/travel programming?

Summer 2020 Study Abroad/Travel Programming:

RECOMMENDATION: Given the ever-evolving situation regarding COVID-19, we believe it would be beneficial to have a System decision made at this time to cancel all summer study abroad/travel programming (including both international and domestic faculty-led travel courses). Our reasons for this include:

- Preparations for a study away experience begin months in advance of departure. Given the current DOS Global Health Level 4 Travel Advisory advising all individuals "Do Not Travel," we do not believe it is appropriate to have students committing resources in preparation for programming that is in direct contradiction to this advisory.
- Students are better equipped to plan for program completion with an accurate understanding of the opportunities available to them. Waiting to cancel summer study abroad could result in missed opportunities to fulfill requirements in alternate ways.
- Our offices are still supporting students in returning to the U.S. from spring study away programming after the recall of all study abroad students. Since the situation is ever changing, it's too early to understand what conditions will be like on the ground months from now and we believe we must be confident in our assessment of the safety of locations prior to preparing to send students back out.
- Many of our trusted partners in the field have cancelled summer study abroad programming, including: USAC (cancelled all Summer Session I and single summer session programs that begin in late May/early June), API (cancelled many Summer Session I programs as well as certain internships with a start date earlier than June 15), ISA (cancelled all programs with a May start date), CISabroad (cancelled many of their summer programs). From the university side: Harvard Business School (cancelled all international field work programs for summer), Universite de Sherbrooke in Quebec (cancelled all incoming programming through end of August), Louisiana State University, Morgan State University, and University of Maryland, College Park (cancelled all summer study abroad). Boston University and Northeastern University are also discussing cancelling summer study abroad programming.
- The CDC has recommended the cancellation of all gatherings over 50 people through at least mid-May. The nature of study away often requires that students are exposed to groups greater than 50 people through transportation, community connections, orientation, and other activities. Even if this recommendation is not extended, mid-May puts us at, or very close to, departure dates.
- USM's Summer Session I has already been moved to online courses only, signifying that even on campuses in Maine, we are not confident we will be able to support in-person interaction. Sending students abroad for in-person interaction during this time presents an entire new set of risk considerations.
- Many of our community partners, both domestic and international, are experiencing dramatic impacts in their operations. We would like to avoid making commitments now, potentially burdening their resources, until we have a better understanding of the longer-term impacts.

By making a System ruling to cancel summer 2020 study abroad/travel programming, we show clear, proactive leadership in protecting our students from navigating unnecessary stress in regards to unknown plans and we demonstrate our commitment to applying CDC and DOS recommendations. Insights from esteemed partners in this field were considered to guide our decision making in order to protect the safety and wellbeing of our students. Connecting students with the world is our passion, and we truly cannot wait for the day we are able to confidently send students out in the world again, but we believe that will not happen this summer. We would like to revisit the status of study abroad/travel programming for early fall in May, to allow appropriate time for planning.

Will summer courses that were to be held on campus still be available? Or will they also be online?

Due to COVID-19 and current CDC recommendations, courses with a May start date will be moved to a remote teaching and learning environment. This includes:

- Session 1 (May 11-28)
- Session 2 (May 11-June 19)
- Session 8 courses starting in May

Please note:

- All existing online courses will be offered as scheduled, subject to regular cancellation policy (e.g. low enrollment).
- Students will be notified by email of any May course cancellations.
- Up-to-date course information is available on the Summer University [website](#).

A decision about whether or not on-campus courses starting in June will be moved to a remote learning environment, or remain as scheduled, is expected by mid-April.

If you have further questions, please contact the Summer University staff at 207.581.3143 or summeruniversity@maine.edu.

I will not be able to effectively participate in the online classes because I do not have a computer or stable internet connection at home state. What should I do?

Please call the COVID-19 information line, 207.581.2681.

You also can contact UMaine Dean of Students Robert Dana, rdana@maine.edu; and UMM Dean of Students Marnie Kaler, marnie.kaler@maine.edu.

I purchased two CLEP exams that I will take on campus. Will I still be able to take these proctored exams?

Please contact the department administering the exam for guidance.

How will students with projects in the field complete their work?

Faculty will be working with students to complete coursework, including field work, using a variety of options.

How do students complete their classes if they do not have computer access?

Students without computers and/or internet access should contact their instructors regarding alternative course work completion options. UMaine students can also contact the Dean of Students Office, 207.581.1406. UMaine and UMM libraries also have computer loan programs. Information is [online](#).

What happens with credits for classes that are not able to be completed online?

Our plan is to make it possible so that all courses can be completed in varied pedagogically appropriate ways, including online and virtually.

What should we do if we have rented textbooks, but still need them for the rest of the semester and, therefore, cannot return them before the deadline?

If you rented textbooks from University Bookstore, you will be advised on how best to return them at the end of the semester.

If classes will be shifting over to an online format, how will the lab component be handled?

Faculty members will advise students of appropriate completion solutions.

Is there the possibility that class meetings will resume this semester?

In-person classes will not resume this semester.

What should students do when they have senior capstone experiences, including field work, required for degree and licensure completion?

Faculty members will advise students of appropriate completion solutions.

Pass/fail questions

Pass/fail option for spring 2020 undergraduate courses

These are extraordinary times for our faculty and students, and the change in class structure and pedagogy required at this midpoint in the semester is disruptive in many ways for all members of the university community. The goal of a new, one-time only (spring semester 2020) pass/fail grading option for all UMaine undergraduate classes is to assume a student-centric approach and provide a choice that maintains as best we can the academic integrity and learning outcomes at the end of this term. It is recognized that some students will be striving to improve their GPA, while others may be more concerned with keeping pace with their classes under changing circumstances or living in conditions that may not be conducive to studying or learning. Likewise, faculty may also be concerned about the integrity of exams or other graded assignments under a new pedagogical format to take effect on March 25, that may make the awarding of letter grades difficult to assign fairly. Faculty also may be concerned that a pass/fail option may minimize the motivation to learn. Recognizing both concerns, the idea behind this pass/fail option is to err on the side of student-centric interests at this time of great upheaval in all our lives — faculty and students alike.

UMaine [pass/fail protocols](#) are posted online.

Information on pass/fail for graduate courses is available on the [Research and Graduate School FAQ page](#).

Does the instructor have to grant approval or permission for a student to switch to pass/fail?

No. It is the student's decision and it cannot be overruled by the instructor.

Will general education courses that students opt to change to pass/fail continue to count for general education courses?

Yes. Grades of LP or P will count to fulfill general education requirements.

Will major/minor/concentration courses students opt to change to pass/fail based on the new policy continue to count for major/minor/concentration courses?

- Yes. Grades of LP or P will count to fulfill those requirements unless the requirement is looking for a grade of "C" or higher.
- Grades of P will fulfill requirements looking for a grade of a "C" or better, but may not automatically pull into the student's Degree Progress Report. We can fix this once we are notified and will continue to look for a more automated way to address this situation.
- If the requirement requires a grade higher than a "C," students will need to check with the department to find out if they can take this option and have the course still count.

Can students who opt to change to pass/fail based on the new policy continue to have their courses count as prerequisites?

- Yes. Grades of LP or P will count to fulfill prerequisites unless the prerequisite needs to be a grade of "C" or higher.
- Grades of P will count to fulfill prerequisites requiring a grade of "C" or higher. We are working to add the pass/fail option to the prerequisite. This should allow students to register for the next course without a problem.
- Students registering for courses where the prerequisites require a grade higher than a "C" will need to discuss their preparation with the instructor.

How will students officially change course(s) from graded to pass/fail?

Students will receive an email from the Office of Student Records shortly before April 10 with a link to the pass/fail protocol and a fillable form to email to OSR from their maine.edu email. Instructors and associate deans will receive a copy of the email around the same time.

How will instructors know which students have elected to change the grading basis for their course(s) to pass/fail?

This information is available on MaineStreet in the Class Roster and the Grade Roster for the course.

What grade should instructors give if the student earns a "C-?"

Instructors should enter a "P" grade. For spring 2020, "P" grades will be considered a "C" or higher for purposes of prerequisites and fulfilling requirements that require a "C" or better grade. "LP" should be entered for grades in the "D" range.

Does the pass/fail protocol apply to non-degree students?

Yes, the protocol applies to non-degree students.

Does the pass/fail protocol apply to early college students?

Yes, with the approval of your high school guidance counselor and Early College Coordinator, Allison Small. To request the P/F option, early college students should contact Allison at allison.small@maine.edu.

What happens if a student is repeating a course and elects the pass/fail option?

The repeat process will work as it has in the past. The prior grade will no longer count in the student's Grade Point Average. Any credits earned will no longer count. Credits earned for the current course will count. Because the course is being taken pass/fail, the grade earned (whether P, LP, or F) will not be calculated in the GPA.

If students are unsure whether to elect Pass/Fail grading, where should they get advice?

Students should reach out to their advisor or instructor to discuss what is best for their situation.