

MEMORANDUM

TO: All NC State Instructors of Record, Spring 2020

FROM: Warwick A. Arden
Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost 

SUBJECT: Information on Exams, S/U Grading and Drop Date

DATE: March 20, 2020

As NC State continues to adapt to the rapidly-changing circumstances of the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19), I appreciate your efforts to stay informed and maintain academic continuity for our students throughout the Spring 2020 semester.

This memo is focused on three issues that many of you, our students, and our students' family members have raised as we move to remote instruction for the remainder of the semester: managing exams (including final exams), changing course grades from letter grades to S/U, and dropping classes.

Our top goals are to protect your ability to make choices about your courses and your instruction, to the extent possible, and to support our students' academic progress and success.

Managing Exams

As the course instructor, you have the freedom to make changes to your exams, including substituting another assignment or activity for one or more exams. This could include changing a closed-book exam to an open-book exam or another activity that assesses similar learning outcomes in a different way. Your college may have already communicated specific testing guidelines and options to you. Keep in mind the following as you change assignments or exams: (1) students must know how they are being evaluated in your course (i.e., you are notifying students clearly and promptly about any changes in assignments and exams), and (2) it's important to assure the validity and integrity of the evaluation (i.e., we must do what we can to assure that students' work is their own). Student authentication required to log into Moodle or similar tools is considered assurance that their work is their own.

If a proctored exam is the only practicable way to assess student learning outcomes in your class, please be aware of the following issues and limitations of this approach in a fully online environment.

- Online proctoring, regardless of the platform used, requires that all students have a webcam and a stable internet connection.
- For exams that are delivered online in Moodle, barring unforeseen circumstances, student monitoring by AI software will be available March 30. Instructors will have access to reports of anomalous student behavior noted by the software.
- For printed paper exams, instructors may be able to directly observe students via the Zoom video communication tool.

If any of these limitations of online proctoring give you cause for concern you are strongly encouraged to consider an alternative means of assessment for your class.

Changing Letter Grades to S/U

An enhanced Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) grading option will be available to students that can be applied to all graduate and undergraduate courses. The College of Veterinary Medicine is developing a plan appropriate for their courses. We will advise students to continue with their current grading basis until they have had time to assess their comfort with the new online course delivery. Details of the new options will be highlighted on the [Student Services Center](#) website in the coming days, but will include the following:

- The grading option can be applied to all graduate and undergraduate courses.
- The S/U grade will not carry grade points and will not impact a student's GPA.
- A grade of S will be assigned by the course instructor when the work is judged to be of C- quality or better.
- A grade of S will fulfill degree requirements, C-wall requirements, and prerequisites for future courses.
- A grade of U will not earn credit and will not affect a student's GPA, though it will be used in Satisfactory Academic Progress calculations.
- Students will have the option of switching to this S/U grading basis until May 8th, which is after the semester has ended and most grades have been submitted. We will suggest students consult with their advisor and/or instructor before making this change, as it cannot be reversed.
- This option will be available to students through MyPack Portal beginning Monday, April 6.

We know our students will continue to pursue academic excellence with the same rigor as before. We hope this enhanced S/U grading basis will reduce stress and anxiety and facilitate progress toward degree and graduation.

Requests for Late Course Drops

On April 6, we will also release an online, late drop request for students who are unable to continue in a particular course. While this is not a preferred option, we realize circumstances might make it difficult to continue enrollment in a course. We will make this online request available to students through the last day of the semester, April 23. Electronic workflows will route these requests to the appropriate individuals and offices for approval.

Thank you again for all that you are doing with your remote instruction approaches and supporting your students in managing these changes.

cc: W. Randolph Woodson, Chancellor
Duane Larick, Senior Vice Provost, Academic Strategy and Resource Management
Tom Miller, Senior Vice Provost, Academic Outreach and Entrepreneurship
Louis Hunt, Senior Vice Provost, Enrollment Management and Services
Greg Raschke, Senior Vice Provost and Director of Libraries
Katharine Stewart, Vice Provost, Faculty Affairs
Marc Hoit, Vice Chancellor, Information Technology
College Deans
Academic Department Heads
Associate Deans for Academic Affairs
Center and Institute Directors