Guidance on Credit/Non-Credit or Traditional Letter Grade

There is a lot of anxiety and a constantly changing landscape of rules and advice on many aspects of our currently disrupted lives; this set of guidelines will, we hope, inform one decision you will soon have to make regarding your course grades. If you retain one thing from this summary, it is that you should contact your BME advising team for help if you have any doubts about these decisions!

Note also that things are changing constantly and we are all trying our best to place student interests as the top priority.

The facts (as we know them) https://registrar.utah.edu/Spring-cr-nc.php

1. **Withdrawing from courses:** (details @ https://registrar.utah.edu/covid.faq.php). Presently, you may withdraw from a course up until April 10. If you withdraw, this designation will be listed on your transcript, and the course will not affect your GPA. However, this option may slow your progress through the program and you will still be charged tuition, including fees and differential.

2. **Credit/No-Credit Option** (CR/NC, details @ https://registrar.utah.edu/Spring-cr-nc.php). Presently, you may switch any courses to CR/NC up until April 10. If you make this switch, the course will be listed on your transcript with a CR if you receive a C- or better, and an NC otherwise. Your professor will still assign you a letter grade, but it will neither appear on your transcript nor impact your GPA. Typical restrictions on CR/NC courses will be waived for this semester, and receiving a CR will satisfy any requirements associated with that course. For example, a CR in any BME required class will count as a passing grade for that course, whereas under normal circumstances, you would need to earn a C or better.

The advice (as best we can distill it)

1. **Talk to your instructors and consult with a BME Department advisor.** You can find program information and also the contact details for all the advisors at https://www.bme.utah.edu/undergraduate-current-students/ and if you are not sure just email Dr. MacLeod (macleod@sci.utah.edu).

2. **When to KEEP a course on traditional grading:** If you are doing well in the course and adjusting to the online system well, then there is no need to change anything. Do nothing and your course will continue with standard letter grading. Check with the instructor of each course to learn where your grade sits at the moment and how they plan to compute the final grade.

3. **When to consider CHANGING to a CR/NC option:**

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a. If you are not doing so well in the course, perhaps even anticipating you might fail it, then the best option may be to change to CR/NC. Even if things go badly and you receive a NC, it will not affect your GPA!

b. If you are not confident in your anticipated final grade and are more concerned about your GPA than about the grade for a specific course, then changing to CR/NC may be advised. It is not clear how admissions committees for majors, medical schools, or graduate programs are going to deal with the fallout from this semester, but GPAs can sometimes matter more than a specific grade. Just be aware that for external purposes, e.g., medical school or graduate program applications, admissions will see a CR grade and have no idea of whether you scored C- or A for that course.

1. **Some programs (like ours) will still access your letter grade**: admission to some programs depends on specific grades, e.g., programs like BME use average grades from a small set of technical courses to determine admission. The University of Utah requires that a CR grade = C-, so our BME program will collect your actual grades for these courses and include them in our evaluation. Note, this practice will generally improve your overall admissions score and be to your advantage.

2. If you are a student who receives Scholarships, Financial Aid, a Veterans benefit, or any other type of financial assistance, you should check with the funding agency before making any changes to your schedule. The same is true if you may be subject to other types of restrictions, such as international students with certain types of visas and student athletes; please check the ramifications before making changes.

3. **If you are pre-medical or pre-health**, the PreProfessional Advising Office has reached out to professional school organizations such as AAMC, ADA, etc. As of the time of this letter, no decision has been made about how to deal with classes that are required for these programs. As more information comes in, the PreProfessional Advising Office is updating their website at https://advising.utah.edu/preprofessional/pre-medical/ppa-faq.php.

4. **Students applying for merit-based scholarships from the College of Engineering** need to be aware that if they opt to take the CR/NC option; they will have to provide an explanation for doing this. If the justification is deemed satisfactory by the scholarship committee, the CR grade will be ignored in the evaluation; otherwise, the grade will be treated as a C- grade.

5. Did we mention talking to the BME Advising Team?