

EXECUTIVE SERVICES DIVISION  
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT, MC 201

**DATE:** April 6, 2020

**TO:** Santa Clara County Superintendents and SCCOE Cabinet Members

**FROM:** Dr. Mary Ann Dewan, County Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:** Santa Clara County Grading Recommendation

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Decisions related to grading as schools implement distance learning are complicated. First and foremost, the safety and well-being of students is of prime importance as recommendations related to grading practices are weighed.

After reviewing the [guidance](#) from the California Department of Education (CDE), the [joint statements from UC/CSU systems](#), and having consulted with district superintendents, it is my recommendation that the schools within Santa Clara County move to a credit/no-credit grading structure for distance learning instruction during the remainder of the school year.

This shift in grading practice ensures that all students have the same opportunity for success as outlined in each district's distance learning plan. For secondary students, this allows for the posting of accumulated credits without positively or negatively impacting grade point averages. Per the joint statements, "the university systems are willing to accept credit/no-credit grades in lieu of letter grades for all courses, including A–G courses, completed in winter/ spring/ summer 2020 for all students. Grades of credit/no credit will not affect the UC or CSU calculations of GPA. In addition, the universities have identified a range of other flexibilities they will offer to support students' access to college during this time."

This change from a traditional letter grade system will bring up a number of questions that will need to be addressed as they arise. It is important to remember that our shared overarching goals are to keep students engaged, focus on the essential skills that will allow them to be successful, and to maintain social connections with other students and teachers to provide stability and decrease social isolation during the school closures. Educators can focus on ways to provide feedback to learners in lieu of assigning a letter grade for this school year.

As soon as it is practicable, I encourage districts to move to a credit/no-credit grading system. To further assist districts in the roll out of this new grading policy, the CDE has addressed some [frequently asked questions](#) as part of its grading and graduation guidance that can be a useful resource.

Attachment (1)



April 1, 2020

*Joint statement from the California State Board of Education, California Department of Education, California State University, University of California, California Community Colleges and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities:*

California's K-12 and higher education communities are committed to helping high school and community college students overcome university admissions and placement challenges presented by the suspension of in-person instruction.

The State Board of Education (SBE), California Department of Education (CDE), California State University (CSU), University of California (UC), California Community Colleges, and independent nonprofit colleges and universities have been working together to understand and address the heightened concerns of students and families and the difficult conditions of this time.

As described in guidance from each of the sectors, the State Board and CDE have identified means to support:

- A range of distance learning
- Strategies for flexibility in grading
- Guidance for adjustments of local graduation requirements

The higher education community has offered assurances regarding:

- Re-evaluation of the financial needs, as well as the eligibility for federal and college financial aid, for families whose circumstances have changed;
- Acceptance of Credit/No Credit grades in lieu of letter grades for A-G high school courses completed in winter/spring/summer 2020;
- Flexibilities associated with the receipt of official transcripts and confirmation of admissions offers, including deferments of deposits or fees, where needed;
- Flexibility and support for students currently enrolled in dual enrollment course offerings;
- For community college students seeking to transfer to a four-year university: Acceptance of Credit/No Credit in lieu of letter grades in "Golden Four" and General Education/prerequisite courses completed at a community college in winter/spring/summer 2020.

These are represented in guidance from each of the sectors, available <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/coronavirus.asp>. We also encourage interested parties to contact university admissions offices with specific questions.

As educators, we understand the anxieties triggered by the many uncertainties students now face and trust these accommodations provide a measure of relief. We look forward to the days far past this pandemic when we can welcome back our students and greet new ones with a handshake or a hug.

## The University of California's Response to COVID-19: Admissions and Financial Aid

The following systemwide measures are being taken to address the educational disruption of students affected by the COVID-19 crisis (as of April 1, 2020)

### **FALL 2020 FRESHMAN ADMITTED STUDENTS**

UC will temporarily suspend the letter grade requirement for A-G courses completed in winter/spring/summer 2020 for all students, including UC's most recently admitted freshmen.

Freshman decisions have been released at all campuses: admissions offers have gone out to students. The deadline to accept the offer of admission is May 1; campuses plan to provide maximum flexibility to students who request extensions and deferment of deposits. Individual campuses may consider extending a campus' deadline beyond the systemwide date and will communicate this information directly with admitted students.

UC requests submission of final transcripts by July 1. If schools are unable or unsure about their ability to issue transcripts by this date, we request that they notify UC at [AskUC@ucop.edu](mailto:AskUC@ucop.edu) and include a date when transcripts are expected to be available. No rescission of student admissions offers will result from students or schools missing official final transcript deadlines, and students will retain admission status through the first day of class until official documents are received by campuses.

The College Board recently announced changes to the AP exam content and format for spring 2020. UC recognizes the effort that students have already applied in these challenging courses and will continue to award UC credit consistent with previous years for 2020 AP exams completed with scores of 3, 4, or 5.

### **FALL 2020/WINTER 2021 TRANSFER STUDENTS**

UC will temporarily suspend the cap on the number of transferable units with Pass/No Pass grading applied toward the minimum 60 semester/90 quarter units required for junior standing.

The systemwide Academic Senate is making efforts to request departmental faculty and campus admissions offices to exercise flexibility with transfer students applying for admission for 2020-21 academic year.

The deadline for transfer students to accept offers of admission to fall 2020 is June 1. Campuses will provide maximum flexibility to students who request extensions and deferment of deposits.

# UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

## **FINANCIAL AID**

The University understands that families' financial circumstances may have changed or may change in the coming months. UC campuses will work with families over the summer to review their eligibility for financial aid and, where allowable, to adjust financial aid packages to reflect their new financial circumstances. Follow-up to students will be handled by email responses, or telephone calls or virtual meetings as needed.

## **FALL 2021 ADMISSIONS**

The temporary suspension of the letter grade requirement in A-G courses completed in winter/spring/summer 2020 extends to all students currently enrolled in high school who may apply to UC for admission to fall 2021, 2022 or 2023. For admission purposes, UC will continue to calculate a GPA using all A-G courses completed **with letter grades** in grades 10 and 11, including summer terms following grades 9, 10 and 11. Courses completed with Pass or Credit grades in winter/spring/summer 2020 will not be used in the GPA calculation but will meet A-G subject area requirements. No student will be penalized in the campus admission review processes for earning Pass grades in A-G coursework during the winter/spring/summer 2020 terms.

Additionally, the University recognizes the challenges that students are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic and, in response, is suspending the standardized test requirement for students applying for fall 2021 freshman admission.

## **COVID-19 Interim Impacts on CSU Undergraduate Admissions Policies and Practices**

The California State University (CSU) system is taking all necessary steps to mitigate the disruptions caused by COVID-19 while ensuring the health and safety for our students, faculty, staff and communities. With the COVID-19 pandemic it has become necessary to adjust some CSU admission requirements and prior guidance to incoming students for fall 2020 and beyond.

The CSU system and CSU campuses are prepared to exercise flexibility and accommodation when working with our educational partners and fall 2020 applicants in meeting admission requirements and the subsequent steps toward enrollment. Although there has been disruption as campuses transition to some or all staff working remotely, processing of admission applications and communications is continuing.

The following information is provided for school districts, schools, community colleges, colleges, educators, prospective students and applicants regarding CSU admission and provides a high-level overview of the guidance. Guidance to CSU campuses regarding technical implementation will be provided in a separate document.

### **High School Guidance – First-Time First-Year Students**

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#### **Fall 2020 First-Time First-Year Students**

1. The CSU will accept grades of "Credit" or "Pass" to satisfy "a-g" requirements completed during winter, spring or summer 2020 terms. All prior coursework must be graded and a grade of C- or better must be earned for the course to satisfy "a-g" requirements. Grades of credit/pass or no credit/non-passing will not be included in the calculation of high school GPA.
2. CSU campuses will assess and initially place students in first-year English/Math based on multiple measures: high school and college courses completed, GPAs and test scores (SBAC, ACT, SAT) that students have submitted thus far.
3. The CSU will not facilitate a systemwide Early Start Program in summer 2020; individual CSU campuses may offer summer transitional programs (e.g. Summer Bridge) in virtual formats.
4. The CSU requests that high schools that can provide transcripts by July 15, 2020, do so; however, campuses will continue to accept transcripts through the fall 2020 term. CSU campuses will not rescind conditional offers of admission based on the non-receipt of transcripts. If a student is not able to provide an official transcript, due to extended school closure, CSU campuses may use unofficial or self-reported data for senior year grades and graduation status.
5. New first-year students will remain in a conditionally admitted status until the CSU campus receives a final transcript document and review of the transcript for a-g requirements is completed.<sup>i</sup>
6. If a student has not met all a-g requirements after review of their final transcript document, at that time, CSU campuses may use admission exceptions on a case-by-case basis if students are no longer CSU-eligible,

based on the inability to complete all “a-g” courses in which they were enrolled in spring 2020.<sup>ii</sup>

Consideration can include how well the student is doing academically in fall 2020. Students should in no way assume that enrollment in Fall 2020 CSU courses means that an exception will be automatically granted.

7. The College Board has announced changes to the AP exam content and format for spring 2020. [The CSU will honor all existing transferable credit articulation for spring 2020 AP exams on which scores of 3, 4, or 5 are earned.](#)
8. CSU campuses are individually considering their extension of intent to enroll and/or housing deposit deadlines. Intent to enroll deadlines will consider the campus’ capacity to provide timely information regarding financial aid awards to students and families. More information will be forthcoming.

### **Fall 2021 Prospective First-Time First-Year Students (Current High School Juniors)**

1. The CSU will consider course grades of “credit” or “pass” as fulfilling “a-g” requirements for those courses completed during winter, spring or summer 2020 terms. All other coursework must be graded and a grade of C- or better must be earned for the course to satisfy “a-g” requirements. Grades of credit/pass or no credit/no pass will not be included in the calculation of high school GPA.
2. The CSU strongly recommends that ALL students enroll in a yearlong senior-year English course and a mathematics/quantitative reasoning course as student-specific Early Assessment Program (EAP) guidance will largely not be available at the time of senior year course registration. These courses could include Expository Reading and Writing (ERWC), Math Reasoning with Connections (MRWC), weighted honors, International Baccalaureate (IB), and Advanced Placement (AP) and other advanced courses.
3. Given the indefinite suspension of ACT/SAT examinations and the fact the state’s Smarter Balanced test will not be administered this year to current high school juniors, the CSU is evaluating its admission process for entering first year students in 2021. The CSU is in consultation with its internal constituents, including its statewide academic senate and governing board, to determine the appropriate path forward for eligibility criteria for fall 2021 applicants. A final decision on how CSU will adapt its admissions process for the fall 2021 term will be made soon. At that time, the CSU will immediately communicate its decision publicly.
4. The College Board recently has announced changes to the AP exam content and format for spring 2020. The [CSU will honor all existing transferable credit articulation for spring 2020 AP exams on which scores of 3, 4, 5 are earned.](#)

### **For Grades 8, 9 and 10:**

1. CSU will consider course grades of “credit” or “pass” as fulfilling “a-g” requirements for those courses completed during winter, spring, or summer 2020 terms. All other coursework must be graded and a grade of C- or better must be earned for the course to satisfy “a-g” requirements. Grades of credit/pass or no credit/no pass will not be included in the calculation of high school GPA.

## Community College Guidance – Incoming Transfers

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### Fall 2020 Transfers

1. The CSU campuses will accept "Credit" or "Pass" for transferable college courses completed in winter, spring or summer 2020 taken to satisfy:
  - A. The Golden Four (English language [A2], oral communication [A1], critical thinking [A3], and mathematics/quantitative reasoning [B4]);
  - B. All other General Education courses; and
  - C. Major prerequisite courses.
2. CSU campuses will clear admission for upper-division transfer applicants with 48 semester or 72 quarter transferable units who have completed English Language (A2) and mathematics/quantitative reasoning (B4) by the start of fall 2020 (including courses taken in summer 2020).
  - A. CSU campuses will work with students to enroll in the appropriate general education and major preparation courses to fulfill lower division requirements prior to enrolling in major coursework.
  - B. Students will still need to fulfill all major requirements to receive their degree.
3. If a CSU campus conditionally admitted a student as a lower-division transfer, the student will need to meet eligibility and have completed English Language (A2) and mathematics/quantitative reasoning (B4) by the start of fall 2020 (including courses taken in summer 2020).
4. The CSU requests that community colleges that can provide transcripts by July 15, 2020, do so; however, CSU campuses will continue to accept transcripts through the fall 2020 term. CSU campuses will not rescind conditional offers of admission based on the non-receipt of transcripts. If a student is not able to provide an official transcript, due to extended school closure, CSU campuses may use unofficial or self-reported data for spring or summer grades and graduation status.
5. New transfer students will remain in a conditionally admitted status until the CSU campus receives a final transcript document and review of the transcript for admission requirements is completed
6. If a student has not completed at least 48 transferable units and fulfilled A2 and B4 requirements after review of their final transcript document, at that time, campuses may use admission exceptions on a case-by-case basis if students do not meet the criteria in item number 2 above. Students should in no way assume that enrollment in Fall 2020 CSU courses means that an exception will be automatically granted.
7. If a student that was conditionally accepted for fall 2020 chooses to remain at their community college to finish their transfer requirements or ADT degree, the CSU campus may defer their admission to winter/spring 2021 terms. This action will be at the discretion of the individual CSU campus.
8. A transfer student who anticipated completing an Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) that enrolls for fall 2020 without completing the ADT and has matriculated with less than 60 units completed would need to obtain a special advising agreement at the CSU campus of enrollment.
9. The College Board recently has announced changes to the AP exam content and format for spring 2020. The [CSU will honor all existing transferable credit articulation for spring 2020 AP exams on which scores of 3, 4, 5 are earned.](#)



10. CSU campuses are individually considering their extension of intent to enroll and/or housing deposit deadlines. Intent to enroll deadlines will consider the campus' capacity to provide timely information regarding financial aid awards to students and families. More information will be forthcoming.

### **Spring 2021 Transfers and Beyond**

1. CSU campuses will accept "Credit" or "Pass" for courses completed in winter, spring or summer 2020 taken to satisfy:
  - A. Golden Four (English language [A2], oral communication [A1], critical thinking [A3], and mathematics/quantitative reasoning [B4]);
  - B. All other General Education courses; and
  - C. Major prerequisite courses.
2. The College Board recently has announced changes to the AP exam content and format for spring 2020. The [CSU will honor all existing transferable credit articulation for spring 2020 AP exams on which scores of 3, 4, 5 are earned](#)

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<sup>i</sup> This should not preclude campuses from being able to award federal financial aid to students for Fall 2020. This applies to both first-time first-year students and transfer students. Federal financial aid eligibility thereafter will be subject to federal regulations and CSU policies.

<sup>ii</sup> The CSU Chancellor's Office will ensure that either campus allocations for admissions exceptions are increased or a special code will be used for these exceptions and they will be excluded from the total count. This applies to both first-time first-year students and transfer students.

*Note: The guidance in this document may be updated in response to the changing context associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. March 31, 2020*



## **AICCU Institution Activities to Serve High School Juniors and Seniors**

***Please be assured that all AICCU campuses are prepared to be as flexible as possible when working with fall 2020 applicants on meeting admission requirements and selection. This includes modifying their policies on Pass/No Pass (P/NP) grades to ensure that high school students, who are working under unprecedented conditions, will not be disadvantaged. While campuses are adhering to local and state shelter in place orders to protect that health and welfare of their communities, some or all staff are working remotely, processing of applications and communications continue to take place. We encourage Fall 2020 applicants to regularly check their email and campus portals.***

The Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) is the organizational voice for over 80 nonprofit higher education institutions in the state.

### Consideration of AP and IB tests

AICCU institutions will maintain flexibility toward AP/IB classes and scores, by not considering them or not weighing the scores in the calculations for GPA. Others will maintain a holistic review of the student's circumstances, taking into consideration the COVID-19 situation and its impact.

### Consideration of P/NP grades in lieu of letter grades

AICCU institutions are modifying their policies on P/NP grades. How or if those grades are translated to GPA varies from institution-to-institution. We are committed to evaluating all pass grades for course work without prejudice and this is a hallmark of holistic review of applications and taking into consideration unique circumstances of our applicants.

### Delay of admissions

Generally, AICCU institutions are not delaying admissions. Decisions have already been made and opening up admissions decisions will only cause greater confusion and complications for institutions, students, and their families. Institutions with rolling admissions will not be impacted by this consideration.

### Other important notes and checking campus individual portals/websites for policy modifications:

- AICCU institutions will provide flexibility for standardized exams, including waiving them. Please check individual campus portals.
- Will accept unofficial transcripts from students until their high school can submit an official transcript.
- Teachers may not be able to provide academic recommendations.

### Financial aid

AICCU member institutions understand that the financial situations of some families have changed during this crisis and will evaluate with individual students and their families about their changed circumstances. We are committed to providing affordable access and appreciate the adversity of what students and families are going through.