On April 1, 2020, Senate Executive approved a proposal to allow undergraduate and graduate students a Pass/Fail grading choice for spanned Fall 2019/Winter 2020 and Winter 2020 courses. In brief, students can “opt to accept the letter grade received (Standard), accept the letter grade received but exclude it from UM GPA calculations (Option 1), or choose to have performance categorized as ‘Pass’ or ‘Fail’ (Option 2).”

The manner by which an “option” can be declared has not yet been established. However, for the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS), we would require that all such declarations be approved by the Unit’s Graduate Chair/Head/Designate before submission to FGS. It is imperative that detailed, one-on-one discussions with graduate students be conducted if a student is considering either Option 1 or Option 2, as both may have unforeseen impacts on students’ programs.

It is important to note that:

1. FGS standards require graduate students to maintain a minimum degree grade point average (DGPA) of 3.0 with no letter grade below “C+” (unless otherwise specified by individual graduate programs supplemental regulations). Opting for a Pass/Fail option may adversely affect a student and their standing in the program.

Some guidelines:

- If minimum grade requirement is achieved, retaining the letter grade is necessary for this course to apply towards program/degree requirements.
- For courses with letter grades of “C” or “D”: Opting for a “Pass” would still mean that the course does not meet minimum FGS standards and therefore, the course would not apply towards program/degree requirements.
- A “Passed” course cannot be repeated to achieve the minimum grade and program requirements; only a “Failed” course can be repeated/substituted.

2. Passed courses may not fulfill letter grade pre- or co-requisite requirements for other courses, preventing students from taking courses that are required by the program of study or otherwise desirable for students in the timely completion of their educational goals.

3. Passed courses may be excluded from consideration for admission to another program within the University or by other Universities.

4. For programs that are professionally accredited, the granting of passing grades to students that would not normally pass under the standard grading scheme may risk the continued accreditation of the program by professional oversight bodies. Such action may also adversely affect the student’s ability to obtain professional licensure in the future.

Clearly, these are serious issues that may impact both students and programs in unforeseen ways. While it remains the prerogative of the student to opt for the grading schemes passed by Senate Executive, graduate students are at particular risk of adverse impacts should such options be exercised.

A series of FAQs is being developed and will be disseminated as soon as possible.