Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory Grading - Temporary Response

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Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory Grading - Temporary Response

What is Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory Grading?
Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory grading is an alternate grading scheme where an ‘S’ counts as a ‘C’ or better, and a ‘U’ counts as a grade below a ‘C’, rather than a letter traditional grade. This is similar to what other institutions call Pass / Fail. For CCCS, neither the ‘S’ nor the ‘U’ grade count in the GPA.

Why use Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory Grading?
As part of our emergency response efforts to COVID-19, colleges may temporarily allow the option for students in all undergraduate college level courses to choose to receive Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory grades in lieu of letter grades. While ‘S’atisfactory and ‘U’nsatisfactory grades have always been available as an option, it was rarely used, and only on a case by case basis, outside of developmental education and PE classes.

Many colleges in the nation are implementing flexible grading options right now as an emergency response to COVID-19. A grade of ‘S’atisfactory can help a student earning a C in a class where they might typically expect to earn a B or better. Furthermore, a grade of ‘U’nsatisfactory can be helpful for a student who is earning a D or failing and doesn’t want the grade to affect their GPA.

How do faculty and instructors assign Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory grading?
For faculty and instructors, and as a temporary measure starting with Spring 2020, all classes with the standard grade method will also be given ‘S’atisfactory and ‘U’nsatisfactory as available grades. Instructors will discuss this option with students to see if it’s the best option for them. When this option is no longer needed, the ‘S’atisfactory and ‘U’nsatisfactory grades will be removed from available options for instructors.

When instructors assign grades via Self Service, they will see this drop down:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If the instructor enters a ‘U’ grade, they will also need to enter a last date of an academic event (LDA). If the student has completed the class, please enter the last date of the class.

How do we use Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory Grading After the Fact?
As a temporary measure starting Spring 2020, students may submit a request to the [College to determine] office to have a grading scheme changed to a S or U. The student has until 10 business days after the term ends to submit a grading scheme change request. For each change, the college will note the change on the transcript.

Steps for changing a grade to an S or U:
After a faculty or instructor submits a letter grade, and a student wishes to change to an ‘S’ or ‘U’, the grade can only be changed on the back end by the Registrar’s office. To change the grade, Registrar staff will go to the Banner form SHATCKN, enter the student ID and Term:

The new grade will be added under the grades block. Please use a value of S if the grade is a C or better, or U if the grade is a D or worse, and a grade change reason of CD.

Once the grade is saved, go back to the Course Detail block, scroll right, and add the comment describing the grade, then save. Registrars will also need to identify ‘S’ and ‘U’ grades entered by faculty and enter the comment for each ‘S’ and ‘U’ grade using the following text:

For an S grade:
S Grade COVID = C or Better

For a U Grade:
U Grade COVID = Below C
The grade will appear like this on the transcript:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJ NO.</th>
<th>COURSE TITLE</th>
<th>CRED GRD</th>
<th>PTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCR 094</td>
<td>Studio 121</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM 125</td>
<td>Interpersonal Communication</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S Grade COVID = C or Better</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENG 121</td>
<td>English Composition I:CG1</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEO 105</td>
<td>World Regional Geography: SS2</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>U Grade COVID = Below C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ehrs: 9.00 GPA-Hrs; 3.00 QPts: 12.00 GPA: 4.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

*A ‘U’ grade requires a Last Date of Academic Event (LDA). If the original grade was an ‘F’, use the LDA entered by the instructor. If a ‘D’, enter the last date of the class.

*In case there’s concern about this process continuing into future semesters, remember that the S/U grades will only be available for the Spring 2020 term.
Communication Plan:

How do we make faculty and instructors aware of these changes?
College leadership will communicate with faculty, instructors, and staff regarding the S/U process at their college. In addition, the State Faculty Advisory Committee (SFAC) has been consulted and provided input prior to making the decision to implement S/U grading.

How do we make students aware of these changes?
This will be decided by college administration in consultation with faculty leadership. Communication from college administration will detail the process and deadlines, reasons why a student might consider selecting an S/U grade, and implications for doing so. College administration will construct a communication to college faculty and instructors with similar information and details specific to them. FAQ’s are included below for use in this communication. Colleges may use these FAQs as they are or modify to fit their individual college needs.

How do students request an S or U grade?
Colleges will either develop their own web simple form (e.g. Form Stack) and make it available to students, or the change will be initiated by the student through email. Colleges must not use their current grade appeal form or process for these requests. While students should be strongly encouraged to talk with an advisor and financial aid before requesting an S/U grade, it may not be required by all institutions. Furthermore, the form and process developed by the college should not be cumbersome and/or have multiple touch points for students to navigate.
Staff Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Will S/U affect financial aid?

A: Federal and state regulations do not specify a grading method that colleges must follow. The S/U methods are acceptable and do not change financial aid eligibility rules. The enrollment status for students is not based on the grading method of the colleges providing the coursework satisfies degree or certificate requirements.

The S/U grade notations do not change the student’s term or cumulative GPA, but they are used in the course completion rate calculation and to determine whether a student completed their financial aid academic period.

The ‘S’atisfactory grade indicates the course has been successfully complete. These grade notations do not change the term or cumulative GPA, but these grades indicate completion of the course.

The ‘U’nsatisfactory grade indicates the course was not successfully completed. The instructor will need to document the Last Date of an Academic Event (LDA) for the individual student. The ‘U’ is treated in the same manner as a non-passing grade of ‘F’.

Q: How does the completion rate calculation impact financial aid?

A: The completion rate calculation is used in the Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) and in the Return of Title IV programs which are mandated by the Department of Education.

The term completion is calculated by dividing the number of credits successfully completed for the term by the number of credits attempted for the term.

The cumulative completion rate is calculated using the total number of credits completed in the student’s academic history at your college by the total number of credits attempted at your college. The cumulative completion rate includes transfer credits.

Q: What about Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)?

A: The SAP policy requires a student to have a 67% cumulative completion rate to remain eligible for financial aid. There is one probationary term given to students who drop below the 67% completion rate. If the student does not have the required 67% cumulative completion rate at the end of the
probationary term, they are ineligible for aid. Students may submit an appeal with extenuating circumstances, which includes being impacted by COVID – 19.

Students who have a zero term completion rate for a single term are not eligible for a probationary term and are encouraged to appeal so resources to assist them can be identified.

All students who are placed in an ineligible status are notified and special notification will be sent for the spring term to encourage all students to submit an appeal for their aid to be reinstated.

Q: What about Return of Title IV (R2T4)?

A: If the student successfully completes coursework for all courses within the student’s scheduled academic period with a grade notation that indicates the student has successfully completed 60% or more, the student will not need a R2T4 calculation. The student and the institution will be eligible for the entire Title IV award in the term.

The ‘S’atisfactory grade indicates the course has been successfully completed. This grade notation does not change the term or cumulative GPA, but these grades indicate completion of the course.

A grade notation of ‘I’ncomplete indicates the student has completed 60% or more of the course.

The ‘U’nsatisfactory grade indicates the course was not successfully completed. Instructors will need to document the last date of attendance or academic event for the individual student. The ‘U’ is treated in the same manner as a non-passing grade of ‘F’ for completion purposes but will not be counted in the GPA.

NOTE: While the S/U does not impact the student’s GPA, some students may be impacted.

For example: A student was awarded financial aid for the spring term based on the condition that the student successfully complete their coursework during the term with a 2.5 or greater. If that student requested all ‘S’ grades, the term GPA would be a 0.0 and the student would not meet the conditional appeal approval. The student would be placed back in an ineligible status and would be required to submit a SAP appeal to their Financial Aid Office.

Appeals related to COVID-19 will be given the special consideration allowed under CARES Act guidance.
Q: Can colleges automatically approve SAP ineligibility without an appeal?

Can colleges assume all students are impacted by COVID-19 and automatically approve those on SAP ineligibility, or does a student need to submit an appeal to the Financial Aid offices?)

A: The CARES Act allows colleges to exclude courses that were not successfully completed due to COVID-19 from the SAP review process without an appeal.

If the student is still ineligible after the courses have been excluded from the calculation, the student must submit a Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) appeal. Appeals are reviewed on a case by case basis using statutory professional judgment authority. Approving appeals on a ‘blanket’ basis is prohibited. All decisions must be made based on the student’s submitted appeal and supporting documentation.

Colleges are urged to be flexible in the documentation requirements for appeals submitted based on COVID-19. For example, under normal circumstances if a student indicated they experienced a medical condition, medical documentation would be required. But based on current conditions, students were encouraged to not visit their doctors for some conditions and this should be considered when reviewing appeals.

Q: How will this affect grade distribution reports?

A: As many colleges currently use S/U grading, it may already appear on your grade distribution report. As it is likely to be used more, it will show up like any other grade. When aggregating data, an S could be an A, B, or C; and a U could be a D or an F.

Q: Why do my students have a zero term GPA?

A: As S/U grades do not count in GPA, it is possible for a student to receive a zero GPA for the term. This could affect several situations:

- When reporting back to a donor or foundation, they may question why there is a zero GPA. You can explain that a different grading mode was offered during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- When reviewing students for academic suspension, please note that students who choose a ‘S’ satisfactory in lieu of a letter grade will not see an increase in their GPA and could become or remain ineligible as a result. Please consider this an extraordinary circumstance and consider whether or not the student should be allowed to continue or return to good standing rather than suspending them when they did make academic progress.
Q: Does HLC have issues about changing grade schemes without prior approval?

A: HLC has now posted several additions to their Coronavirus updates, including supportive, temporary policies on offering a P/F (or S/U) option, ending a term early, and less completion for incompletes. All of its information can be found here. Note specifically under “answers to frequently asked questions” the section on “assignment of grades.” This specifies that HLC will not be making decisions on grade scheme so long as academic rigor and integrity are met. Institutions who seem to contradict their own policies on grading should submit a document stating how this change will not impact integrity or rigor. Keep checking back with the HLC Coronavirus Update for more.

Q: What happens for students taking a CCCOnline class?

A: Students in CCCOnline classes with questions on the grading scheme will follow the College’s process and work with an adviser on deciding if the option is right for them. Then, after students complete their CCCOnline courses and earn grades, they can request a grade change to S/U after the fact.
Student Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: What is Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory?

A: ‘S’atisfactory / ‘U’nsatisfactory is similar to Pass/Fail. If you are receiving a ‘C’ or better, you can request your grade be changed to “Satisfactory”; if you are receiving a grade below a ‘C’ you can request your grade be changed to “Unsatisfactory”. ‘S’atisfactory and ‘U’nsatisfactory grades do not count in your GPA. If you are doing well in most courses, ‘S’atisfactory / ‘U’nsatisfactory could be used to prevent one class from bringing down your GPA. It is best to discuss what is right for you with your faculty or instructor and/or an advisor. If you are receiving a D or F grade, you could request a ‘U’ and have it not count against you in your GPA.

Q: Why would I choose Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory?

A: We understand that the COVID-19 pandemic has likely affected you, your family, your job, and many other aspects of your life. Allowing an ‘S’atisfactory / ‘U’nsatisfactory grading option may be helpful to you as you try to balance your life during this unprecedented time with the move to remote delivery. Further, national data shows that students who don’t normally take online classes often don’t do as well as they would in traditional classes. This can have an impact on completion and GPA and should be considered in the decision making process.

Q: What if I choose Satisfactory / Unsatisfactory for every class?

A: If you choose ‘S’atisfactory / ‘U’nsatisfactory for all courses, your term GPA could be 0.00 for the term. However, if you have ‘S’atisfactory courses, you will still be making progress towards your degree or certificate depending on your program requirements. It is best to talk to your faculty and instructors as well an advisor to determine if this option is best.
Q: How does S/U affect transfer to a university?

A: This depends on where the student plans to transfer:
   • For in-state transfer to a Colorado university within the Statewide Transfer Articulation Agreements (and Degrees with Designation), the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) is recommending all universities to accept Pass/Satisfactory grades in transfer during this time period. Their guidance is embedded here:
     [CDHE Academic and Student Service Guidance COVID19 final 032720.pdf]
   • For out-of-state universities, students and their advisors should check with individual institutions. In some cases a class required for admissions may need to be repeated.

Q: I am a student athlete. How will this affect my eligibility?

A: According to NJCAA rules, all P/F (or S/U) grades count as a ‘C’. Therefore, student athletes need to work with their instructors, athletic directors, and advisors to determine if selecting an S/U grade is the right choice as it can impact academic standing and athletic eligibility.

Q: I am getting a B and worry it will bring down my GPA?

A: A ‘S’atisfactory grade will not affect your GPA, however a ‘S’atisfactory” grade is a ‘C’ or better. If your program requires a ‘B’ or better, choosing a ‘S’atisfactory grade could mean your course no longer counts towards your program requirements.

Q: I am getting a C. Should I take an Incomplete or switch to Satisfactory?

A: You may elect to take an incomplete if you believe you will be able to finish the class with a grade better than a ‘C’, especially if your program requires a ‘B’ or better. If you choose an incomplete and are not able to complete it, your grade will become an ‘F’ and affect your GPA. For Spring 2020, incompletes will get extended time for completion, from one semester to three. If you do not believe you will be able to complete your class, converting your ‘C’ to a ‘S’atisfactory will allow you to still receive a passing grade, without a ‘C’ bringing down your GPA.
Q: I am on academic probation, how will Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory affect me?

A: Because ‘S’atisfactory and ‘U’nsatisfactory grades do not affect your GPA, both options could negatively impact you and possibly put you on suspension. However, if you are not able to pass your classes with a ‘C’ or better, choosing ‘U’nsatisfactory will prevent you from lowering your GPA further. An advisor can help you determine what would be the right choice for your specific situation.

Q: How will Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory affect my financial aid?

A: If you receive an ‘U’nsatisfactory grade, it will count against financial aid completion, just like getting a ‘D’ or ‘F’. If you receive a ‘S’atisfactory grade, it will still count towards financial aid completion, similar to a ‘C’ or better.

NOTE: While the S/U does not impact the student GPA, some students may be impacted.

For example:
At the end of the fall term you were placed in an ‘ineligible for Financial Aid’ status. Prior to the spring term, you submitted an appeal to the Financial Aid Office. The appeal was approved for the spring term based on the condition that you successfully complete 100% of your coursework during the term with a 2.5 or greater GPA.

If you requested all ‘S’ grades for the spring, you will have satisfied the completion condition but your term GPA would be a 0.00. You would not meet the requirements of your conditional appeal approval and may be placed back into an ineligible status.

Students are encouraged to seek advising from the Financial Aid Office for guidance based on your individual situation. Appeals related to COVID-19 will be given the special consideration allowed under CARES Act guidance.