FAQs on Spring 2020 New Regulations

Q: I am a Department Chair and I would like to understand how things differ from previous quarters when it comes to S/NC.

A: Senate Regulations leave to Department Chairs, as in the past, the authority to decide in each individual case whether to allow an S/NC course to count towards the major requirements of an undergraduate student in your Department (Senate Regulation R1.2.3). As it is quite possible that such requests may be more common than in the past, we urge chairs to be flexible and proactive in exercising this authority, and confirm that chairs may delegate the approval of petitions to count an S/NC course towards a student’s major requirements to professional advising staff. Chairs should provide criteria and guidelines for which petitions may be automatically approved, and which will still require the chair’s individual review. For example, chairs might delegate approval for lower-division courses, or for “additional courses” towards the major but not core requirements, or such other criteria that reflect the department’s best judgment.

Withdrawals

Q: I’m thinking about dropping a course, and even if I drop, my academic load will be at least 12 units. What are the possible consequences, and what is the timeline?

A: Within the first two weeks any student can withdraw from a course without any approval. Starting the beginning of the third week, and until the end of the eighth week, you need the authorization of your advisor (Senate Regulation R1.1.4). If you drop by week eight (for Spring Quarter 2020 only), your transcript will not mention the withdrawal (“W”) (Senate Regulation R1.1.5). If you want to drop after the end of week eight, you will need to ask for the authorization of your Dean, who will decide on a case-by-case basis; in case of authorization, you will have a “W” in the transcript. Remember that a “W” has no impact on your GPA nor is, in any form, a “punitive” grade; it is just a record that you were enrolled for part of the quarter. While you decide the best option for you, take advantage of all the resources UCR can offer to help you make that decision. If you feel overwhelmed by the course or remote instruction, contact the Instructor or the TA; they can assist you in navigating this new environment and help troubleshoot difficulties you are facing. Your academic advisor can help you consider major-specific consequences and other implications, and possible alternatives.

Q: If I drop a course, can I enroll in a different one?
A: You can add a class by yourself until the second week, and with the authorization of your advisor and the instructor of the new class during week three (Senate Regulation R1.1.3). Before you drop a course, it is a good idea to explore other options; this would keep you on track with your graduation time. Note that the window is quite narrow (end of week three!) so be proactive about it.

Q: I’m thinking about dropping a course and doing so will drop my academic load below 12 units. How can I withdraw, and what are the possible consequences?

A: Dropping below the 12 units limit may cause serious consequences, including the loss of financial aid eligibility, and may jeopardize the possibility of Continued Registration (Senate Regulation R7.2). Because of that, you can be authorized to drop below 12 units only by the Dean (Senate Regulation R1.1.4). Unless extraordinary circumstances warrant it, you should avoid dropping a class if that pushes you below the 12 unit limit. Consult your academic advisor if you need to further investigate the issue.

Pass-No Pass (S/NC) grade options

Q: I’m thinking of taking one or more courses for an S/NC grade because of stress or other issues during the Spring 2020 quarter. When must I make that decision?

A: Students have until the end of the eighth week to file a petition to change their grading basis from letter-grade to S/NC. (Senate Regulation R1.1.6) Not all courses offer S/NC grading, but it is an option for most undergraduate courses. (You can check the Banner listing for the course at classes.ucr.edu, which will list the possible ‘Grading Modes’ in the Catalog link of the Class Details pane). This deadline has not changed in Spring 2020. After registration is final, you may need to file a petition to change the grading basis of any course from ‘letter grade’ to ‘S/NC’, and these petitions can be submitted until the end of week eight.

The decision whether to take a course for a letter grade or S/NC rests with you. Your instructors may suggest that S/NC status could be more appropriate for some courses this Spring, because of the sudden shift to remote learning methods, but you make the final decision. Taking one or more courses on an S/NC basis may also have implications for your financial aid (especially for Veterans), if you are planning to apply to Professional Schools or Graduate Programs, and for other reasons, so it’s wise to get advice from your academic advisor before making this decision.

Q: Can I take as many courses for S/NC grades as I wish? What consequences will S/NC grades have, now or later in my career?

A: Normally, students are limited to taking no more than 1/3 of their total units (undertaken and passed) for an S/NC grade (Senate Regulation 1.2.3). However, because of the stresses and dislocation during Spring 2020, courses taken for an S/NC grade during this quarter will not be counted towards the 1/3 limit. You should still consult with an advisor before taking additional S/NC courses. If you
receive Veterans’ benefits, if you are trying to improve your GPA, or if you are considering competitive graduate education, you should be sure to consult with your academic advisor, the Veterans’ Affairs office, or the Financial Aid office before changing some or all of your Spring 2020 courses to S/NC grading.

Q: Will a course in my major still count for graduation if I change it to S/NC?

A: S/NC courses normally cannot be counted towards your major requirements for your BA or BS degree. However, department chairs and program directors have the authority to make exceptions if you submit a petition to your department or program. Each department and program will decide which courses will still qualify for the major if taken S/NC in Spring 2020 (Senate Regulation R1.2.3). The Academic Senate is encouraging everyone involved to be flexible and generous in reviewing these petitions. In some cases, your academic advisor or your department's enrollment manager will be able to approve your petition to count an S/NC course towards your degree requirements. You must request permission to count an S/NC course toward your major requirements through a petition. This means that it is very important for you to consult with your academic advisor before changing the grading basis of any course you expect to count toward your major’s requirements. Your advisor can also tell you whether the course you are considering for S/NC grading is a prerequisite (with letter grade) for other courses in your major, which could affect your decision as well.