



## Proposal for Temporary Grading Scheme under Exceptional Academic Measures - Year-Long (2019/20) and Winter 2020 Courses

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In light of the COVID-19 global health pandemic, Lakehead University rapidly switched to an online learning environment on Wednesday March 18, 2020. In a very short period of time, our students have experienced significant changes with respect to their learning environment, living arrangements, employment and financial matters, along with overall health and wellbeing concerns for themselves as well as their loved ones.

Given the extraordinary challenges faced by students and faculty during these unprecedented times, post-secondary institutions are implementing **temporary** changes to letter grading schemes in recognition of the impact on student learning. Each institution is taking a different approach. Appendix A summarizes approaches being taken by universities across the country.

With Lakehead's unique and highly underrepresented student population, a student-centred approach is highly recommended that provides students with flexibility to account for their own academic and personal challenges faced and mitigate anxiety. This is similar to the approach taken by the University of British Columbia (UBC).

### **Recommendation:**

The Senate of Lakehead University to approve under an emergency motion to:

1. Permit a one-time alteration to the course grading scheme (for Year-Long 2019/20 and Winter 2020 courses only) to include a new transcript notation of Pass/Fail (with no numeric value)
2. Temporarily alter University Regulation X "Withdrawal" (c) Petitions

Late withdrawal without academic penalty may be allowed in cases of illness or other compelling circumstances. A student seeking withdrawal for such reasons must petition the Registrar in writing within two months of the release of final grades, with supporting documentation. In the case of illness a Medical Certificate is required. The Registrar will then consult with the instructor or, if the instructor is not accessible, the Chair/Director of the instructor's academic unit. If the petition is granted, "W" (withdrew) will be assigned to the course. "W" is not considered a mark. In all other cases withdrawal from courses is not permitted after the deadline has passed.

to allow students (for Year-Long 2019/20 and Winter 2020 courses only) to voluntarily "late withdrawal" from a course(s) after receipt of their final grade without submission of a formal Petition.



**The following outlines how this proposal would work:**

For Year-Long 2019/20 and Winter 2020 term courses, Lakehead University will:

- Provide all students with a numeric grade for each of their course(s). Instructors will submit their final grades as per the normal process through myInfo no later than April 23, 2020.
- Upon receipt of the numeric grade, for each course, students will have the option to:

Option 1: Keep the numeric grade;

Option 2: Convert the numeric grade to a Pass/Fail\* (\* a Passing grade would be granted for numeric marks greater than or equal to 50% (undergraduate courses) and 60% (graduate courses); a new transcript notation will be created PCR (Pass credit) and FNC (Fail no credit) with no numeric values associated. This new transcript notation would only be used in the future with the approval of the Senate.

Option 3: Late withdrawal/drop\* the course with no academic penalty and no requirement to submit a Petition for Late Withdrawal (\*no financial refund associated). Students will receive a "W" on their transcript, and will not receive any credit. The Late Withdrawal option will become available to students upon approval by Senate to allow students the opportunity to withdraw earlier should they choose.

Exception: For the Faculty of Law, University Regulation X Withdrawal (c) Petitions will apply.

Note: If a student receives an "Incomplete (INC)" grade, upon receipt of the numeric grade as per the University Regulation "Incomplete Standing" (e)(f), students will be permitted to select from the above options within 7 days.

### **Logistics:**

- An online tool will be created by TSC/ERP to allow students the opportunity to select the options they choose for their 2019/20 Full Year term course(s) and/or Winter 2020 term course(s).
- Students will be required to submit their Grade Replacement Request to Enrolment Services by April 30, 2020. If students do not inform Enrolment Services by this date, the numeric grade will stand on the students' transcript.
  - Graduating students will have their Grade Replacement Request information released first in order to continue with graduation assessments to meet the May 11 Senate date (approval of the graduands).
- If a student chooses Pass/Fail or late withdrawal, the numeric grade will remain in the student system. The chosen notation will appear on the students' transcript.

### **Terms and Conditions:**

- A PCR (Pass) grade will count as a credit towards program requirements, but will not be included in the average calculation. If the course with a PCR grade is a prerequisite for another course, it will be counted as such.
- A FNC (Fail) will not count as a credit towards program requirements, nor will it be included in the average calculation.
- Only courses with passing numeric grades (50% or higher for undergraduate courses; 60% or higher for graduate courses) can be replaced with a PCR (Pass); incomplete grades cannot be replaced. Only courses with numeric grades below 50% (undergraduate) or below 60% (graduate) can be replaced with FNC.
- A FNC will not count as a failed course attempt per *University Regulation V Standing (h) Repeating Courses*.
- Courses with a PCR or FNC grade value will appear on the official and unofficial transcript.
- PCR and FNC revisions are final, cannot be reversed or appealed, and do not allow for a tuition rebate.
- Students must carefully consider potential impacts in choosing to replace a numeric grade with a PCR or FNC grade. Students are advised to seek advice from their Program Chair as needed before submitting the Grade Replacement Request by the deadline.
- Exception: In the event a student is found in violation of the Lakehead University Academic Integrity Code, the numeric grade for the course(s) will stand (if a student elected the option for a Pass/Fail or W Late Withdrawal, it will be reverted to the numeric grade).

**Special Exams:**

Special Exams will be temporarily suspended for Year-Long 2019/20 and Winter 2020 courses given these various options made available to students. Special Exams would resume for future terms.

Exception: Special Exams will continue for the Faculty of Law.

**Impact on Various Academic Matters:**

- Students that choose Pass/Fail will have the numeric grades from their previous term(s), along with any numeric grades from the current term, used to calculate their average for academic matters such as:
  - Academic standing/progression
  - First class standing
  - Medals
  - Renewable entrance scholarships
- Students considering transferring to another post-secondary institution or interested in applying to post graduate/graduate studies may want to consider keeping the numeric grade as each post-secondary institution will treat the Pass/Fail based on their own admission policies.
- Students will be encouraged to seek academic advice before submitting their request

### **Appendix A: Summary of Post-Secondary Institution Responses to Temporary Grading Scheme Changes due to COVID-19**

Universities have been addressing the extraordinary challenges being faced by students and faculty by converting to alternate grading schemes, including Pass/Fail. The following outlines information currently available:

| <b>University</b>              | <b>Implementing a Pass/Fail Option</b>  | <b>If yes, when do students select Pass/Fail</b>            | <b>Extending Deadline to Drop a Course</b>   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|--|
| University of British Columbia | Yes – students able to change any grades to P/F if these choose   | After final grades released                                 | Yes – after final grades received  |
| University of Alberta          | Yes – P/F for all courses   |   | Yes – last date of classes   |
| Brock University               | Yes   | After final grades released                                 | Yes – after final grades released  |
| Carleton University            | Yes – being explored (no further details)   |   | Yes – last date of classes   |
| Nipissing University           | Yes   | Under exceptional circumstances after final grades released | Yes – after final grades received May 1  |
| Ontario Tech                   | Yes – ad hoc basis determined by the Faculty  | After final grades released                                 | Yes – last date of classes   |
| Queen’s University             | Yes   | On appeal after grades are posted                           | Yes – after final grades received - early May  |
| Ryerson University             | Yes – students able to change any grades to Credit/No Credit new grade designation if they choose       | After final grades released                                 | Yes – last date of classes   |
| Trent University               | Yes – limited basis for exceptional cases only where it is not possible for the student to complete the | Prior to final grades being released                        | No (using pre-existing options like late withdrawal – added a self-declaration option) |



|                               | required course assessment  |  |  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|--|
| University of Guelph          | Yes – Pass only   | After final grades released                                | Yes – after final grades received - May 20 |
| University of Ottawa          | Yes, decision made by the instructor  | After final marks received                                 | Yes – last date of classes                 |
| University of Toronto – Arts  | Yes Credit/No Credit grade designation in place due to previous labour strike | Will be decided by the student after they see their grades |  |
| University of Windsor         | Yes   | After final grades released                                | Yes – last date of classes                 |
| University of Western Ontario | Yes   | Will be decided by the professor                           | Yes – last date of classes                 |
| York University               | Yes   | May 9  | Yes - after final grades received - May 9  |