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UW-Madison offers students option to receive pass-fail grades this semester amid COVID-19 pandemic

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Kelly Meyerhofer | Wisconsin State Journal

Mar 27, 2020



A group of students listens during a lecture on UW-Madison's campus in 2018.

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UW-Madison students can skip the letter grades this semester, one of several recently announced measures by the university to offer flexibility during the pandemic.

Under the new policy, students will still receive grades for each class they take, but they now have the option to receive on their transcript a pass or fail designation related to the coronavirus. Students must decide by May 22, eight days after final grades are due.



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"Recognizing that our lives have been significantly impacted by COVID-19, our grading and credit policies must adapt," UW-Madison provost John Karl Scholz said in a **message to the university community**.

The pass-fail option will be available for most courses, but Scholz said there may be some course exceptions, such as those with rules related to program accreditation or strict degree requirements.



UW students scramble as COVID-19 coronavirus empties dorms, shifts classes online

Kelly Meyerhofer | Wisconsin State Journal , Emily Hamer | Wisconsin State Journal

Another step UW-Madison has taken to ease the anxiety associated with the coronavirus: the extension of the so-called "tenure clock."

Junior faculty members typically have a certain number of years before their university reviews their body of work and decides whether to grant tenure, an indefinite academic appointment that provides broad job protections most workers lack.

"Given the unprecedented challenges we face due to the COVID-19 crisis, it is unreasonable to expect that all assistant professors are able to make normal progress toward tenure in all areas of faculty activity: teaching, research, and service," Scholz said in a **Wednesday announcement**.

With academic conferences canceled, courses moved online, research reduced, or in some cases suspended, and personal obligations greater for many than it was pre-pandemic, faculty can now request a COVID-19 related extension.

UW-Madison's new pass-fail policy and tenure clock extension are similar to measures taken by universities across the country.



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