

To: JSU Graduate Students

From: Office of Academic Affairs and Division of Graduate Studies

RE: Graduate Alternative Grading Policy for Spring 2020

Date: April 21, 2020

Alternative Graduate Grading Option in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

After conferring with an extensive group of stakeholders including the Division of Graduate Studies, the Graduate Council (who also conferred with Graduate Faculty in their respective departments), and administrators in all colleges, the Jackson State University Office of Academic Affairs is endorsing/advocating the utilization of "Incomplete-I" and "In Progress-IP" grade options for graduate students in response to the Coronavirus Crisis during the Spring 2020 semester. Furthermore, it was considered more permissible that graduate programs not opt in to the same alternative grading option plan advanced for undergraduate programs due to the significant concerns regarding external accreditation issues for graduate programs, student transcript evaluation by other universities and employers, and maintaining the University's Carnegie Designation as a High Research Institution. Because of the concerns for ethical grade management during this time, alternate grade options have been recommended by the Jackson State University Graduate Division for the Spring 2020 semester. The policy and FAQs on special situations are discussed below.

Policy for Graduate Course Grading for Spring 2020

Graduate professors must rely on sound judgment and academic experience, balanced with magnanimity, when assigning final grades to students enrolled in graduate courses at Jackson State University (JSU) for the Spring 2020 semester. Consequently, it is recommended that graduate faculty utilize "Incomplete-I" and "In Progress-IP" grading options for students who have articulated any difficulty in completing assignments this semester due to health concerns, financial hardship, work-related conflicts, electronic access, equipment problems, etc.

These options are defined herein:

Incomplete Option: For students who have completed more than 50% of the coursework and have maintained satisfactory progress on the assignments completed, it is recommended that the graduate professor use the "I" grade option, providing the student with a specified period of time to complete assignments (November 15, 2020).

In Progress Option: For students who have completed less than 50% of the coursework and have unsatisfactory progress on 50% or more of the assigned coursework, it is

endorsed that the graduate professor use the "IP" grade option, providing the student with a longer but specified period of time to complete assignments (April 15, 2021).

Both the "I" and "IP" options should be accompanied by a contract that must be signed (electronically or in person via U.S. mail) by the student and graduate professor assigned to the course. The contract should stipulate the final date that all outstanding assignments are due and the tentative date that the grade change should be assigned in P.A.W.S. for the course. A sample contract for review will be developed by the Division of Graduate Studies (with input from the Graduate Council) for approval by the JSU Office of Academic Affairs. The completed contract will be retained in the student's records in the Academic Department with copies being maintained by the student, professor, and department chair.

The "I" and "IP" grades will have no impact on the student's grade point average (GPA).

- Students who receive an "A" or "B" grade in a course will have their grades posted as earned.

- Students who would receive a C, D, or F grade will, in consultation with the assigned professor, be assigned an "I" or "IP" grade, depending on their progress in the course. The "I" or "IP" will appear on the student's transcript and will not count for course credit nor be used in GPA calculations. When outstanding assignments are completed, a final grade will be assigned to replace the "I"/"IP", and the final letter grade will then become a part of the student's GPA.

If a contract is satisfactorily fulfilled before the final due date, the assigned graduate professor should evaluate and grade the assignments and issue the final grade at that time.

Spring 2020 Graduate Grading FAQs

How does an I or IP grade impact my GPA?

The "I" and "IP" grades will not impact your GPA in any way, positively or negatively.

What if my final grade for a class is a "C"?

If your final grade is a "C" and you are eligible to earn two "C" grades, after consultation with your assigned professor, you may request that the "C" grade be posted as your final grade. However, if other circumstances (such as those named above) have impeded your performance and progress in the course, you may be assigned an "I" grade and work toward the completion of assignments considered necessary by the assigned professor.

How does the "I" grade work?

If you have completed more than 50% of the coursework and have maintained satisfactory progress on the assignments completed, the professor can use the "I" grade option, providing you with a specified period of time to complete assignments (November 15, 2020) and receive a final grade.

How does the “IP” grade work?

If you have completed less than 50% of the coursework and have made unsatisfactory progress on 50% or more of the assigned coursework, the professor can use the "IP" grade option, providing you with a longer but specified period of time to complete assignments (April 15, 2021) and receive a final grade.

Where do I get a contract for the “I” or “IP” grade?

The contract form will be developed by the Division of Graduate Studies, in consultation with the Graduate Council, and made available to graduate professors before May 1, 2020. The contract will basically include outstanding assignments, the final due date, and signature spaces for the assigned professor and the student.

What if I don’t fulfill the stipulations of my contract: complete all assignments by the due date?

You will be assigned the permanent letter grade earned by the due date.

What if my final grade for a class is not posted by May 6, 2020, and I am a graduating student?

If you have an “I” (Incomplete) grade or an “IP” (In Progress) grade by May 6, 2020, your degree will not be awarded until a final passing grade is earned. If this grade is a “C” and you are eligible to earn two “C” grades, your degree can be awarded. If your degree is not awarded for Spring 2020, you will need to reapply for graduation clearance during a later semester in which the final grade(s) is awarded.