

Dear Students,

The global health pandemic has upended many of our best-laid plans. The Law School's plans for continued in-person instruction and in-person events in March and April were quickly dashed when we learned the full reach of the oncoming crisis. And clearly, we are not out of the woods yet. Many of you and your families are facing personal hardships in this unprecedented time. Please know you are in our thoughts daily. The collective health and safety of our community remains first and foremost on our minds.

The subject of how we will finish the semester—in particular, the grading of courses—is one that has attracted the attention of many, including many of our own students and faculty. And it is safe to say that opinions vary on the appropriate path forward in light of the circumstances. Unfortunately, there are no options without significant downside consequences. All we can do is our best, based on the information available to us and our commitment to Jesuit, humanistic principles and values that guide our decision-making.

I have received thoughtful input and opinions from a variety of students and faculty on this subject, including a recommendation from the Law School's Academic Affairs Committee that all courses for the Spring semester be Pass/Fail. Ultimately the issue of how grades are recorded on a transcript is an administrative determination. Accordingly, the decision I announce below is one arrived at with the guidance and full support of our University academic leadership, including most importantly our Provost and Senior Vice President, Dr. Deena González, and our President, Dr. Thayne McCulloh.

Our guiding principles in arriving at the decision announced below were several, including recognition of and sensitivity to the following concerns: (1) individual circumstances, beyond the individual's reasonable ability to predict or control; (2) the importance of academic decision-making and integrity in the evaluation and assessment of students' academic performance, and a desire to preserve the academic freedom of each faculty member; (3) equity and fairness; (4) the agency and freedom for individual students to make choices that may impact their lives and careers; and (5) the Law School's interest and obligation, to students and the public, to provide a rigorous legal education, complete with assessment mechanisms, amidst this unanticipated and dramatic interruption to the semester.

In view of the above, the following policy is hereby announced, applicable to all law students in all years, for the Spring 2020 semester only:

- **For those courses with final exams, final exams will be administered remotely, pursuant to guidance provided by the Law School's Academic Affairs Committee and approved by the faculty**
 - More information on the administration of final exams will be forthcoming from the Registrar's Office and individual faculty, once the above has occurred
 - No in-person examinations at the Law School will be offered this semester
- **Faculty must submit letter grades to the Registrar's Office by 11 a.m. on Friday, May 29, 2020**

- Grades submitted must be in accordance with rules established in the Student Handbook
- Students should not expect to see their grades immediately upon submission by faculty
- **Students have until Monday, June 8th to elect to receive a Pass/Fail grade instead of a letter grade for any course they are taking for credit**
 - The Registrar's Office will provide subsequent information on how students wishing to do so can elect to receive a Pass/Fail grade for a given course
 - A student's decision to elect Pass/Fail will not be communicated to any of the student's professors
 - Students will have an opportunity to see their letter grades after they are submitted, and before the June 8th deadline for electing Pass/Fail
 - The option to select Pass/Fail can be made on a course-by-course basis
 - The option to select Pass/Fail grading for a given course is irrevocable once made
 - Students are encouraged to consult with their academic advisor in considering whether to elect the Pass/Fail option for any course
 - For purposes of receiving a Pass, a student must achieve a final letter grade of D or higher in the course
 - Students who receive a Fail in a required course must retake the course the next time it is offered (and will not be charged tuition for the second time they take the course); the grade they earn the second time they take the course will not be averaged with the prior Fail grade
 - Students who are concerned about failing one or more courses, due to life circumstances beyond their control, are encouraged to consult Assistant Dean Little to determine whether they should pursue a leave of absence from the Law School; such leaves will be liberally granted by my office for good cause shown
- **Grades recorded on transcripts for the Spring 2020 semester—both letter grades and Pass/Fail grades—will not contribute to cumulative grade point average calculations made by the Law School, now or in the future, nor will the recorded grades be used for purposes of determining class rank or honors designations**
 - All students' transcripts will contain a statement about the extraordinary circumstances of Spring 2020 due to COVID-19
- **No student whose scholarship is conditioned on maintaining a certain GPA will have that scholarship revoked as a result of Spring 2020 grades**
 - At a future date, my office will communicate more information about the retention of conditional scholarships to those who have them
 - For current 1Ls, please note that the retention of your conditional scholarship will not be conditioned simply on Fall 2019 academic performance

In the coming days, the Registrar's Office will communicate with all students and faculty more information about the implementation of the policy set out above. I ask for your patience and understanding of the Registrar's Office as it works toward providing additional written guidance that will answer a number of questions that may be on your mind after reading this policy.

As is often the case in matters involving academic policy, there is no ideal solution that will be uniformly embraced by students and faculty. The President, Provost, and I are aware of that fact in promulgating the policy announced here today. Yet in good faith, after ample study and consideration, we believe the above policy presents the best path forward for our law school at this time. Thank you for your understanding and your continued hard work during this most challenging circumstance. We know it is not easy. But eventually, with collective effort and God's grace, this period will be behind us.

Best regards,

Dean Rooksby

OFFICE OF THE DEAN | [Gonzaga University School of Law](#) | P 509-313-3700