

## Grading Policy for Fall 2020

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A letter grading system with extra flexibility will be in effect during the Fall 2020 semester for both undergraduate and graduate subjects.

For all subjects, the grades that will be recorded include A, B, C, D/NE, and F/NE, where NE indicates that no record will appear on the external transcript. No academic credit will be received for recorded grades of D/NE and F/NE. However, students assigned a grade of D/NE will have the option of electing to accept a grade of D, which will carry with it the associated units since that may be desired in order to fulfill a requirement for graduation. This election must be made by Add Date of the Spring 2021 semester (**Friday, March 5, 2021**).

In addition, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students may elect to have one subject graded PE/NE in the fall semester. This election must be made by Drop Date of the fall semester (**Wednesday, November 18, 2020**). Instructors will not know which students have made this election; this is consistent with current practice whereby such information does not appear on class lists when students elect to take a subject as Sophomore Exploratory, Junior/Senior P/D/F, or Graduate P/D/F.

Sophomores and juniors are under [Phases One and Two of the CUP Experiment](#) and these students will retain the option to designate by Add Date up to three science core GIRs as P/NR in any semester after the first semester of their first year. This is in addition to the option of electing one subject to be graded PE/NE as described above.

First-year undergraduate students will be graded on the normal P/NR basis for all subjects in the fall semester.

Subjects that are normally graded as P/D/F, e.g., some UROPs, will continue to have grades submitted as P, D, or F, but these grades will be recorded by the Registrar as P, D/NE, or F/NE, where NE indicates that no record will appear on the external transcript. No academic credit will be received for recorded grades of D/NE and F/NE. However, students will have the option of changing a D/NE to a D by Add Date of the Spring 2021 semester (**Friday, March 5, 2021**).

**Please note:** A decision on the grading policy for Spring 2021 will be made by the end of the Fall semester. The grading policy for Spring 2021 could be a continuation of the Fall 2020 policy, a return to regular grading, alternate grades, or a different policy altogether. *Please be assured that this decision will be made after a consultative process similar to the one that led to the grading policy for Fall 2020.*

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The following provides additional detail regarding key features of this system:

- (1) Instructors will submit grades of A, B, C, D, or F for all subjects, including for subjects where students have elected the PE/NE option (see 4 below).

Subjects normally graded as P/D/F will continue to have grades submitted as P, D, or F (see 7 below). In accord with the practice in normal years, instructors may also include grade modifiers (+/-). However, these modifiers will only appear on internal grade reports, and term and cumulative grade point averages (internal and external) will be calculated without consideration of the modifiers.

- (2) In the fall semester, the Registrar will automatically translate all grades of F to F/NE. No record of these subjects will appear on the external transcript, and no academic credit will be received for these subjects.
- (3) When a grade of D is submitted by the instructor, the Registrar will automatically translate the grade of D to D/NE. In this case the student may opt to accept the grade of D, which will carry with it the associated credit. This may be desired, for example, in order to fulfill a requirement for graduation. This election must be made by Add Date of the Spring 2021 semester (**Friday, March 5, 2021**), and can be done through the regular add/drop/change online form, with advisor approval. If a student does not choose to accept the grade of D, then no record of the subject will appear on the external transcript and no academic credit will be received for the subject.
- (4) Sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students will have the option to have one subject recorded as PE/NE, where these grades are defined as in *Rules and Regulations 2.64* as follows: PE reflects performance at any of the levels A, B, or C; NE indicates performance at the level of D or F for which no record will appear on the external transcript, and for which no academic credit will be received. The decision to elect this option must be made by Drop Date (**Wednesday, November 18, 2020**), and as for all changes in registration, it must be approved by the student's academic advisor.
  - (a) In the case where students elect the PE/NE option, instructors will submit grades of A, B, C, D, or F. The Registrar will then automatically translate these grades to grades of PE, D/NE, and F/NE for the internal grade reports. However, the external transcript will only show PE for subjects where the final grade submitted is a C- or higher, and no record will appear for subjects graded D/NE and F/NE with the exception indicated below.
  - (b) Students electing the PE/NE option and receiving a D/NE in that subject can elect to accept a grade of D, which will carry with it the associated units. This election requires the approval of the student's advisor and must be made by Add Date of the Spring 2021 semester (**Friday, March 5, 2021**), and can be done through the regular add/drop/change online form.
  - (c) Instructors will not know (from class lists or at the time of submitting grades) which students have elected to have a subject recorded as PE/NE. This is an extension of current practice whereby such information does not appear on

class lists when students elect to take a subject as Sophomore Exploratory, Junior/Senior P/D/F, or Graduate P/D/F.

- (d) This PE/NE option can be applied to any subject, including those used to fulfill General Institute Requirements, minor requirements, and departmental requirements.
  - (e) For undergraduate students, exercising this PE/NE option will not change the number of Junior-Senior P/D/F options remaining or available in future semesters (subject to any emergency policies in effect if there are further significant disruptions).
  - (f) The Committee on Graduate Programs and the Graduate Education subgroup of the Academic Exceptions and Dislocations Team<sup>1</sup> will discuss and provide guidance regarding the situation where a graduate student selects PE/NE for a subject that is counted towards the program's qualifying process/general exams.
- (5) The "normal" [Junior-Senior P/D/F Option](#) and [Graduate P/D/F Option](#) will not be available during Fall 2020. Note that the "normal" Junior-Senior P/D/F and Graduate P/D/F options are more restrictive than this fall's PE/NE option since in contrast to this fall's PE/NE option, they cannot be used for departmental and Institute requirements.
  - (6) Under Phases One and Two of the CUP Experiment, sophomores and juniors will retain the option to designate up to three science core GIRs as P/NR after the first semester of their first year. This is in addition to the option of electing one subject to be graded PE/NE as described above.
  - (7) Subjects that are normally graded as P/D/F, such as UROP subjects, will continue to have grades submitted as P, D, or F. The Registrar's Office will record these grades as P, D/NE, or F/NE. Grades of D/NE and F/NE will not receive academic credit. However, for a grade of D/NE, a student can elect to accept a grade of D, which will carry with it the associated units. Students have the option to change a D/NE to a D by Add Date of the Spring 2021 semester (**Friday, March 5, 2021**).
  - (8) The IE grade option will be available in lieu of the normal grade of I (Incomplete) during Fall 2020. If a minor part of the requirements for a subject is not fulfilled, the instructor can assign a grade of IE, which has a more flexible deadline for completion as compared to the normal grade of I. Grades of IE submitted during Fall 2020 must be resolved by the last day of final exams in Spring 2021. If a student receives a grade of IE and subsequently completes the work, the student's grade will be changed to show IE/final grade. If the IE is received in a subject the student has designated for the PE/NE grading option,

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the Academic Continuity Working Group established in Spring 2020 in response to the pandemic.

then the final grade will show as IE/PE or IE/NE. Note: A grade of IE does not have to be resolved prior to graduation; however, an unresolved IE does not carry credit, and incomplete subjects required for graduation by the Institute or by a departmental program must be completed prior to graduation.

- (9) As in normal semesters, sophomores may designate one subject as Exploratory. With an Exploratory subject, the student can either accept the letter grade awarded or change the class to listener status (in which case no credit is awarded and the subject does not appear on the transcript). This option is in addition to the option to have a subject graded PE/NE, as described in (4) above. Note: If a sophomore designates a subject as Exploratory, they may not elect to have this subject graded PE/NE.
- (10) Grades of OX and IE will resolve to the election made by the student for the subject in Fall 2020, i.e., either (a) ABC D/NE F/NE; or (b) PE/NE. Note: An unexcused O grade is treated as an NE: it receives no academic credit and is not used in the calculation of GPA.
- (11) Instructors will submit grades of A, B, C, D, or F for SB and master's theses that are **completed** during Fall 2020. The same is true for multi-term subjects. As with regular subjects (described above), these will be recorded by the Registrar's Office as A, B, C, D/NE, F/NE. Grades of D/NE and F/NE will not carry academic credit. However, a student can elect to accept a grade of D, which will carry with it the associated units, since that may be desired in order to fulfill a requirement for graduation. This election must be made by Add Date of the Spring 2021 semester (**Friday, March 5, 2021**), requires approval of the advisor, and can be done through the regular add/drop/change online. In addition, a student can also elect the PE/NE option (described above) to apply to a thesis or multi-term subject that a student is completing during Fall 2020. The decision to elect this option must be made by Drop Date (**Wednesday, November 18, 2020**), and as for all changes in registration, it must be approved by the student's academic advisor.
- (12) Instructors will submit a J or a U grade for SB and master's theses that are **not** completed during Fall 2020, and a T grade for multi-term subjects that are **not** completed during Fall 2020.
- (13) The SA grade applies as usual to doctoral theses completed during Fall 2020.
- (14) For sophomores, juniors, and seniors, Advanced Standing Exams (ASEs) taken in Summer 2020 or during the Fall 2020 semester will be graded A, B, C, D/NE, F/NE, since they will appear on the Fall 2020 grade report/transcript and that is the grading system in effect for Fall 2020. A, B, and C will appear on the external record as A&, B&, and C&. D/NE and F/NE will appear on the internal record as D/NE& and F/NE&. Upperclass students assigned a grade of D/NE will have the option of electing to accept a grade of D, which will carry with it the

associated units and which will appear on the external record as D&; this election must be made by Add Date of the Spring 2021 semester (**Friday, March 5, 2021**). **Note:** The PE/NE option **cannot** be applied to ASEs.

- (15) For first-year students, Advanced Standing Exams (ASEs) taken in Summer 2020 or during the Fall 2020 semester will be graded P, D, or F. A passing grade appears on the external record as P&. D and F appear only on the internal record, as DN& and FN&.
- (16) For first-year undergraduate students in the first semester and in the Independent Activities Period, the only passing grade permanently recorded by the Registrar will be P. The key elements of this grading scheme will remain in effect, including the reporting of hidden grades to the Registrar. The first-year credit limit for the Fall also remains in effect (48 units + 9 units of Discovery Subjects), and Early Sophomore Standing will not be offered.
- (17) The grades submitted for MIT students who cross-register for subjects at Harvard or Wellesley will be recorded by the MIT Registrar's Office according to the grading policies described above. Students may use the PE/NE designation on a cross-registered subject.

In addition to these changes in grading policy, APART also notes the following:

While anxiety over grades contributes to the stress and pressure experienced by MIT students, APART believes that the methods of assessment employed in classes play a comparable or even more significant role, particularly in this time of public health risks and anxiety due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Noting this, and noting also that all students will be remote after November 20, APART urges instructors to de-emphasize "high stakes" end-of-term methods of evaluation such as final exams, favoring instead lower stakes assessments distributed over the course of the semester. Examples could include multiple quizzes, problem sets, shorter projects or papers, oral mini-exams, and student presentations or demos.

Students with difficult home learning environments have the option to apply to return to campus via the Student Housing Assistance Review Process (SHARP).

Many students rely on study groups, p-setting groups, and other means of collaboration as part of their learning process. To support and facilitate this during this period of remote learning, MIT is providing any undergraduate student who requests it a loan of an Apple iPad and Apple Pencil free of charge.

Finally, in the event that the conditions of the pandemic worsen significantly during the fall, it is possible that a system of alternate grades ("universal" PE/NE) could be mandated for all subjects as was the case in the spring.

Details on the definitions of specific grades and how they are to be awarded, unless superseded by the Emergency Regulations above, can be found in Section 2.60 of *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty*: <https://facultygovernance.mit.edu/rules-and-regulations#2-60-grades>.