

Temporary Graduate School Policies

in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

Approved by Graduate Council, 4/1/2020
Approved by Academic Council, 4/6/2020

The following policies will apply to courses offered during the Spring and Summer 2020 semesters.

If it is impossible for students enrolled in a particular class to meet the learning objectives of the class or gain the rich experiences planned for the class, course requirements may be fulfilled at the request of a Graduate Program Director and with the approval of the Academic Unit Head, in any of the following ways:

- Courses may be offered in an alternative manner, such as through online experiences or simulations, if it is possible to meet the ultimate goals of the course such as developing certain expertise, acquiring skills and/or preparing students for licensure.
- A course may be suspended, and students given the opportunity to continue during a future semester without cost or penalty. With this option, students should receive the grade of Incomplete (I) at the end of the semester. Incompletes may be extended until such time that the course may be completed. Course completion should begin as soon as conditions permit.
- Summer 2020 courses may be postponed until a future term (Fall 2020, Spring 2021 or Summer 2021). Continuous enrollment (GRAD 597) will continue to be required. *(TGS will explore whether document continuance tuition can be waived for students who could not complete their document because resources were not available to complete necessary work due to COVID-19.)*
- The grading scheme for all students enrolled in the class may be adjusted from letter grades to Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) at the discretion of the course instructor and approval of the Program Director and/or the Academic Unit Head. The “satisfactory” grade will fulfill degree requirements. Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory grades will not affect students’ grade point average. A change of grading scheme must be submitted to the Registrar by April 27, and the Graduate School needs to be copied

on the request. Such request need to indicate Class Subject, Course Number and Course Section.

- Individual students who do not perform well in a course can request from the instructor a WP or WF grade instead of a letter grade. This grade can be recorded by instructors when reporting final grades. WP and WF grades do not count towards a student's GPA and the student does not earn credit for the course; the WF grade will not trigger student suspensions.

Student Initiated Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U) Option

At the request of a course instructor, and subject to the discretion of the Graduate Program Director or Academic Unit Head, course instructors can allow individual students in their course to change their grading scheme to Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U). The deadline for faculty to request changes in their course's grading scheme is April 27. The deadline for students to change their grading scheme from a letter grade to S/U is May 11.

An Academic Unit Head or graduate program director may discourage individual student grade-scheme changes because:

- When transcripts are compared, students who earn a grade of "Satisfactory" may not be perceived to have achieved the same level of competence as students who earn grades of "A" or "B," putting these students at a competitive disadvantage.
- For graduate students, "A" and "B" are considered fully acceptable grades. Students may also receive up to two "C" grades, which is a passing grade for an individual course. Students who earn three "C" grades are dismissed. In addition, students who earn single grades of "F" or "U" are **dismissed**.
- Graduate students often use their transcripts to obtain licenses to practice, and not having letter grades on the transcript may make it difficult for the student to demonstrate their competency in a subject area to a licensing board.

If the grading scheme for a student is changed to Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory a Satisfactory grade will fulfill degree requirements. Satisfactory and Unsatisfactory grades will not affect a student's grade point average. Note that the decision to switch to the S/U grading scheme is irreversible.

Time to Degree Exception

Students impacted by COVID-19 may request exceptions to Policy 1370 – Time Limitations, granting them additional time to complete their degree.

Scholarly Document Submission Deadlines

Final Documents (Thesis, Dissertation, and Research Projects) are typically due in the office of the Graduate School on April 15. These projects should be submitted as soon as possible but must be submitted by May 7 to be eligible for a May 2020 conferral date. Students who could not meet this deadline **can be assigned a grade of “I” for the spring semester and will not be expected to enroll in a document continuance course for the summer semester. Students in this situation would be expected to submit their document by June 26 to be eligible for an August 2020 conferral date.**

Program Directors should notify the graduate school which students are receiving incompletes for their final document course to allow us to exempt these students from summer enrollment and include them on our list of students who are expected to complete their project by the August deadline. If more time is needed, the student should enroll in the appropriate final document continuance course. *(TGS will explore continuance fee waivers for students with extenuating circumstances.)*

Withdrawal from Courses or the University

Due to the impact of COVID-19 on university operations, JMU is extending the Spring 2020 course withdrawal deadline to April 24 for semester-long and Second Block (7W2) courses. This additional time will give students five weeks in which to acclimate to the new online course delivery method and assess their ability or desire to continue in the course.

Students who decide to withdraw from individual Spring 2020 courses may do so via MyMadison through 11:59 p.m. on April 24. Withdrawal from a course will not reduce tuition charges. Course withdrawal will result in the assignment of a grade of “W” and has no bearing on students’ GPA. Students are strongly advised to consult with their advisers and course professors before withdrawing from a course.

Students who decide to withdraw from all courses for the semester are withdrawing from the university. The deadline for dropping all Spring 2020 courses and receiving a tuition reimbursement was January 21, 2020. Students who withdraw from all Spring 2020 courses after January 21 do not receive a tuition refund. Students who decide to

withdraw from all courses must contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 540-568-6468 or deanofstudents@jmu.edu to begin the steps required to complete an official withdrawal.

Graduate students who officially withdraw from the university and who wish to return for Summer or Fall 2020 should consult with their program and then The Graduate School as soon as possible at grad@jmu.edu. Students who will either be required to re-apply for admission or will be asked to submit an intent to enroll form so that they can re-enter without reapplication.

NEW Temporary COVID-19 Policy: Exemption from Continuous Enrollment (Added April 17, 2020)

Current Graduate School policy on continuous enrollment requires a graduate student to enroll in at least one graduate credit hour in each fall and spring semester in order to remain in active status. Students who are not enrolled in fall or spring courses, or GRAD 597, are considered “inactive.” Students who are only completing “Incomplete” courses from prior semesters are not considered active students. Recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted course and degree progress for a number of students during the Spring 2020 semester, The Graduate School is instituting a temporary policy related to Continuous Enrollment.

- For certain students it will be necessary to receive a grade of Incomplete for some Spring 2020 courses. These Incomplete grades may be due to limitations in access to laboratories, internship and practicum sites, student teaching locations, physical locations necessary to complete coursework; or other extenuating circumstances. When a grade of “Incomplete” is assigned to the student with the expectation that the coursework be completed by the end of the Fall 2020 semester, the student can be exempted from the required enrollment for the fall semester.
- For certain students it will be impossible to enroll in necessary courses needed to complete degree requirements due to restrictions in place due to the pandemic. Examples: courses scheduled abroad; courses that must be conducted in person; courses bound by a location no longer accessible. Because such courses may not be scheduled again for several semesters, students may be exempted from the required enrollment for the fall and spring semesters of the 2020-2021 academic year.

Requests for an Exemption from Continuous Enrollment must come from the Graduate Program Director to The Graduate School. An individual student may request the exemption in consultation with their Graduate Program Director, and the Graduate Program Director will forward the request to The Graduate School. A student may also confer individually with the Interim Assistant Dean and Director of Graduate Student Services for guidance on options and the best steps forward in their particular situation.

[Request for Exemption from Continuous Enrollment Form \(COVID-19\)](#)