S (SATISFACTORY) AND U (UNSATISFACTORY GRADING)

Q: What are the basics of S/U grading?

For more details, re-read the email President Rankin sent you on April 3, 2020 at 3:44 p.m. or consult the Alternative Grading spring 2020 policy on the https://www.sdsmt.edu/covid-19/ page under the section entitled “Temporary BOR Policies.”

The basics are as follows:
1. Your instructor assigns a grade.
2. You see your grade.
3. You have between May 4th, 2020 and May 18th, 2020 to select among the following options for any grade:
   - Option 1: Keep your assigned grade, have it counted in your GPA, and do nothing.
   - Option 2: If you earned an A, B, or C in a course, request that it be converted to an S (satisfactory) knowing that full credit will be assigned for the course. The S designation will not affect your GPA.
   - Option 3: If you earned a D in a course, request that it be converted into a U (unsatisfactory) to avoid having the D used in the calculation of your GPA. Note that a U means no credit is earned for the course.

Note that all F grades—and for graduate students, all FAIL designations, will be automatically converted to a U (unsatisfactory). No credit will be earned for the course; however, no F grade or fail designation earned in Spring 2020 semester will be calculated into GPA.

Students pursuing a minor in military science are not eligible for this S/U alternative grading option.

Q: Why is SD Mines giving students the choice to change spring 2020 grades to S/U?

We are offering you this choice in recognition of the disruptions in your life caused by COVID-19. All members of campus are experiencing some level of adjustment and challenge, and this is especially true of students. We want to support your ongoing success at Mines. Lessening your concerns about how COVID-19 disruptions might affect your GPA is one thing we can do for you.

Q: If I select the S/U grade for a course, how is my grade determined?

Your instructor will assign your letter grade according to the terms of the syllabus for the course. Once you see your grade, you can elect to convert a letter grade of A, B, or C to a grade of S (satisfactory). The “S” grade is not calculated into your GPA.

You may elect to change a D grade to a U (unsatisfactory). If you opt for a U (rather than keeping the D grade), you will not receive credit for the course, and the grade is not calculated into your GPA.
All grades of F you earn will be automatically converted to grades of U. You will not earn credits for any U grades, and the U grades are no calculated into your GPA.

Q: What majors does this alternative grading option (S/U) NOT apply to? Specifically, which students are not able to request that their grades be recorded as S/U?

The only program exempt from the S/U grading option is the Military Science minor; all other programs will allow this option.

Q: Will the credits from a course recorded as S/U count toward graduation?

You will receive course credit toward graduation for any class in which you earn an S. You will not receive course credit toward graduation for any class in which you earn a U. For a D grade you keep as a D, check with your advisor about minimum grades or GPA for your major. If you cannot reach your advisor, email the department head of the program(s) you are enrolled in.

Q: Can I pick and choose which courses to take S/U?

Yes. Unless you are enrolled in a Military Science minor, you may elect to have all, a few, or none of your grades converted to an S or a U. Recall, however, that all grades of F will be automatically converted to a U.

Q: Can the S/U course count towards my major or minor?

Yes, unless you are pursuing a military science minor. Remember, and D you convert to a U or F that is converted to a U will generate NO credit, so any U grade will not advance you further to graduation.

Q: Does the course instructor have to grant approval or permission for a student to switch to S/U?

NO. The decision is yours to make and cannot be overruled by an instructor.

Q: Can a S/U graded course meet General Education requirements?

Any S or D grades earned in spring 2020 will count towards general education requirements. A possible exception is if you are taking Calculus I or a more advanced math class to meet Goal 5 requirements. For certain math classes you may need to earn a C or better to meet the prerequisite of a more advanced class. A grade of D will still enable you to meet your Goal 5 General Education requirement, but it may not meet the prerequisite of a more advanced class.

Q: If I request a course S/U, can it be used in a future semester as a course prerequisite that requires a minimum grade?

Yes. An S grade meets all course prerequisites for any courses taken at SD Mines in the future.
Q: Does a S/U course affect my GPA?

NO. The reason we are making the S/U grading option available to you is to help ease concerns you may have about the impact on your GPA of the challenges and disruptions related to COVID-19.

Q: How will this impact me if I plan to graduate in May 2020?

If you are an undergraduate planning to graduate in May 2020, you must earn an S or a D in all classes required for graduation to earn necessary credits and be able to graduate.

Remember that some programs require a minimum grade of C in some courses, so a D for those courses would not meet graduation requirements. If in doubt, ask your advisor. If you cannot reach your advisor, email the department head of the program(s) you are enrolled in.

If you are a graduate student planning to graduate in May 2020 who chooses to have any grades recorded as S/U, you will need to earn an S in all courses.

Q: How do I declare a course S/U?

First, put a reminder on your calendar to review your grades on or soon after May 4, 2020. If you are not pursuing a military science minor, you can elect to convert any grade earned in spring 2020 to an S or a U.

You have between May 4th, 2020 and May 18th, 2020 to fill out an online form that will be deployed in the next week or so. You will receive email notification of the form availability, the link, and additional information as needed. No in-person visits to campus will be needed to give us directions on how to handle your spring 2020 grades.

We recommend that you discuss options—and their impact—with your advisor. If you cannot reach your advisor, email the department head of the program(s) you are enrolled in.

Q: What is the timeframe for declaring a course S/U?

You have between May 4th, 2020 and May 18th, 2020 to request any A, B, or C grade be converted to an S or any D grade be converted to a U. We suggest, of course, not waiting until the last minute as consulting with your advisor and/or financial aid (financialaid@sdsmt.edu) may be critical steps you can’t accomplish in time. If you cannot reach your advisor, email the department head of the program(s) you are enrolled in.

Q: What happens if I do not request that a class's grade is recorded as S/U?

If you do not use the time between May 4th, 2020 and May 18th, 2020 to request any A, B, or C grade be converted to an S or any D grade be converted to a U, you will keep the grade
assigned by your instructor. Any F you are assigned for spring 2020 will automatically be converted to a U, so it will not count in your GPA. So, for Fs, you do not need to do anything.

**Q: Is S/U grading optional?**

Yes. This option is 100% in your control. The S/U alternative was designed to achieve two main things: 1) ease your concerns about how COVID-19 adjustments and challenges may impact your GPA and 2) ensuring that these challenges and disruptions will not negatively affect your academic success at SD Mines.

**Q: What happens if I take an incomplete for a course in spring 2020? Can I select S/U grade this summer after completing the course?**

Yes. The timeframe of **May 4th, 2020 and May 18th, 2020** is for grades assigned at semester’s end. If you are granted an incomplete for a course you took in spring semester 2020, you will have 15 days after your grade is assigned to request an S/U option. Make sure you and your instructor complete an “Incomplete Grade Contract” that specifically articulates the remaining course requirements for you to be issued a letter grade. Also, maintain communication with your instructor so you know when the I (incomplete) is changed to a letter grade.

**Q: How will graduate and professional schools view grades reported as S/U when students apply to their institutions?**

Many universities across the country are offering some form of alternative grading to students in response to the COVID-19 disruptions. This means you can reasonably expect graduate and professional schools to take into considerations how this public health emergency has affected everyone in the United States and especially students.

Of course, earning good grades and retaining those grades in your GPA and transcript is the best strategy if you know you plan to seek admission into a graduate or professional program.

We recommend you discuss your plans and your choices with your academic advisor. If you cannot reach your advisor, email the department head of the program(s) you are enrolled in.

**Q: Will an S or U grade have an impact on scholarships I currently receive?**

Since all classes moved online in spring 2020, the requirement of completing at least 24 SD Mines credit hours to keep your renewable scholarship will not be enforced for the 2020-2021 academic year. However, you will still need to meet the SD Mines Grade Point Average requirement of at least 3.0.

Note that the phrase “SD Mines GPA” means the GPA you have based on SD Mines courses you have taken. If your degree program requires you to take a course from another South Dakota public university, for instance, the grade from that course is not included in your SD Mines GPA. The GPA that includes all grades is often referred to as “total cumulative GPA.”
If this answer does not fully respond to your questions, email Monica.Darrow@sdsmt.edu in the Office of Financial Aid to request information specific to your circumstances.

Q: Will S and U grades impact my ability to meet financial aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards so I can continue receiving Federal Financial aid?

To maintain satisfactory academic progress or “SAP,” you must complete and pass at least 67 percent of the credits you have attempted. U grades (like F and W grades) will count as credits that have not been completed.

If you receive Federal Financial aid and do not meet SAP standards due to COVID-19 related circumstances, you will have the opportunity to appeal to continue receiving Federal Financial Aid. To get more detailed information, email financialaid@sdsmt.edu.

Q: If I am currently receiving Federal financial aid on a probationary status, how will converting grades to S and U impact my eligibility for financial aid?

If you are receiving Federal financial aid on a probationary status that requires you to meet certain requirements or fulfill the terms of an academic plan, please email financialaid@sdsmt.edu to learn how converting to S and U grades will impact you and your particular situation.

Q: If I am in the Honors program, how will an S/U grade affect me?

Opting for an S grade will have no effect on your status as a participant in the Honors program. A grade of D or U may have an impact. If this answer does not fully respond to your questions, email Scott.Kenner@sdsmt.edu. Dr. Kenner is the advisor for the Honors Program.

Q: Will the use of the S/U grades put me, as an undergraduate, at risk of going on probation or being suspended?

Letter grades earned in spring 2020 and converted to an S or U will not be used at SD Mines in decisions about probation status, nor will they cause you to be suspended. For more details, re-read the email President Rankin sent you on April 3, 2020 at 3:44 p.m. or consult the Academic Suspension and Probation spring 2020 policy on the https://www.sdsmt.edu/covid-19/ page under the section entitled "Temporary BOR Policies."

Q: I’m on probation. How will S/U grading affect my probationary status?

If you are an undergraduate, and you keep your letter grade so that it raises your GPA and gets you off probation, you get off probation. (see the GPA requirements for “good academic standing” in the Academic Suspension and Probation spring 2020 policy on the https://www.sdsmt.edu/covid-19/ page under the section entitled "Temporary BOR Policies.”

If you opt for the S or U grade option, neither are calculated into your GPA, so, unless you retain other letter grades that get you off probation, you will remain on probation.
Q: Will my instructor ever know if I chose an S/U grade in his or her course?

The Office of the Registrar at SD Mines will NOT notify your instructors of your decisions about S/U grades. However, your advisor does have access to your records, and can see your choices. Instances may occur, such as when you ask a faculty member to write you a letter of recommendation, that prompt an instructor to look at your academic records. The university will continue to abide by all FERPA regulations regarding your educational record.

Q: If I am a student athlete. How will opting for an S/U grade affect my eligibility for athletics next year?

If your cumulative GPA is 2.5 or lower, or if you are repeating a course in spring 2020, you should email Seth.Nichols@sdsmt.edu, Assistant Athletic Director/Athletics and Academics, or Cassie.Kosiba@sdsmt.edu, Associate Athletic Director of Internal Operations/Senior Women’s Administrator for information on your specific circumstances.

Q: What happens if I am repeating a course and I opt for an S or a U?

If you are taking a class in spring 2020 semester to replace a prior grade in order to raise your GPA, an S (satisfactory) will replace the prior grade, but neither grade (the prior grade nor the S or the U) will count towards the GPA.

Q: I’m a non-degree seeking student. Can I request an S/U grade?

Yes, this option is open to you.

Q: I’m a dual-credit student. Can I request an S/U grade?

Yes, this option is open to you. However, check with your high school guidance counselor before requesting an S or U grade.

Q: How will S/U grades appear on my transcript?

If you request an S grade, it will show up as an S. If you choose a U grade or have an F automatically converted into a U, it will show up as a U.

Q: Are there any possible negative effects if I request an S grade in a course?

You need to consider your plans, consult with your advisor, and consider all potential impacts of your decision. Graduate admissions departments and professional schools, such as medical or law schools, could view an S/U grade differently than a letter grade. On the other hand, COVID-19 disruptions and challenges are pervasive, so all you may need to do is be prepared to explain the circumstances to a potential employer or an admissions office.

Q: What if I change my mind and want the grade changed back to regular A-F grading?
Once you request an S or U grade, the decision cannot be undone. Therefore, you should consult your advisor. If you cannot reach your advisor, email the department head of the program(s) you are enrolled in.

Q: Does a S/U course affect my GPA?

No.

Q: What other factors should I consider before requesting an S or U grade?

- If you are doing well academically, you may want to keep your grade to sustain or improve your GPA.
- If you are concerned about not having a letter grade for graduate of professional school, you may want to keep your letter grade(s).
- If you plan to get a job for which competition is strong and letter grades are important, you may want to keep your letter grade(s).
- If you plan to seek a job in another country in which letter grades are important, you may want to keep your letter grade(s).

Q: If I know I am going to fail a course, should I withdraw or just wait for it to be turned into a U?

Just waiting for it to turn into a U and not be calculated into your GPA is an option. If you do elect to withdraw, please refer to the email President Rankin sent you on April 3, 2020 at 3:44 p.m. or consult the Maximum Withdrawals spring 2020 policy on the https://www.sdsmt.edu/covid-19/ page under the section entitled “Temporary BOR Policies.”

If you are confused by the difference between a W and a WD, please know that any withdrawal evoked by you after the drop/add date this semester will NOT count toward the limit of 6 withdrawals (WDs) you can accrue.

If you have already hit your limit of 6 Ws, no withdrawal from a spring 2020 course will turn into a WFL.

Normally, you can accrue up to 6 “late” withdrawals, after which any withdrawals become WFLs, which means they DO calculate into you GPA as 00.0 “grades.” A WFL of 00.0 has the same impact on your GPA as an F. These normal policies are suspended for spring 2020 semester.

Q: Can I transfer credits into SD Mines if I receive an S or U grade from another college or university?

Yes. SD Mines will transfer in S/U grades and credits. S/U grades you transfer into SD Mines will not be calculated into your GPA. Of course, U grades bring in no credits.
For details, consult the Transfer of Academic Credit spring 2020 policy on the https://www.sdsmt.edu/covid-19/ page under the section entitled "Temporary BOR Policies."

**Q: If I have additional questions about declaring a course S/U, where should I go?**

Email your academic advisor to handle the issue by email or to set up a time to visit via phone or Zoom. If you cannot reach your advisor, email the department head of the program(s) you are enrolled in. If you cannot reach someone who can answer your question, or if your question is not academic in nature, email the appropriate office, e.g., registrar@sdsmt.edu or financialaid@sdsmt.edu, or email Kate.Alley@sdsmt.edu for advice on whom to contact for answers. If you are a graduate student and are unsure whom to contact with questions, email Maribeth.Price@sdsmt.edu.

**MULTIPLE COURSE ATTEMPTS**

**Q: What are the basics of the temporary policy for course attempts?**

For details, consult the Registration and Course Attempts spring 2020 policy on the https://www.sdsmt.edu/covid-19/ page under the section entitled "Temporary BOR Policies."

The basics are as follows:

- If you are an undergraduate taking or re-taking a course in spring 2020 that results in an F or a D if a C or better is required, the course attempt will NOT count towards the maximum of three attempts you can make without submitting an academic appeal.

- If you are a graduate student taking or re-taking a course in spring 2020 that results in an F or a D if a C or better is required, the course attempt will NOT count towards the maximum of two attempts you can make without submitting an academic appeal.

- This temporary policy applies to all grades or credits earned during the spring 2020 semester and includes transfer credit, credits by CLEP exam or established methods of earning course credits.

**Q: If I opt to have a letter grade converted into an S, will I still be able to repeat the course?**

Yes. No S or U grades count toward attempts at a course. S/U grades are not calculated into GPA, so if you want to repeat a course in which you received an S (satisfactory), you may repeat the course to earn a letter grade that will be calculated into your GPA.

As explained above, any U (unsatisfactory) grade received in spring 2020 will not count as an attempt and will not be calculated into your GPA.