

Alternative Grading Option (S/U)
Spring 2020
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

All Black Hills State University students are strongly encouraged to work closely with their academic advisors and other BHSU personnel to determine possible implications of choices related to grading for the spring 2020 semester.

Q1: Why is BHSU giving students the choice to change spring 2020 grades to S/U?

A: BHSU is providing this choice for some courses in recognition of the unprecedented circumstances related to COVID- 19. To maximize student success and learning, the University recognizes the challenges inherent as courses have moved online and students and faculty work from home settings.

Q2: If I select the S/U grade for a course, how is my grade determined?

A: The instructor of your class will assign a letter grade at the end of the semester.

Students may select to convert a letter grade of A, B, or C to a grade of S.

Students may select to convert a final letter grade of D to a U. Students who select the U (rather than keeping the D grade) will not receive applicable credit for the course and the grade will not be calculated in their grade point average. To be clear, this means that students who select the U (rather than keep the D grade) will have to re-take the course if the course is required for their program of study. Students who elect to keep the D will receive credit for completing the course and it will be calculated in their grade point average. Some programs may require a minimum grade of C (or S) in courses. In this case, neither a D nor a U would meet program requirements.

All grades of F shall be automatically converted to grades of U. Students receiving the U grade will not receive applicable credit for the course and the grade will not be calculated in their grade point average.

Q3: What programs 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?

A: Due to accreditation/licensure considerations and the particular discipline, students in the following programs are **not** eligible to elect S/U grades for any courses during spring 2020:

Undergraduate

- Military Science (minor)

Graduate

- All BHSU graduate programs.

Q4: Will the credits from a course recorded as S/U count toward graduation?

A: Students will receive course credit toward graduation for any class in which they earn an S. Students will not receive course credit toward graduation for any class in which they earn a U.

Q5: Can I pick and choose which courses to take S/U?

A: Yes, students may request any or all courses be changed to S/U unless your program is one which has been determined to not be eligible.

Q6: Does the course instructor have to grant approval or permission for a student to switch to S/U?

A: No. It is a student's decision and it cannot be overruled by the instructor.

Q7: Can the S/U course count towards my major or minor?

A: Students may use Spring 2020 S/U graded courses to fulfill major/minor /certificate requirements. S/U graded courses from other semesters cannot be used to fulfill major/minor/certificate requirements.

Q8: Can a S/U graded course meet General Education requirements?

A: Students may use Spring 2020 S/U courses to fulfill any graduation requirement, including all general education requirements.

Q9: If I desire a course S/U, can it be used in a future semester as a course prerequisite that requires a minimum grade?

A: Yes, a S/U grade earned in a Spring 2020 course may be used to fulfill a prerequisite minimum grade requirement in a future semester.

Q10: Does a S/U course affect my GPA?

A: A grade of S/U will not factor into your GPA.

Q11: How will this impact students who are graduating in May 2020?

Undergraduate students who are graduating in May 2020 and choose to have any of their grades recorded as S/U will need to earn an S or D (in other words, not a U) in all of the courses required for graduation.

Note that some programs may require a minimum grade of C (or S) in courses. In this case, a D does not meet graduation requirements in those programs.

Q12: How do I declare a course S/U?

A: First, review the letter grades assigned by course instructors and consult with your academic advisor and others as needed. Next, between May 4 and May 18 you will be able to fill out the form at this link: [BHSU S/U Grading Form](#)

The form will be visible but will not be available to use until May 4. Students will need to enter their user id/password credentials to log in to the site.

Q13: What is the timeframe for declaring a course S/U?

A: The time frame for requesting that a grade be recorded as S/U will be open from May 4, 2020 (first day of finals week) until midnight CST (11:00pm MST) on May 18, 2020 (two weeks later).

Q14: What happens if a student does not request that a class's grade is recorded as S/U?

A: Unless a student specifically chooses to have their grade in a class recorded as S or U, they will be graded in the traditional A-F grading system or in whichever grading system the class was originally intended to grade them.

Q15: Is this optional?

A: This is entirely optional. BHSU has designed it with the intention that choosing to select S/U grades will not negatively impact future academic success.

Q16: What happens if a student takes an incomplete for a course in spring 2020? Can the student select S/U grade after completing the course and a grade has been assigned?

A: Yes. All A-F grades that are reported for Spring 2020 semester – regardless of the exact start or ends dates of the class and, in the case of an incomplete, regardless of when the final grade is reported – can be recorded as S/U.

Q17: How will graduate and professional schools view grades reported as S/U when students apply to their institutions?

A: Many institutions have already gone to some type of alternative grading option for spring 2020. That being the case, one can reasonably expect that graduate and professional schools will have the unique circumstances in mind as they consider applications. If you are planning on attending graduate or professional school, you may want to elect to receive letter grades. If you have questions, please discuss with your academic advisor or faculty member before selecting the S/U option.

Q18: Will students who opt into S/U grades and who earn an S still be able to repeat the course?

A: Yes. Regardless of the grade earned and recorded, courses recorded as S/U are exempt from any policies limiting a student's ability to retake the course.

Q19: Will using the S/U option affect eligibility for financial aid packages and/or scholarships?

A: Direct these questions to BHSU Financial Aid and/or Scholarship personnel at BHSUfinancial@BHSU.edu.

Q20: Will S and U grades impact my ability to meet financial aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards?

A: To maintain SAP, students must complete and pass at least 67 percent of cumulatively attempted credits. U grades (like F grades) will count as credits that have not been completed. If you do not meet SAP standards due to COVID-19 related circumstances, you will have the opportunity to appeal to continue receiving Federal Financial Aid.

Q21: If I am currently receiving financial aid on a probationary status, how will converting grades to S and U impact my eligibility for financial aid?

A: If you are receiving financial aid on a probationary status contingent upon my meeting certain requirements or following an academic plan, please contact BHSU Financial Aid to discuss how converting to S and U grades will impact your eligibility.

Q22: If a student is enrolled in an Honors class, how will the S/U affect the honors credit?

A: Students earning either a passing grade or "S" will earn Honors credit for the course.

Q23: Will the use of the S/U grades put an undergraduate student at greater risk of going on probation or being suspended?

A: Numerical grades that have been converted to an S or U will not be used by any entity at Black Hills State University in decisions about probation status.

Q24: Are the faculty aware that a student has elected S/U when assigning final grades?

A: No, faculty will not know which students have elected S/U when they assign final grades.

Q25: I am a student athlete. How does receiving a S/U grade affect my eligibility for athletics next year?

Any student athlete with a 2.5 CGPA or lower and/or currently repeating a course should contact the Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance before choosing the alternative grade. If you have any questions, contact the Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance.

Q26: What happens if a student is repeating a course and elects the S/U option?

A: The repeat process will work as it has in the past. The prior grade will no longer count in the student's Grade Point Average (GPA). Credits earned for the current course will count. Because the course is being taken S/U, the grade earned will not be calculated into the GPA.

Q27: What if I already declared a course S/U this semester?

A: If you previously elected to take a course S/U, it will stay S/U.

Q28: Does S/U grading option apply to non-degree seeking students?

A: Yes, the option to declare S/U applies to non-degree seeking students.

Q29: Does S/U grading option apply to dual credit and concurrent credit students?

A: Yes, however, be sure to check with your high school guidance counselor prior to making this decision. Please contact the BHSU Registrar's Office with dual-credit questions.

Q30: How will S/U grades appear on my transcript?

A: For courses where the S/U grade have been selected, the course grade will appear as S or U on the transcript.

Q31: Are there any possible negative effects if a student chooses to take an S grade in a course?

A: BHSU has worked to anticipate and eliminate potential negative consequences for choosing to take an S grade instead of a numeric grade in the context of studies here at BHSU. However, depending on future plans, outside parties may view an S/U grade differently from a numeric grade. Keep in mind that the use of alternative grading is being widely used by a large number of universities. Please talk with your Academic Advisor to discuss possible negative effects given your specific future plans.

Q32: What if I change my mind and want the grade changed back to regular A-F grading?

A: Once a student submits the change request for S/U grading, it **cannot** be changed back to regular grading.

Q33: What other factors should be considered before deciding to convert a course to S/U?

- A student who is doing well may decide to not convert a course(s) to S/U because a strong letter grade will improve the GPA.
- A student who is concerned about not having a letter grade for graduate or professional school may not want to convert to S/U.
- A student who plans to enter a profession where a letter grade is critical for competitive employment may not want to convert to S/U.
- A student who plans to pursue overseas employment where a letter grade is essential may not want to convert to S/U.

Q34: If I have additional questions about declaring a course S/U, where should I go?

A: Contact your academic advisor or other BHSU personnel about your choice and about any impact your choices might have for future courses or admissions to future programs.