

Westfield State University Policy

Policy Title: AP012: Pass/Fail Grading Option **Effective Date:** August 15, 2022 **Policy Number:** AP012

1.0 Purpose and Overview

Westfield State University recognizes that students may wish to explore academic subjects outside their major fields of study without the pressure of traditional letter grading. The Pass/Fail grading option is designed to encourage intellectual exploration, broaden educational horizons, and promote a more well-rounded educational experience. This policy outlines the conditions and procedures under which undergraduate students may elect to take a course on a Pass/Fail basis. A “Pass” (P) grade indicates that the student has performed at a level equivalent to a grade of C- or better. A “Fail” (F) grade indicates performance at a level of D+ or lower and is calculated into the GPA as a failing grade. This option is intended to be a supplement to, not a replacement for, the standard grading system.

2.0 Scope

This policy applies to all matriculated undergraduate students at Westfield State University who have achieved at least sophomore standing. It does not apply to graduate students, non-degree students, or courses taken at other institutions for transfer credit. Specific restrictions may apply to certain majors or programs as detailed in Section 5.0. This policy is in effect for all academic terms, including fall, spring, and summer sessions.

3.0 Policy Content

3.1 Eligibility

To be eligible to elect the Pass/Fail grading option for a course, a student must:

- Be a currently enrolled, matriculated undergraduate student.
- Be in good academic standing, as defined by university policy AP005 (i.e., not on academic probation).
- Have successfully completed at least 30 credit hours at Westfield State University.

3.2 Course Limitations

- A student may elect the Pass/Fail option for a maximum of one course per semester.
- A maximum of four courses, not to exceed 16 credit hours, taken under the Pass/Fail option may be counted toward the total credit hours required for graduation.
- The Pass/Fail option may only be used for courses that are considered free electives. It cannot be used for courses that fulfill major, minor, general education, or any other specific program requirements.

3.3 Grade Reporting and GPA Calculation

- A grade of “P” (Pass) is recorded on the student’s academic transcript if a grade of C- or higher is earned. A “P” grade does not affect the student’s grade point average (GPA) but does count toward the total credit hours for graduation.
- A grade of “F” (Fail) is recorded on the transcript if a grade of D+ or lower is earned. An “F” grade is treated as a traditional “F” and is factored into the student’s GPA.
- Instructors are not informed that a student has elected the Pass/Fail option. They will submit a standard letter grade, which the Registrar’s Office will convert to a “P” or “F” as appropriate.

3.4 Impact on Academic Honors and Recognition

- **Dean's List:** Courses taken on a Pass/Fail basis are not included in the calculation for Dean's List eligibility. A student must complete at least 12 credit hours of graded coursework in a semester to be considered for the Dean's List.
- **Graduation Honors:** Credits for courses in which a "P" grade is earned are not included in the GPA calculation for graduation with honors (cum laude, magna cum laude, summa cum laude).
- **Scholarships:** Students receiving scholarships or other forms of financial aid should consult with the Office of Financial Aid to determine if there are any specific requirements regarding graded credits that may be affected by the Pass/Fail option.

3.5 Considerations for Graduate and Professional School

Students considering application to graduate or professional schools are strongly advised to discuss the implications of a Pass/Fail grade with their academic advisor and the admissions offices of the schools to which they plan to apply. Many graduate and professional programs prefer or require letter grades in all coursework, and a "P" grade may be viewed less favorably than a strong letter grade.

4.0 Procedures

4.1 Election of Pass/Fail Option

1. **Consultation with Academic Advisor:** The student must first meet with their academic advisor to discuss the appropriateness of the Pass/Fail option for their academic plan and goals.
2. **Obtain Request Form:** The student obtains a "Pass/Fail Request Form" from the Office of the University Registrar or its website.
3. **Complete and Sign Form:** The student completes the form, which requires their signature and the signature of their academic advisor, indicating that the consultation has taken place.
4. **Submit Form:** The completed and signed form must be submitted to the Office of the University Registrar by the deadline specified in the Academic Calendar.

4.2 Deadlines

The deadline for submitting a Pass/Fail Request Form is the same as the last day to withdraw from a course without academic penalty, as published in the official Academic Calendar for each semester. This deadline is strictly enforced. Once the form is submitted, the decision is final and cannot be reversed.

5.0 Restrictions by Major

Certain academic departments and programs have specific restrictions on the use of the Pass/Fail option. Students are responsible for consulting with their academic advisor to ensure compliance with all departmental and program-specific requirements. The following programs have additional restrictions:

- **School of Business:** Students may not use the Pass/Fail option for any course with a business prefix (e.g., ACCT, FIN, MGMT, MKTG).
- **School of Nursing:** Pass/Fail is not permitted for any science or nursing-prefix courses.
- **Teacher Education Programs:** Courses taken to fulfill any requirement for teacher certification may not be taken on a Pass/Fail basis.
- **Engineering Programs:** Students in all engineering disciplines are limited to a maximum of two courses (8 credit hours) under the Pass/Fail option for their entire degree program.
- **Pre-Law and Pre-Health Advising Tracks:** Students on these tracks are strongly discouraged from using the Pass/Fail option, as it may negatively impact their applications to law school or medical school.

6.0 Financial Aid Implications

Students receiving federal, state, or institutional financial aid must maintain satisfactory academic progress (SAP), which includes both a qualitative (GPA) and quantitative (completion rate) measure. While a “P” grade does not affect GPA, an “F” grade does. Furthermore, all attempted credits, including those taken Pass/Fail, are counted in the SAP calculation. Students should consult with the Office of Financial

Aid to fully understand the potential impact of the Pass/Fail option on their financial aid eligibility.

7.0 Related Policies

- AP005: Academic Standing
- AP008: Grading System
- AP015: Course Withdrawal
- FA101: Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid

8.0 Contact Information

For questions regarding this policy or the Pass/Fail request process, please contact:

Office of the University Registrar Westfield State University 123 Administration Drive
Westfield, ST 12345 (123) 456-7890 registrar@westfieldstate.edu

9.0 Revision History

Effective Date	Summary of Changes
August 15, 2022	Initial policy implementation.
September 1, 2023	Updated Section 5.0 to include restrictions for the School of Nursing.
December 1, 2024	Added Section 3.4, 3.5, and 6.0 for clarity on academic honors, graduate school considerations, and financial aid. Expanded Section 4.1 with a step-by-step procedure. Added more examples to Section 5.0.