Credit/No Credit Options and Law School

Dear Students:

Many of you have been asking about the impact on your law school application if you elect to take courses under a credit/no credit option. I have consulted a number of sources – pre-law advisors, admissions staff, LSAC – and I want to share the information I received.

Under the option, students must earn a C or better in a class to receive credit if the Credit/No Credit option is selected. Earning a C- would result in No Credit. Please go to https://utdallas.edu/covid/staff-faculty-research-info/academic-continuity/credit-no-credit-or-pass-fail-grading for more information about the UTD policy.

First and foremost, please take the time to think very seriously about your own personal situation when deciding on your grade options. Before all of this happened, you were probably in one of two modes regarding your grades: 1) trying to improve your previous GPA, or 2) trying to maintain an already good GPA. Your situation has an impact on your decision.

Next, law schools definitely recognize that there is incredible upheaval and stress in all academic life, including within their own schools. Grading decisions are being made at every level, for each semester, each in response to their own circumstances. As you know, law schools do take a holistic approach to application review, and review all of the components of your law school application, and will view each semester of your grades in context. That being said, even as your individual circumstances are considered during this stressful time, law schools are looking for students who are academically engaged. Here are some factors that law schools might consider:

- The type of course being switched to credit/no credit.
- How many courses are being switched to credit/no credit.
- The reason for switching a course to credit/no credit.

Also think about the competitiveness of admissions at the schools you are considering. LSAT score and GPA will always be the foremost consideration, but where you have the same numbers as other applicants, admissions officers will be looking deeper into your application.

Finally, I would like to share the input from LSAC:

LSAC’s updated FAQ states:

Law schools are fully aware of and understand that many undergraduate schools are going to some version of a pass/fail grading system for Spring 2020. In fact, many law schools are making the same decision for their current students. Law schools will be understanding of the situation and will not penalize any applicant for having pass/fail grades. LSAC will place a letter in the CAS report of every applicant enrolled during Spring 2020, to remind law schools going forward that the semester was one in which many schools changed their grading systems in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

LSAC has not updated this information since Spring 2020, but it is generally understood that circumstances are the same for Fall 2020. If you want to weigh the pros and cons of your individual decision, please do not hesitate to contact me. Email barbarakirby@utdallas.edu to get a virtual appointment. We are meeting by MS Teams, telephone, FaceTime, or we can exchange emails.

Until then, stay safe and stay well.