

June 26, 2020

Dear Employer:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Duquesne University decided to finish the spring 2020 semester by offering classes remotely to all students. As a result, the School of Law faculty quickly adapted their class lectures to an online format, and our law students adjusted to attending classes via online platforms. Due to these unprecedented circumstances, the faculty had to reconsider our grading policies.

To aid employers that are reviewing the resumes and transcripts of current students and 2020 graduates, the grading policy adopted by the faculty for spring 2020 can be found in its entirety below. In a nutshell, the policy includes the following:

- Students will have seven days to convert any of their letter grades to a Pass/No-Pass grade (according to guidance set forth in the policy and subsequent communication from the School of Law).
- The letter grades or Pass/No-Pass grades will appear on the students' transcripts, but they will not factor into GPA's or class ranks.
- Students' cumulative GPA's and class ranks will be based on grades earned through the fall 2019 semester.

We know that this grading policy is by no means a perfect solution to the difficult problems that the COVID-19 turmoil poses for equitable student assessment. Unfortunately, though, there is no perfect solution, and any alternative grading system that we might have adopted would also have produced unforeseeable burdens and disadvantages for many students. The policy we have adopted is a sincere attempt to try to minimize as many adverse consequences as best we can.

Students have been instructed to list their GPA's as they appear on their transcripts when listing the information on their resumes. However, students may state an updated GPA in their cover letters, as long as further details are provided, such as "Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Duquesne University School of Law used a modified grading policy for the spring 2020 semester, and grades earned during that semester were not calculated into a student's cumulative GPA. If I calculated

my spring grades cumulative with my previous grade point average, my GPA would be [student-calculated GPA].”

I hope this information assists you in your review of application materials submitted by Duquesne Law students and 2020 graduates. Should you have any questions about the grading policy, please contact Professor Tara Willke, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, at [willket@duq.edu](mailto:willket@duq.edu) or (412) 396-4637. If you have any questions relating to employment matters, please contact Maria Comas, Director of Career Services, at [comas@duq.edu](mailto:comas@duq.edu) or (412) 396-6279.

Sincerely,

April M. Barton  
Dean and Professor of Law

**Duquesne University School of Law**  
**Spring 2020 Grading Policy**  
**Modified Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The University determined that all courses in the Spring 2020 semester would be graded optional Pass/No-Pass. Regarding the School of Law, the optional Pass/No-Pass includes all courses taught in the spring 2020 semester **except**:

- (1) courses that are already graded as “Pass/Fail;” and
- (2) any course for which all graded components were submitted prior to March 18, 2020, such as Legal Research & Writing II (LRW).

*Choosing Pass/No-Pass*

Students may elect a Pass for any grade that is a “C-” or above. For grades below a “C-,” students may elect to keep the grade or choose No-Pass.

After grades are released, students will have seven (7) days to convert any of their courses during this spring term from a letter grade to a Pass/No-Pass grade. The Registrar’s office is creating a process for students and will announce it at a later date.

All courses that are awarded Pass grades will count toward graduation and degree requirements and satisfy future course prerequisites. As previously announced, even if a student elects to keep a letter grade or the grade was received in a course like LRW, grades for the spring 2020 semester will **not** be calculated into students’ grade point averages.

If a student elects No-Pass for a course required for graduation, that course will need to be repeated during a future semester. For elective courses, students who opt for No Pass, **are not required** to retake an elective course, even if the actual grade received is a grade of “F.”

*Clinics and Externships*

All clinics receive letter grades, and students should make a good faith effort to complete fieldwork hours that professors make available; failure to do so could result in the lowering of the grade for a clinical course.

Regarding externships, students enrolled in externships must complete the following hours of externship work:

- 46 hours for 1 credit
- 93 hours for 2 credits
- 140 hours for 3 credits
  - Failure to make a good faith effort to complete the externship hours that field supervisors make available could result in a “no pass” for students in externships. Students unable to receive work from their field supervisor are required to speak to Professor Grace Orsatti to create alternative assignments.

### *Class Rank*

We will allow students to choose whether to keep their grades, and the grades will remain on the transcript (with an appropriate notation that this was during the COVID-19 outbreak), but we will not calculate spring 2020 semester grades into the class rank. Instead, class rank will be determined by the grades for the fall 2019 semester.