

FOURTH QUARTER CREDIT/NO CREDIT: FAMILY GUIDE

YHS Credit/No Credit Proposal

From the start of distance learning, YHS staff have focused on how to adjust expectations for teaching and learning in this new system. The extension of distance learning past the initial April 27 “return to school” date has led us to deepen our focus on how best to serve students. We strongly feel that the situation requires an innovative, responsive approach to teaching and learning, a stance supported by 90% of YHS staff.

Why are we considering instituting credit/no credit for the fourth quarter?

Distance Learning can be rigorous and meaningful, yet it is substantially different from on-site learning. A quarter average of “90” for this quarter 4 is not equivalent to a “90” from another quarter. Furthermore, we face the following challenges:

A widening equity gap

- Many students are care-givers for family members throughout the day. Furthermore, in the weeks ahead, family and/or friends may be affected by Covid-19, either because they are involved in high-risk professions (health care, law enforcement, essential businesses) or because they or family members are exposed to this illness.
- A number of our families are not able to provide appropriate learning spaces at home and/or effective supervision for their student’s learning.
- Students who require accommodations in the regular classroom setting are currently receiving fewer supports, based on what can feasibly be offered when learning is no longer on site.

How will teachers adjust teaching and learning for students?

- Keep the focus on relationships, community, and social/emotional health.
- Identify “What is meaningful?” to choose the most important content and skills for students. When school is conducted at a distance, how can we shift the work so that it is student-centered and responsive to the current situation? What do we no longer cover, given the parameters of distance learning?
- Modify assessments/assignments so that the format and content match student learning needs, including possibly exempting some students from certain tasks.

How will a credit/no credit system work?

For third quarter, grades on a 100-point scale have been entered into PowerSchool, and these will stand. Although quarter grades do not appear on official transcripts, there are several ways to highlight strong third quarter work. These include honor roll status and third quarter (and fourth quarter) performance in letters of recommendation.

For fourth quarter, teachers will identify ***Essential Assignments***. Teachers will evaluate student performance on these assignments to determine whether a student’s work can be issued “credit” or “no credit.”

- If a student shows understanding of the material covered in an essential assignment, s/he will receive “credit” for the assignment.
- If an initial attempt does not meet the criteria for “credit,” teachers will give feedback on student work and encourage re-submissions.
- At the end of the ***fourth quarter***, if a student’s work is not complete and/or the student’s work does not meet “credit” criteria on all assignments, the teacher will consider the student’s work

over time to determine if a student has successfully mastered the content and skills and should receive a “credit” for the fourth quarter.

- At the end of the ***second semester***, if a student has not passed for third or fourth quarter, the teacher will review the student’s work over the course of the semester to determine if the student has successfully mastered the content and skills and should receive a “credit” for the second semester.
- If a teacher determines that a student has not demonstrated mastery of content and skills for credit (semester and/or year), the student will be offered remediation opportunities to earn credit at a future time.

FAQs

Q: How will this impact my student’s Grade Point Average (GPA)?

A: It is first important to note that quarter grades do not appear on official transcripts in any grading system. Semester 2 will appear as credit/no credit on transcripts, and these grades will not factor into GPAs. Teachers and guidance counselors will highlight strong third quarter and fourth quarter work and third quarter honor roll status in letters of recommendation.

Q: What kind of impact will this have on my student’s future plans for college?

A: We know that all high schools are considering how to shift their approach to the end of the year, and we are not alone in choosing to adopt a credit/no credit system. In addition, many colleges have stated that they will show flexibility and understanding about the change to non-numerical grades.

- From **Vanderbilt**: “There’s no doubt that high school transcripts for this year’s and future year’s applicants will look different. There will be pass/fail grades where there were once As and Bs. There will be tests untaken, chances to improve forgone, but context dictates how we read files. And in unprecedented times, context will take on unprecedented importance.”
- From the **University of Virginia**: “Students are not responsible for things they cannot control. With most high schools closed for the spring semester, we will need to be flexible when evaluating transcripts and academic course work, and we will continue to monitor the state of standardized testing nationally and abroad.”
- From **Simmons College**: “As we move forward, our application reviews will take into account the fact that students encountered changes this spring due to closures, including difficulty submitting documents, conversions to pass/fail grades, unavailability of activities. We are offering flexibility with deadlines and admission requirements. We understand!”
- From the **University of Maine at Orono**: “Grading this year for high schools is a challenge. Many schools are thinking about doing pass/fail for a semester or even the whole year. Whatever you decide, we will roll with. Students will not be negatively impacted by the grading decisions that are made by high schools this year in the admissions process.”
- From **Bowdoin College**: “Chances are, your school is finishing the year remotely, maybe on a different schedule, maybe with different grades, and definitely in a way that feels unfamiliar. We get it. When you are ready to apply, we will evaluate your transcript within the context of this crisis. Focus on managing what is in front of you right now, and we’ll focus on how to adapt our process and our evaluations as necessary.”

Many other colleges and universities (**Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Smith College, Stanford University**) have moved to credit/no credit grading at their own institutions as well. Additionally, as part of each student’s college admissions packet, YHS guidance will clearly explain the grading system in place for the spring semester of 2020.

Q: How will this impact my student's transition to YHS classes in the fall?

A: As content is modified during the fourth quarter, teachers will note changes so that next year's starting point reflects the difference. This may mean that content will need to be taught for the first time or that content needs to be reviewed. The goal is to have students back on par as soon as possible.

Q: My student is a senior. How will this impact end-of-year recognitions?

A: End-of-year and Latin (cum laude, etc.) awards for seniors are always based on the first seven semesters of schooling, so this transition will not have an impact on current seniors.

Q: What about eligibility for extra-curriculars and senior privileges?

A: Students who pass their classes for the second semester will be eligible for extra-curricular activities and senior privileges in the fall.



Resources:

[Blog post from Chris Lehmann](#), Principal of Science Leadership Academy (SLA) in Philadelphia: "Doing School in the Time of Coronavirus."

[Blog post from A.J. Juliani](#), Director of Learning and Innovation at Centennial School District (PA) and Faculty at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education: "This is Not Online or Distance Learning."