



## FAQ

### **Overlake's Decision Regarding 4th Quarter Grades 2020**

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#### **What Does This Mean for You?**

**An Overview:** Overlake is eliminating percentage grades for the fourth quarter 2020 and will move to a system of credit/no credit (CR/NC) for students in grades seventh through twelfth for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. The fifth and sixth graders currently do not receive percentage grades. Students who achieve mastery of essential content and skills for the quarter will receive credit for the semester. Teacher comments will be sent June 2020.

We realize that this change may create uncertainty for students, particularly for our junior class as they prepare to apply to college. In arriving at this decision, the school considered information shared by numerous colleges and universities about how admissions practices will differ next year based on the COVID-19 pandemic. We encourage you to read a letter from the [University of Chicago](#) on changes to their admission practices. Although this is only one school, it does capture well what many colleges and universities around the country are communicating about how applications will be read in the future.

#### **Why did the school make such a change?**

From feedback the school received from students and families, it was clear there was significant stress. This was caused by several factors including students dealing with a global pandemic, the changes in how instruction was happening, and the significant shift in how students were interacting with each other and their teachers. Our goal in making this major change was to mitigate some of this stress while still providing academic opportunities for students to continue to learn and master content and skills.

#### **What will my Upper School Overlake transcript look like?**

[Click here for a sample transcript.](#)

The Upper School transcript will list classes, by grade, and the final grade for Semester 1 and/or Semester 2. Semester long classes will only show one grade; yearlong classes will show a grade for Semester 1 and Semester 2.



Semester classes taken in Semester 1 will receive a numeric grade. Semester classes taken in Semester 2 will receive a grade of CR or NC. Yearlong classes will receive a numeric grade for Semester 1 and a grade of CR or NC for Semester 2.

Quarterly grades are not reported on Overlake transcripts, but these grades can be provided to a college/university upon request.

### **How will Credit/No Credit affect my GPA?**

Credit/No Credit will not be part of the GPA calculation.

### **Why are you grading CR/NC this quarter?**

We want to engage our students meaningfully and moving to CR/NC is intended to enhance, not diminish, distance learning. Our instruction will include assessment with meaningful feedback. We believe this approach will best support student health and wellness given the necessary but unexpected shift to remote learning this spring and the wide range of personal circumstances students will be navigating as they engage in their coursework from afar. It is also intended to lessen the anxiety that this new endeavor might prompt for our students. The decision to make this change was carefully considered and does not reflect any inherent shortcoming of remote learning. Rather, it was based on issues of uncertainty, access, equity and recognition that online education was different. Overlake reviewed the actions taken by colleges/universities and other independent schools nationwide before making this decision to be sure that there would not be any negative ramifications for our students. As noted by the University of Chicago, "if your school moves to an alternative grading system or method of credit notation (pass/fail, credit/no credit, etc.), we will fully understand why the change has been made and it will not, in any way, be an issue for an admissions office." This message was one of *many* the Overlake College Counseling team received from colleges and universities on how they will view applicants next year and for the foreseeable future.



### **How will my assignments be evaluated? Number or CR/NC?**

Faculty will continue to provide meaningful assignments meant to support learning. Given the move to CR/NC, faculty will have the opportunity to be more flexible in the assignments that they create with some being graded with a percent, some for credit, and some only for submission. The current situation makes cumulative traditional testing, for instance, more challenging. Student should see fewer high stakes tests and a wider range of assessments.

### **What is the minimum I need to get to receive a CR?**

The academic outcomes of this term, as with any other, will largely hinge on students and their active engagement in their coursework. Overlake faculty are ready to provide students with an engaging online learning experience, including thoughtful feedback, and student support. Similar to what they had done on campus, students should bring as much energy, creativity, thoughtfulness, and effort to this work as they can and reach out for help when they need it. Faculty will ensure that students, advisories and parents/guardians are given feedback if they are not working at a CR level for each individual course.

### **How can I show academic achievement and an upward grade trend without actual grades?**

There is an optional section on college applications where students may provide additional information to help bolster their application. In addition to your essays, you can use the optional section to provide supplemental context about your academic achievements.

Overlake College Counseling will always provide colleges with information that would support an application. The decision to send Q3 grades will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with your Academic Dean/Overlake College Counselor. You should also plan to self-report this information in your college applications.

### **May I request to have my transcript show my actual grade?**

For the second semester, students will receive a CR or NC on their transcript. The opportunity to provide Q3 grades to colleges will be available although they won't



appear on the transcript. Each grade on the transcript represents a semester of work with a quarter grade being a grade to date midway through the semester. Faculty will not be expected to continue to assess in the same way that they had previously done and therefore will not be expected to maintain nor provide a percent grade at the end of the Spring 2020 semester.

### **How will colleges/universities review my application?**

The majority of institutions stated they will review applications holistically. This means accomplishments in and out of the classroom including community involvement, athletics, fine and performing arts, employment, and personal circumstances – will all be considered. Below are several excerpts from highly selective schools about how they plan to review college applications in the wake of this pandemic. Any decision a high school makes will not disadvantage an applicant. Applicants cannot control the courses offered, the grading scale or changes to the academic program. As such, Overlake's decision to move to a CR/NC system will not limit a student's admissions outcomes.

One question college counselors anticipate in future college applications is how did you (the student) spend your time during your school closure and summer? For example:

- What did you read for pleasure?
- What new hobbies or projects did you try?
- How did you contribute to your family and/or community?
- Did you pursue online learning outside of Overlake?

Below, you will find links from many colleges/universities across the USA to illustrate their response to the pandemic and its effects on college admissions.

*We recognize that school transcripts will look different for many students this year, and we will work with that! Academic progress as usual is currently being disrupted for students across the globe. We encourage students to continue to engage with whatever method of learning your school is able to offer, and to do so to the best of your ability. If your school moves to an alternative grading system or method of credit notation (pass/fail, credit/no credit, etc.), we will fully understand why the change has been made and it will not, in any way, be an issue for an admissions office.*  
**-University of Chicago**



*Please be assured that we fully support the pedagogical and administrative decisions your school may make in order to assist your community through this crisis. For example, pass/fail marks or alternative grading methods in lieu of letter or numerical grades will be accommodated in our review of final transcripts. We all have plenty of obstacles to navigate in the months ahead and submitting paperwork for your college-bound students should be the least of your concerns...we understand that disruptions may significantly alter the trajectory of their extracurricular, athletic and other pursuits. Students might not have access to summer programs or other enrichment experiences. Their college applications will likely look different than they have in the past. We remain committed to our holistic and contextual review process that considers the individual circumstances that shape each applicant's journey*  
**-Columbia University**

*We know you have many questions about how unanticipated changes to your senior year schedule as a result of COVID-19 school modifications will affect your admission to the UW. Rest assured that we will be as flexible and understanding as possible. As always, we will review individual circumstances on a case-by-case basis. We will keep you up-to-date with the latest admissions information via email and our website, but feel free to contact us with any questions you may have. We're here to help.*  
**-University of Washington**

*We understand that many schools are still unclear about what the remainder of this academic year will entail. Please know that we will be flexible in working with you and your students to honor whatever decisions your school makes around curriculum, grading policies and graduation requirements. You can count on the following:*

#### **Test Optional for the 2020-2021 Application Cycle**

*Students applying to Williams as first-years or transfers during the 2020-2021 admission cycle have the option of applying under a test-optional policy. This change has been instituted for next year only, in response to the extraordinary challenges facing all of us during the COVID-19 pandemic. For students who choose to submit standardized test results, those results will be considered as part of our holistic admission process that strives to center students and their unique lived experiences.*

#### **Additional Flexibility in the Admission Process**

*We understand that the pandemic has led to school closings, shifts to remote learning and pass/fail grading policies, cancellations of co-curricular activities, and a host of other disruptions that dramatically impact students' experiences. You can be certain that we'll be flexible in working with students and families no matter what challenges or limitations they've faced. None of us know what the next few months will hold, but our commitment to getting to know students and their stories will remain at the core of everything we do*  
**-Williams College**





**University of California System**

<https://edsources.org/2020/uc-suspends-sat-act-requirements-for-2021-applicants/627670>

**University of Chicago**

<https://collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu/files/documents/letter-from-dean-admissions-uchicago.pdf>

**Harvard University**

<https://college.harvard.edu/about/news-announcements/special-message-high-school-juniors-applying-harvard>

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)**

<https://mitadmissions.org/blogs/entry/mits-covid-19-precautions-and-its-impact-on-admissions/>

**University of Pennsylvania**

<https://ask.admissions.upenn.edu/hc/en-us/articles/360040924812-COVID-19-Updates-for-Prospective-Students>

**Stanford University**

<https://admission.stanford.edu>

**Vanderbilt University**

<https://admissions.vanderbilt.edu/vandybloggers/2020/03/strange-days/>

**Yale University**

<https://admissions.yale.edu/covid-19>