Concurrent 3: Covering grades
Grade covering in the first year: Options, advantages, and challenges

Pond
**Curzan & Moldwin Report: Values (March 2019)**

Recommends adopting a set of *shared values* for undergraduate education at the University of Michigan:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Bold Exploration</strong></th>
<th>To expand knowledge and encourage curiosity and discovery, to gain in breadth of experiences and in depth of critical inquiry, and to embrace intellectual and creative risks.</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Greater Good</strong></td>
<td>To encourage a sense of responsibility to society, both local and global, and to promote informed, active citizenship focused on creating ideas and outcomes bigger than ourselves to benefit others.</td>
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<td><strong>Purposeful Inclusion</strong></td>
<td>To thoughtfully, intentionally, and actively engage in a community that allows all members to thrive by valuing and learning from others' backgrounds, identities, and perspectives, and by striving for equitable treatment.</td>
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<td><strong>Collaborative Spirit</strong></td>
<td>To seek and learn effective teamwork across disciplines, with intellectual and cultural humility, integrity, and awareness of the value of diverse contributions for collective achievement.</td>
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<td><strong>Well-being</strong></td>
<td>To foster resilience in the face of adversity and challenges and to support the overall health of each individual within the learning community as they pursue their goals.</td>
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<td><strong>Self-determination</strong></td>
<td>To promote reflection, explore purpose, and make mindful choices among pathways leading to meaningful work and meaningful lives.</td>
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Curzan & Moldwin Report: Recommendations

“We would like to see the University of Michigan radically rethink grading practices for undergraduates across units, especially in the first one to two years.”

| Bold Exploration | Experiment with **covered grades** for first-year students. Implement a university-wide **course repeat policy** whereby a student’s first attempt is forgiven and only the second attempt grade shows on the transcript and factors into GPA. Creating a more **narrative, curated transcript** to encourage building guided reflection. Making the **academic calendar more flexible** to empower shorter and longer learning experiences. |

| Greater Good |

| Purposeful Inclusion |

| Collaborative Spirit |

| Well-being & Self-determination |
The University should **recommend that all courses consider moving away from competitive grading** and adopt clear criterion referenced grading.

- The university should **encourage the instructional community to focus on authentic assessment**, discouraging heavy reliance on a few high stakes timed examinations for grading and encouraging the use of more frequent, authentic forms of evaluation with timely feedback.

- All U-M schools and colleges **return to an earlier and uniform withdrawal** (whereby a “W” is noted on the transcript) and **pass/fail deadline**, at week 9 of each semester.

- The university should **establish separate systems for internal and external transcripts** to better serve the different purposes that internal and external audiences have for these documents.
MIT Grading Policies Exploration Report (May 2023)

Policy: “All first-time first-year students start their time at MIT with a semester graded Pass/No Record. Under P/NR, students either earn at least a C and their transcript simply states that they “Passed” the class, or they earn a D or F and have no record on their transcript that they took the class.”

Timeline:
- Fall 1968: Policy implemented as pass/fail grading for students’ first year; voted into permanence with revisions that (1) a failure would not appear on transcript and (2) there would be a credit limit to keep students from overextending themselves.
- Fall 1990: Passing grade moved from “D” to “C”; credit limit was lowered.
- Fall 2002: P/NR reduced to first semester rather than full first year.
- Fall 2018: A multi-phase experimental grading policy was implemented intended to encourage student exploration of courses so students can more easily select a major at the end of their first year. Data collection was affected by the pandemic and efforts were resumed and renewed in 2022 and 2023.
Key takeaways:

- No policy is truly permanent, nor will any policy work perfectly for everyone, but communicating, co-designing, and iterating with students and faculty can generate lasting policies that serve everyone well enough and promote equity/excellence.

- Students need the flexibility to explore their interests but need guardrails to prevent them from taking on too much or falling behind.
  - Need grading policies and credit limits.

- Students face many sources of stress and self-doubt in the first year. University policies, messaging, and advising should acknowledge these stressors and support students in facing them.
Bibliography

Academic Policies Work Team. (2023) Student Mental Health Innovative Approaches.


