

# **Concurrent 3: Covering grades**



Undergraduate  
Education  
at Michigan

**FORGING  
A COMMON  
VISION** 2.20.24



## Grade covering in the first year: Options, advantages, and challenges

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# Curzan & Moldwin Report: Values (March 2019)

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

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <i>Bold Exploration</i>     | 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.  |
| <i>Greater Good</i>         | 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.                         |
| <i>Purposeful Inclusion</i> | 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. |
| <i>Collaborative Spirit</i> | 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.                                  |
| <i>Well-being</i>           | 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.   |
| <i>Self-determination</i>   | To promote reflection, explore purpose, and make mindful choices among pathways leading to meaningful work and meaningful lives.  |

# 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*

# Post-COVID Grade Policy Committee

## Recommendations (June 2022)

- 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.

# MIT Grading Policies Exploration Report (May 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.

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