



Grading Policy Guidance for Remote and Blended Learning Models (2020-21)

With the transition to blended and remote learning, New York City students, families, teachers, paraprofessionals, services providers, and administrators, have adapted to new ways of learning. Students’ grades are a critical teacher tool to communicate progress to students and families and provide meaningful feedback about what students are learning. Grades must provide a complete picture of students’ performance and take into consideration the varied circumstances that students and schools are navigating in remote and blended learning for 2020-21.

While we assess student learning in new ways, we must continue to review student work holistically. Schools must adapt their grading policies to reflect the realities of remote and blended learning and their impact on the ways students demonstrate their learning. This guidance is designed to promote equity, flexibility, and empathy in our grading practices for all students.

As students participate in remote and blended learning, teachers must grade their work and keep their gradebooks up to date, as set forth by the principal’s expectations. In alignment with existing systems, teachers must document students’ areas for improvement on student report cards or in other school-based systems, including for high-performing students.

Schools should contact their [academic policy and systems lead](#) for additional support with grading policies.

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GRADING POLICY FLEXIBILITIES

Schools must ensure that their grading policies and practices acknowledge the impact of remote and blended learning models on the ways in which students complete their assigned work. This review must consider the following flexibilities as we implement learning models for all students:

- A) **Student access to devices and high-speed internet:** Schools must take into consideration students' access to devices and high-speed internet and support them in catching up on their learning once they have received a device. Work issued by schools while students do not have suitable access (i.e., paper materials) must be reviewed and considered in teachers' overall assessment of whether students have met learning outcomes. If students are not able to complete assigned work due to issues related to technology, schools must provide an alternative way for them to complete the activities.
- B) **Expectations for due dates and submission of late work:** Schools must adjust their deadlines and expectations for submission of assignments to acknowledge the significant impact of COVID-19 on students' experiences. These adjustments may include extending deadlines for individual students, taking into consideration the personal loss, illness, or other trauma that students may be experiencing. Schools are encouraged to lessen or eliminate penalties for late work beyond these adjusted deadlines. Due dates must be clearly documented for students and take into consideration timelines for entering grades.
- C) **Attendance may not count toward grades:** Attending school, participating in class, and demonstrating understanding are all essential components of student learning, and school communities must make every effort to ensure that students attend school, with a goal of every student, every day. Students' grades must reflect the extent to which they have met the learning outcomes for their courses. At the high school level, any student who achieves the learning outcomes for a course must be granted credit, as described in guidance from the [New York State Education Department](#). When students attend remote and blended learning consistently, they have the greatest opportunity to make progress, receive support from their teachers, and demonstrate their learning. Schools have flexibility in determining the factors that contribute to grades as described in their school-wide grading policies. With the understanding that course time is no longer a requirement for earning credit, courses that currently include attendance as a factor in student grades must remove that factor completely. Schools should use [Insight](#) to monitor attendance trends and guide continuous improvement strategies.
- D) **The way in which assignments are scored:** If parts of some tasks are impractical in a remote setting, teachers must consider adjusting the way those assignments are graded. This could include lowering the weight of portions of an assignment, adjusting the way students are expected to express their learning, or removing portions of tasks.

Schools must base students' grades on academic progress and performance, considering a student's entire body of work in each subject area. The rate at which students are able to engage in remote learning, in and of itself, may not be used as a factor in grade calculations. For example, schools may not penalize students for missing remote learning sessions if they successfully demonstrate meeting the associated learning outcomes in other ways. See [Grading Scales](#) for guidance about which marks to use when there is insufficient work to determine a final grade.



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As outlined in the [Grading Policy Toolkit](#), schools may not have different grading policies for different student populations. Grading policies must apply to all students equally, including students with disabilities participating in both standard and alternate assessment and multilingual/English language learners.¹

Any changes to grading policies must be shared with the school community, so that teachers, students, and families understand what grades mean and how they are determined. Families must be informed in their preferred language.

¹ Different grading scales may be used for students who participate in alternate assessment as described in [Grading Scales](#).

GRADING SCALES

During the 2020-21 school year, the following policies apply for the scale of marks awarded. See [Overview of Grading Policy Changes from SY19-20](#) for a comparison to the grading policy from spring 2020.

Grade Level	Requirements
Grades Kindergarten through 5	<p>Schools may select their grading scales for marking period and final grades.</p> <p>‘N’ must be used in place of a failing grade.</p> <p>‘NL’ must be used in cases where there is insufficient information to determine whether a student has met standards.²</p> <p>Parents/guardians make the final decision about whether the student’s final passing grade remains on the existing scale or is updated to ‘MT’ (Meets standards). See Parent/Guardian Choice of Grading Scale.</p>
Grades 6-8	<p>Schools may select their grading scales for marking period and final grades.</p> <p>‘NX’ must be used in the following cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students receive an ‘NX’ in place of failing grades. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Only students in grade 8 are required to reconcile a final grade of ‘NX’ in a core course by August 2021 in alignment with promotion policies. June grades of ‘NX’ must be updated to a passing grade upon successful completion of summer work in core courses. ○ For all other courses, ‘NX’ remains as the student’s final grade. • Students receive an ‘NX’ if there is insufficient work to calculate a final grade. <p>Parents/guardians make the final decision about whether the student’s final passing grade remains on the existing scale or is updated to ‘P’ (pass). See Parent/Guardian Choice of Grading Scale.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades of ‘P’ are not included in students’ GPAs.

² Prior to 2020-21, grades of ‘NL’ were reserved for students who were new or recent admits. For 2020-21, this mark may also be used for any student in grades K-5 for whom there is insufficient information to determine whether they have met standards in that subject.

Grade Level	Requirements
Grades 9-12	<p>Schools may select their grading scales for marking period and final grades.</p> <p>'NX' must be used in the following cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students receive an 'NX' in place of failing grades. • Students receive an 'NX' if there is insufficient work to calculate a final grade. <p>Parents/guardians make the final decision about whether the student's final passing grade remains on the existing scale or is updated to 'CR' (Credit). See Parent/Guardian Choice of Grading Scale.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades of 'CR' are not included in students' GPAs.
Alternate Assessment	<p>Grading for students participating in alternate assessment is intended to communicate student's progress towards alternate assessment standards and progress towards the student's IEP goals.</p> <p>Students participating in alternate assessment receive both marking period grades and final grades.</p> <p>The grading scale is established at the individual school level. Schools may select their grading scales for marking period and final grades. Schools may continue to use grading scales that existed prior to the transition to remote learning if this scale continues to meet the needs of their school community. The majority of District 75 schools utilize a 1-4 point scale, but schools may select from the DOE-provided grading scales.</p>

PARENT/GUARDIAN CHOICE FOR FINAL GRADES

Schools must provide every parent or guardian the option to replace their student's passing final grades with grades of 'MT' (meets standards), 'P' (pass), or 'CR' (credit) depending upon the student's grade level. Parents have the final say in this determination; students need not meet specific criteria. Parents may apply this option to all of their student's passing courses or specific passing courses (e.g., math only).

Schools must determine parents' preferred option as follows. The term "parent" means the student's parent(s) or guardian(s), or any person(s) in a parental or custodial relationship to the student, or the student, if they are an emancipated minor or has reached 18 years of age:

- Schools must first calculate students' final grades using their existing scales and enter them into STARS.
- Upon issuing final report cards, schools must inform all parents of their right to select a grade of 'MT', 'P', or 'CR' (based upon the student's grade level) for their passing courses and provide parents specific instructions for submitting their requests to designated school staff. Schools must invite parents to discuss their preference and decision with school staff (see [Sample Email to Parents and Guardians about Parent Choice Option](#)).
- Schools must honor and document all requests received, whether the request was submitted in writing or through other means. This documentation may include a copy of an email from the parent, a documented conversation between the parent and a school staff member (signed and dated by school staff member), or other records that clearly indicate the parent's name, student's name, grade preference by course, and date.
- Schools must update students' final grades and provide families with updated report cards and transcripts within 30 days of the receipt of the request. High schools must prioritize making these updates for graduating students within 10 days so that their final transcripts are accurate. Final grades may be updated using the following methods:
 - STARS Classroom Download/Upload
 - Marking Period Grades Screen
 - Electronic Grade Gathering (EGG) File (middle and high school)
 - Transcript Update (middle and high school)
 - Performing a transcript update does not change the final grade on the report card; use one of the above methods if an updated report card is required.

For high school students who received passing grades in June or August 2020, parents have the right to submit or revise their preference for through **November 30, 2020**. For high school students who initially earned an 'NX' in June and/or summer 2020 and have since received passing grades in those courses, parents have the right to submit or revise their preference through **March 1, 2021**.

GRADE POINT AVERAGE (GPA) AND RANK

Final grades of 'P' and 'NX' for middle school students will not be included in student GPAs. Final grades of 'NC', 'NX', and 'CR' for high school students will not be included in student GPAs. See [Completing Courses and Updating 'NX' Grades](#) for more information about completing courses for which students receive 'NX' grades.

Given the grading policy changes during the transition to remote learning in SY19-20, final grades that were awarded between March 14 and August 31 must not be used for ranking purposes. Schools should consider factors such as equity, motivation, and academic integrity when considering whether to specify an individual student's rank. Schools are encouraged to move away from using grades as a means of comparative student recognition and instead celebrate all students for navigating the significant challenges during the COVID-19 crisis.

Including class rank on transcripts is optional. Class rank is often used to determine scholarship eligibility, but schools may also choose to designate students as being in the top 10% or top 25% for GPA outside of STARS without assigning each student an individual number/rank in STARS.

COMPLETING COURSEWORK AND UPDATING 'NX' GRADES

Students who earn an 'NX' must be given opportunities to continue their learning. Teachers who award an 'NX' must document the areas in which students have not yet met the learning outcomes for the course. Students must then be provided with targeted instruction to meet the learning outcomes in those areas. High schools must program all students who have outstanding marks of 'NX' for synchronous instruction in all terms either until they have reconciled the mark or until the deadline for reconciliation, whichever comes first. Middle school students who receive marks of 'NX' should be provided the opportunity to pass the course during summer school.

The teacher providing targeted instruction to support a student in passing courses in which they previously received an 'NX' is responsible for determining the final outcomes of the course. If the current teacher is different from the previous teacher of the course, the teacher should request relevant records of the student's progress and performance from the previous teacher, in alignment with school-based procedures. The current teacher may also assess students at the beginning of the term to determine students' individual needs. As outlined in the [Transfer Student Toolkit](#), for students who transfer between schools, it is the responsibility of the receiving school to request all records from the previous school within the first two weeks of a student's matriculation and as soon as possible.

'NX' Grades Awarded in June and Summer 2020

High school students from SY19-20 have until January 31, 2021 to complete outstanding coursework for grades of 'NX' issued in June and/or summer 2020 courses.

- Schools must update the 'NX' to the passing grade for students who meet the learning outcomes for the course by January 31, 2021. The school must notify the student's parent/guardian of their option to keep the final calculated grade for the course or replace it with 'CR' (Credit). Families have until

March 1, 2021 to decide whether they would like to change these June and/or August 2020 passing grades to 'CR'. See [Parent/Guardian Choice for High School Final Grades](#).

- If students do not achieve the course learning outcomes by January 31, 2021, the school must update the 'NX' (Course in progress) to 'NC' (No credit).

'NX' Grades Awarded in 2020-21

During the 2020-21 school year, middle and high school students may receive grades of 'NX' (Course in progress) instead of a failing grade or when there is insufficient work to determine a final grade.

- High school students who receive final grades of 'NX' during the Fall term of SY20-21 have until June 2021 to complete outstanding coursework.
- High school students who receive final grades of 'NX' during the Spring and/or Summer term of SY20-21 have until January 31, 2022 to complete outstanding coursework.
- Once high schools update the 'NX' to a passing grade, the high school must also notify the student's parent/guardian of their option to keep the final calculated grade for the course or replace it with 'CR' (Credit).

If high school students do not achieve the course learning outcomes by the dates specified above, the school must update the 'NX' (course in progress) to 'NC' (no credit).

Summary of timelines

- Grades of 'NX' earned from the beginning of remote learning through August 2020 must be reconciled by January 31, 2021.
- Grades of 'NX' earned between September 2020 and February 1, 2021 must be reconciled by June 2021.
- For high school, grades of 'NX' earned between February 2, 2021 and August 2021 must be reconciled by January 2022.
- For middle school, grades of 'NX' earned between February 2, 2021 and June 2021 must be reconciled by August 2021.

COMMUNICATING STUDENT PROGRESS

Students who are enrolled in courses to work toward resolving a previous 'NX' must still be awarded interim grades. Schools should determine the appropriate marking period grades based on the teacher's current gradebook for the student, in alignment with normal grading procedures. 'NX' may be used as a marking period grade where appropriate to indicate that the student has not yet met the learning outcomes for the course. Progress must be periodically reported to students and families at least once per marking period. In addition to grades, teachers may communicate about student progress through report card comments, written notes, and/or phone calls to students and families, in alignment with school-based expectations.

Example:

School A has a student who received an 'NX' in June 2020 and is now working toward passing the course in fall 2020. The school uses a mark of 'NX' for marking period grades and leaves comments detailing which learning outcomes the student must still achieve to pass the course.

Example:

School B has a student who receives an 'NX' first term and works toward passing the course during second term. The school communicates to the student and family the scope of outcomes for each marking period. The student receives a mark based on their achievement toward those outcomes.

RECONCILING MARKS OF 'NX'

Once a student has completed the coursework required to pass a course, the grade should be reconciled by the current teacher supporting the student with completion. The teacher should compile all grades from any terms in which the student worked toward the standards of the course and must create one comprehensive grade book that includes all marks being used to determine the final grade as well as a clearly marked final grade. The grade book must also include the name of the student, the name and/or course code of the course, the name of the teacher awarding the grade, and the terms in which the course took place.

A final mark must not be awarded in the final term in which the student completed the course. Instead, the original mark of 'NX' must be changed using a transcript update.

Updating courses not successfully completed

If a student does not pass a course by the deadline, the original 'NX' mark must be updated to an 'NC' (no credit). The mark of 'NC' does not have a numeric equivalent and will not be calculated into a student's grade point average. No final mark may be awarded in any terms other than the original term in which the student earned the initial 'NX'.

Reconciling marks of 'NX' originally awarded by another school

Because schools cannot perform transcript updates to edit records from other DBNs, a new process will be established to ensure that the original 'NX' is changed in STARS. Further guidance is forthcoming. Schools can prepare for the reconciliation process by compiling a final grade book as outlined above and keeping lists of students whose grades need to be reconciled.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Does this grading policy apply to students with IEPs participating in both standardized and alternate assessment?

The grading flexibilities in this document apply to all students. Teachers must also indicate progress towards student attainment of IEP goals. Schools serving students with IEPs in grades K-12 participating in alternate assessment may continue to award grades using their existing grading scales from prior to the transition to remote learning for both marking period and final grades. At the same time report cards are issued, schools should also report progress on student IEP goals and provide this information to parents.

2. When can parents request to replace the student’s calculated final grade with ‘MT’, ‘P’, or ‘CR’?

This option is only available **after** the student has received a passing final grade in the course. Schools must collect and document these preferences after report cards are issued and adjust accordingly as described in [Parent/Guardian Choice for High School Final Grades](#). Schools may not make the decision on behalf of the parent/family. Parent choice does not apply to marking period grades, which remain on schools’ existing grading scales.

3. How much time must schools allow for parents/guardians to change passing grades to ‘MT’, ‘P’, or ‘CR’?

Schools may set their own deadlines for parents to decide if they want to convert any of their student’s passing final grades. This deadline should allow parents at least 60 days after receipt of their student’s final grades for them to respond. This minimum includes passing grades that are awarded on a rolling basis after high school students have completed courses in which they originally received an ‘NX’.

Parents of students in articulating grades (often grades 5 and 8) will have less time to change their students’ passing final grades issued in June so that the student’s grade is finalized before they move to the next grade/school.

4. How long do 8th grade students have to make up marks of ‘NX’ that they receive during the school year?

In alignment with the promotion process, 8th grade students must have work for the course from the 2020-2021 school year in which they received an ‘NX’ completed by August 2021. If students do not pass those courses by August, the grade will remain an ‘NX’ and will not be updated.

5. How should high schools support students in preparing their transcripts for postsecondary options in light of the 2020-21 grading policy?

Given the impact of COVID-19 on students’ academic experiences, including cancellation of Regents Exams and a large scale shift to [test-optional and test-blind postsecondary admissions policies](#) that impact the use of SAT or ACT scores, colleges and universities are relying heavily on student transcripts to evaluate student admissibility and appropriate placement in college coursework. Schools can support students by

ensuring that their transcripts provide a clear and comprehensive picture of their academic experiences, following the guidance below.

- The titles of courses should be easy for an external reader to interpret. Information about the themes and topics covered in required courses can hinder postsecondary admissions officers' ability to understand a student's academic history. Your [School Profile](#) is an important school-created document that should accompany all students' postsecondary applications because it contextualizes your school's course offerings to inform how postsecondary admissions will interpret your students' transcripts. See School Profile exemplars [here](#). Colleges use your School Profile and your students' transcripts to assess the rigor of student course work and identify indicators for postsecondary success. It is therefore critical that course titles in transcripts clearly communicate the content of students' coursework. This information can also be communicated with students and families through course catalogs or other materials.
- Courses for which a standard code is not available are generally coded using 'Q' in the second character. The titles of these courses should be descriptive so that the reader of the transcript can interpret them. For example, the course "MQS11: Math Topics" does not provide any information about the content of the course and whether it is high-school level, while "MQS11: Pre-Algebra" clearly describes the course content.
- Any credit-bearing college course that students take in high school (which must have a "U" in the sixth character of the STARS course code) should have either an actual course title or clear college course descriptor so students and higher education admissions can interpret them. For example, a college course code such as "MAT 1275" does not provide any information about the content of the course, while "College Algebra and Trigonometry" clearly describes course content. Please refer to the [College Courses guidance](#) on coding courses.
- Advanced Placement courses must use specific, required course titles; see the [AP Courses guidance](#) for additional information. Consistent use of AP Course naming conventions on student transcripts makes your students' AP experiences recognizable to all postsecondary admissions officers and helps them evaluate level of rigor in a student's coursework throughout high school.
- Follow the timelines described in this grading policy guidance for changing passing grades to 'CR' at parent request and for reconciling 'NX' grades. Having current grades on students' transcripts in alignment with DOE deadlines enables colleges to make informed decisions in evaluating student transcripts. Colleges will begin reviewing applications, and transcripts, in late November 2020 through January 2021, so it is important that updates are made prior to the application review process by postsecondary admissions officers. Schools will have an opportunity to submit second semester grades after January 2021.

6. My school does not operate on semesters. What is the timeline for reconciling our grades?

The deadline for grade reconciliation is based on grade band and when grades are awarded. Middle school students have until the end of June to have 'NX' marks received before February 2 reconciled and until the end of Term 7 to have their marks of 'NX' from February 2 until June reconciled. For high school, marks of



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'NX' awarded during quarter 1, quarter 2, trimester 1, or semester 1 have until the end of June for reconciliation. Marks of 'NX' awarded to high school students during quarter 3, quarter 4, trimester 2, trimester 3, semester 2, or at the end of an annual term have until the end of the following January to be reconciled.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Overview of Grading Policy Changes from SY19-20

Policy Area	SY19-20 (pre-COVID)	SY19-20 Remote Learning (includes Summer 2020)	SY20-21 (Remote and Blended Learning)
Grading scale for grades K-5	Schools select a scale from the DOE-provided grading scales.	Schools are required to award final grades of meets standards (MT) or needs improvement (N).	Change: Schools select a scale from the DOE-provided grading scales. Needs improvement (N) must be used in place of failing grades. NL must be used when there is insufficient work to calculate a final grade.
Grading scale for grades 6-8	Schools select a scale from the DOE-provided grading scales.	Schools are required to award final grades of meets standards (MT), needs improvement (N), or course in progress ('NX') only.	Change: Schools select a scale from the DOE-provided grading scales. NX must be used in place of failing grades or when there is insufficient work to calculate a final grade.
Grading scale for grades 9-12	Schools select a scale from the DOE-provided grading scales.	Schools continue with existing grading scales.	Same: Schools select a scale from the DOE-provided grading scales. NX must be used in place of failing grades or when there is insufficient work to calculate a final grade.
Meaning and Use of 'NX'	'Incomplete' is to be used only in extreme cases where there is not enough work to award a marking period or final grade. Student has one term (including summer) to make up work to change grade.	'Course in Progress' is to be used when there is insufficient work to calculate a final grade. Student has until the end of summer for middle school and until January 31 for high school to make up work to change grade.	Same: 'Course in Progress' is to be used when there is insufficient work to calculate a final grade. Change: Student has <u>a specified timeline</u> to make up work to change grade.

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Policy Area	SY19-20 (pre-COVID)	SY19-20 Remote Learning (includes Summer 2020)	SY20-21 (Remote and Blended Learning)
Parent Option to Replace the Passing Calculated Final Grade	Parents are not entitled to opt for a different grading scale.	All high schools must honor parent choice between the calculated final grade and a grade of 'CR' for passing courses for HS students.	Change: All schools must honor parent choice between the calculated passing final grade and a grade of 'MT' for students in grades K-5, 'P' for students in grades 6-8, and 'CR' for students in grades 9-12.
GPA	Schools determine which courses are included in GPA and how they are weighted. GPA is calculated using standard DOE numeric equivalents for each mark.	Schools exclude final marks of 'MT', 'N', 'NX', and 'CR' for middle and high school. Otherwise, schools determine which courses are included in GPA and how they are weighted.	Change: Schools exclude final marks of 'P' and 'NX' for middle school students and exclude final marks of 'NX', 'NC', and 'CR' for high school students. Otherwise, schools determine which courses are included in GPA and how they are weighted.
Rank	Set by the school.	Set by school. Schools must exclude final marks awarded during remote learning in 2019-20.	Same: Set by school. Schools must exclude final marks awarded during remote learning in 2019-20.

Appendix B: Sample Email for Parent/Guardian Option to Replace Final Passing Grades (High School)

Dear Parent/Guardian of [Student Name],

We recognize that COVID-19 and the transition to blended and remote learning may impact how your student demonstrates their learning. Because of this, you can choose to replace any passing final grade on your student's transcript for the 2020-21 school year with a grade of credit or 'CR'. This option is meant to ensure that your student's transcript best reflects their achievements.

Your student's final grades appear on their transcript, which is the official record of the courses they have completed. Final grades in some courses are used to calculate a cumulative average, which is often used for scholarship and program eligibility and class ranking. If you choose to change any of your student's passing grades to 'CR', that grade will not affect their cumulative average, but it will still count toward graduation. More information on student transcripts is available at <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/learning/student-journey/student-records-and-transcripts>.

To let us know which passing course grades from [year/term] you would like to be changed to grades of 'CR', respond to this email by [school-based deadline] with one of the options below. If you do not respond by this deadline, the original passing final grade will be permanently saved on your student's transcript.

- **I want to change all** passing final grades to passing grades of 'CR'. Respond to this email with, "change all passing grades from [year/term] to CR." Doing so means that none of my student's passing final grades will be included in their cumulative average.
- **I want to change the following** passing final grades to passing grades of 'CR'. Respond to this email with, "change the following passing grades from [year/term] to CR" and list all of the courses for which you are requesting this change.
- **I do not want to change** any passing final grades to passing grades of 'CR'. Respond to this email with, "do not change any grades." I understand that all of my student's passing final grades will be included in their cumulative average.
- **I am not sure.** Respond to this email with, "I would like to meet with a school staff member to discuss this decision."

Once we receive your decision, we will make the change(s) within 10 business days for students graduating in this term and within 30 business days for all other students.

This is an important decision that impacts your student's next steps after high school. We are available to discuss these options with you to help you make the best decision for your student. We congratulate your student for reaching this stage in their high school career.

Sincerely,

[Name and contact information]