Extraordinary Circumstances Petition
Graded Course to Credit/Fail
Fall 2020

Background

Following the unprecedented changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Yale Law School faculty voted to adopt a mandatory credit/fail system for the Spring 2020 semester. In July 2020, the faculty voted to return to standard YLS grading policies with important exceptions to credit/fail course election and deadline policies. Students may elect to change a Fall 2020 course or clinic to CR/F, with instructor permission, from August 24, 2020 through September 28, 2020. From August 24, 2020 through December 1, 2020, students facing a significant hardship that necessitates a course or clinic switch to CR/F may submit an Extraordinary Circumstances Petition to the Law School administration for consideration.

Eligibility

Students currently enrolled in a Yale Law School degree program and registered in a course or clinic are eligible to submit an Extraordinary Circumstances Petition. Applicants must be prepared to describe the exceptional circumstance that justifies a change to the grading basis of a Fall 2020 course or clinic.

Reasons for requesting a course change to CR/F following the September 28 deadline include:

- unexpected illness (including COVID-19)
- unexpected childcare challenges or other care obligations
- unexpected family health emergencies
- exceptional financial challenges
- other exceptional circumstances

Application Process

Applicants must complete the “Extraordinary Circumstances Petition to Change Grading Basis” form that identifies the course or clinic in question and describes the exceptional circumstance that justifies a change to the course’s grading basis to CR/F. Applicants must also submit an unofficial Yale Law School transcript along with their form. Applicants should feel free to submit additional documentation to support the exceptional circumstance described. Submitting supporting documentation is optional, but encouraged. Students should provide as much information and documentation as they have available at the time of submission and provide updates as they become available.
Prior to submitting a petition, students are highly encouraged to schedule a meeting with Monica Maldonado, Senior Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs (monica.maldonado@yale.edu), to go over individual academic records and discuss alternative options.

All petition materials (form, unofficial transcript, and supporting documentation) must be sent by email attachment to Deans Ellen Cosgrove (ellen.cosgrove@yale.edu) and Monica Maldonado (monica.maldonado@yale.edu) with the following subject line: Extraordinary Circumstances Petition: [Name and Anticipated Graduation Year of Applicant]. Students must submit petition materials no later than December 1, 2020. Under no circumstances may a student change to CR/F after a grade has been submitted to the Law School Registrar.

Review Process

The Petition Review Committee, comprised of Associate Dean Ellen Cosgrove and Senior Assistant Dean Monica Maldonado, assesses all petitions and takes the Law School’s minimum graded credits requirements into account when making determinations. The Committee may share petition materials and consult with Deputy Dean Ian Ayres before reaching a final decision. In the event that Deputy Dean Ayres is the faculty member responsible for grading the petitioned course or clinic, the Petition Review Committee may instead consult with Dean Heather Gerken. Petition materials remain confidential and are confined to the Petition Review Committee, Deputy Dean Ayres or, if necessary, Dean Heather Gerken. Submitted materials are not shared with the faculty member offering the petitioned course or clinic. The Petition Review Committee retains sole authority to approve or deny petitions.

In most cases, approved petitions will change the grading basis of the petitioned course or clinic to CR/F. In exceptional circumstances, the Petition Review Committee may approve a course change to CR-G/F, in which case the course units would count toward the Yale Law School graded unit requirement as if it were a graded course. Such determinations are made on a case-by-case basis. Following Review Committee deliberations, applicants should expect to receive an email officially approving or denying the petition and, if applicable, explaining any changes to the relevant course’s grading basis. If the petition is approved, the Registrar will be informed and any grade submitted by the faculty member will be changed to the CR/F format. A student may not change back to the graded format once the change to CR/F has been made.

Absent a material change in circumstances, the Review Committee will not accept appeals after a final decision is made.