

1. CALL TO ORDER

Call to Order – 4:34PM

2. TERRITORIALACKNOWLEDGMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that the SFSS is located on the traditional, unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), Selílwtulh (Tsleil-Waututh), k^wik^wəłəm (Kwikwetlem) and qícəy (Katzie) Nations. Unceded means that these territories have never been handed over, sold, or given up by these nations, and we are currently situated on occupied territories.

3. ROLL CALL OF ATTENDANCE

3.1 Council Composition

Student Union Representatives

Archeology	Clara Wilmot
Art, Performance, and Cinema Studies	
Bachelor of Environment.....	Bradley Sarandi
Behavioral Neuroscience	Ramsha Farooqui
Biology	Nicolas Bonilla
Biomedical Physiology & Kinesiology	Joshua Ham
Business	Mohnish Farswani
Chemistry	Gwen Bui
Cognitive Science	
Communications	
Computing Science	Ryan Vansickle
Criminology	Charlotte Taylor-Baer
Dance	
Data Science Student Union	Myckland Matthew
Earth Science.....	Alex Kristinsson
Economics	Sandra Pal
Education.....	Adrienne Blas
Engineering Science	Alvin David
English.....	Liz Giardin
Environmental Resource.....	
Environmental Science	Caitlin Heide
Film Student Union.....	
First Nations Studies Student Union	
French	Kylee Pocrnich
Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies.....	Devynn Butterworth
Geography	Winnie Wu
Gerontology Student Union.....	
Global Asia Studies Student Union.....	
Health Science.....	
History	Alan Saunderson
Humanities	Sara Wong
Interactive Arts and Technology	Jeremy Felix

International Studies	Alea Mohamed
Labour Studies	Justin Chen
Linguistics	Brianne Limb
Mathematics	Ben Tischler
Mechatronics System Engineering	Kimia Rezaeian
Molecular Biology & Biochemistry	Kyle Newcomb
Music Student Union	
Operations Research	Ashutosh Dubal
Philosophy	Tony Yu
Physics	Manuel Rojas
Political Science (<i>Vice-Chair</i>)	Helen Pahou
Psychology	Tiffany Liu
Science Undergraduate Society (SUS) (<i>Chair</i>)	Zaid Lari
Society of Arts and Social Sciences (SASS)	
Sociology and Anthropology	Kayla Chow
Software Systems	Mahek Khan
Statistics and Actuarial Science (SASSA)	Stephanie Chung
Sustainable Community Development	
Sustainable Energy Engineering Student Society	Maven Sera
Theatre Student Union	
Visual Arts	
World Literature	Ksydalg Henry

Constituency Group Representatives

Disability and Neurodiversity Alliance (DNA)	Serena Bains
First Nations Students Association (FNSA)	Lauren Robson
Out on Campus Collective (OOC)	
Residence Hall's Association (RHA)	
Student Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC)	Ryan Stolys
Students of Caribbean & African Ancestry (SOCA)	Juanita Julius Ndyamukama
Women Centre Collective (WCC)	Nisha Manhas

Board of Directors

SFSS Directors (*non-voting*)

President	Osob Mohamed
VP External Relations	Samad Raza
VP Finance	Corbett Gildersleve
VP Student Services	Matthew Provost
VP Student Life	Jennifer Chou
VP University Relations	Gabe Liosis
At-Large Representative	Balqees Jama
At-Large Representative	Phum Luckkid
Faculty Representative (Applied Sciences)	Harry Preet Singh
Faculty Representative (Arts & Social Sciences)	Sude Guvendik
Faculty Representative (Business)	Mehtaab Gill
Faculty Representative (Communications, Art, & Technology)	Haider Masood
Faculty Representative (Education)	Emerly Liu
Faculty Representative (Environment)	Anuki Karunajeewa
Faculty Representative (Health Sciences)	Nafoni Modi
Faculty Representative (Science)	WeiChun Kua

3.2 Society Staff

Operations Organizer Ayesha Khan
Administrative Assistant Brianna Mau

3.3 Regrets

Behavioral Neuroscience Ramsha Farooqui
Software Systems Mahek Khan

3.4 Absents

Bachelor of Environment Bradley Sarandi
Environmental Science Caitlin Heide
Geography Winnie Wu
Physics Manuel Rojas

4. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

4.1 MOTION COUNCIL 2021-02-03:01

Zaid/Ben

Be it resolved to adopt the agenda as amended.

CARRIED AS AMENDED UNANIMOUSLY

- Add Section 5 Ratification of Regrets.
- Add Discussion 10.3 Burnaby Mountain Gondola Project.

5. RATIFICATION OF REGRETS

5.1 MOTION COUNCIL 2021-02-03:02

Lauren/Juanita

Be it resolved to ratify regrets from Ramsha Farooqui, Sara Wong, and Mahek Khan.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- Sara Wong joined the meeting at 4:58PM.

6. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6.1 COUNCIL MINUTES – MOTION COUNCIL 2021-02-03:03

Helen/Alan

Be it resolved to receive and file the following minute(s):

- Council 2021-01-20

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. REPORTS FROM LIAISONS

7.1 Council Liaison

- Jan. 29th Board meeting
 - Transition Manager is leaving, and Operations Organizer now has signing authority.
 - New committee made up of some Board members has been set up to work with the union on the re-negotiations of the Collective Agreement.
 - Money has been put forward towards continuing the New Mode subscription.
 - \$500 has been put forward towards the Gondola campaign.
 - New fund called Social Justice Campaign Support Fund that can help student's with funds

for marketing, events, and promotions.

- There are several upcoming events including one that involves collaboration with the GSS and TSSU.

7.2 Board Liaison

- Jan. 29th Board Meeting Notes (for more details see attached file)
 - Gondola campaign is to help get student voices at a Burnaby City Council meeting & also President would love clips from councilors talking about their transit experience.
 - Social Justice Campaign Support Fund will also help teach student how to campaign and give resources and training along with the funds.
 - Spring/Summer Emergency Funding will be implemented. SFSS is working on a way to administer it on their own as distributing the funding through SFU has many restrictions.
 - The current plan is to distribute \$500 to 400 students per semester.

8. REPORTS FROM BOARD EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

8.1 VP Student Services

- Working on a digital media campaign to highlight current services and is in contact with Campaigns, Research and Policy Coordinator and Communications Coordinator.
 - Providing students with updated information, changes, and how to access information about what SFSS has.
 - Making infographics and digital timelines.
- On the Board Organizer Hiring Committee and will also be on the Bargaining Committee with the union.
- Doing research on accessible mental wellness resources around Greater Vancouver.
 - Also doing research on apps as well. Looking for low-cost options.
- Let Us Speak campaign received a lot of support during the Fall – 594 signatures on a petition and 12 letters of support.
 - On January 14th, the Office for Aboriginal Peoples and some SFU university administration set up the first consultation meeting with Indigenous students about the First Peoples Gathering House. This is the first step in a much-needed process.

8.2 VP Student Life

- Accessibility committee has a few ongoing projects.
 - Promotion of the Accessibility Fund which can be used to make events more accessible.
 - Creating an Accessibility Issues Policy for SFSS.
 - Recently hired an Accessibility Assistant who will be helping with all the accessibility related work.
- Events
 - Sharing Black History Month resources and promoting SOCA events.
 - Grey's Anatomy Trivia Night.
 - Origami Rose Making and Letter Writing Workshop.
 - Details are on the SFSS Events Instagram page.

8.3 VP University Relations

- New Grading scheme, P/C/NC, was approved by the Senate. It's a pilot that doesn't quite reach the level of the past grading scheme.
 - Hoping to work with individual departments to expand the scheme to required courses.
- Federal Government Announcement on Quarantine in Government-Approved Hotels for International Travelers
 - Concerned about implications for international students.
 - In discussion, with SFU around options to lobby the government to make sure this travel

policy will not impact international students.

- This includes making sure that SFU CARES is included as an approved hotel.
- Student Affordability Working Group
 - Two out of three areas have been completed.
 - Food insecurity – A list of resources is now available on SFU’s website.
 - Finance predictability – An online calendar that will go up soon to help students do research on the costs associated with university and living in Metro Vancouver.
- Burnaby Mountain Gondola Campaign
 - TransLink has completed their consultation process and will be sending the findings to Burnaby City Council who is the body that will decide if the gondola proceeds or not.
 - Campaign to increase enthusiasm among students and get them to attend this meeting to make sure student voices are heard.
- Governance Chair Projects
 - Policy change to expand duties and obligations of committee chairs to foster greater accountability and being consistent to make sure there is a good relationship between support staff and committee chairs.
 - Notice of Motion has been given, and Board will be voting on this on February 12th.
 - Developing a Consent Agenda which lumps the housekeeping items on an agenda to make meetings go faster.
- Transition Steering Committee is up and running. Governance is meeting very soon. Training Working Group chaired by VP Finance has already met twice. Operations Working Group chaired by President will be meeting soon too.
- Chairing a hiring committee for a staff position called a Student Advocacy Coordinator to help support students who are in dispute with the university and need representation. Posting will be going out shortly for this.
- Semester report is coming out soon.

9. NEW BUSINESS

9.1 Council Space Campaign Working Group– MOTION COUNCIL 2021-02-03:04

Zaid/Ben

Whereas Council passed a motion at it’s January 6th meeting to launch a space campaign titled #StudentsDeserveSpace,

Whereas the motion called upon Council to write and deliver a joint letter to the respective faculties and departments of Councillors who voted in favour,

Be it resolved that Council strike a working group on drafting the joint letter,

Be it further resolved that Council appoint Zaid Lari as Chair of the working group,

Be it further resolved that Council appoint Alan Saunderson, Kimia Rezaeian and Helen Pahou as members of the working group.

CARRIED AS AMENDED unanimously

- This was discussed at an earlier meeting but need to get the letter and campaign kick started.
- No one has volunteered to act on this yet.
- Looking for three people, to be representative of Council, to be a part of a working group to collaborate on the project. The working group will then submit the letter to Council for approval.
- Amend motion to replace x with Zaid Lari.
- Amend motion to replace y with Alan Saunderson, Kimia Rezaeian and Helen Pahou.
- Working group will draft the letter and check in with DSUs to see if they are getting the space they want and if there is any progress in conversations with the departments.

- Faculty Representative (Science) will be helping as much as he can as well.

9.2 Board Finance and Administrative Services Committee– MOTION COUNCIL 2021-02-03:05

Ksydalg/Ben

Whereas each of the SFSS Board Committees reserves one seat for an appointed Councilor to occupy, Whereas the Council seat on the Finance and Administrative Services Committee has become vacant, Be it resolved that Council recommend that x be appointed to the Board Finance and Administrative Services Committee.

NOT CARRIED

- VP Finance asked for this to be put on the agenda as the previous Councilor who held this seat is no longer a part of the Council.
- Finance and Administrative Services Committee receives all internal finances. They are currently working on the upcoming budget for 2021/2022 year. Other projects include the participatory budgeting pilot project.
- Amend motion to read replace ‘each’ with ‘multiple’ in the first Whereas clause.
- Motion could not be passed as no one was interested in filling this position.

10. DISCUSSION ITEMS

10.1 Senate Motion on Pilot Undergraduate Grading Scheme

- Several Board members mobilized student senators and undergrads behind idea to bring back Pass/Fail grading scheme back in December.
- Became very clear that students were really struggling at the end of Fall 2020 semester because of isolation, financial hardship etc.
- Petition that circulated about this topic has more than 7000 signatures.
- Student senators were able to get a motion on the Senate agenda to bring back the grading scheme.
- VP University Relations and others had multiple conversations at the beginning of January with Senators and SCUS to work on something that would pass at Senate.
 - These talks resulted in a P/C/NC grading scheme which passed at the Senate floor with 91% support.
- P/C/NC grading scheme
 - This grading scheme exists at other universities already and has since before COVID to encourage exploration without fear of hurting one’s GPA.
 - Pass means that credit is awarded to the students for a grade of C- or higher.
 - Credit means that they passed the course, but it was not a high enough grade to complete a prerequisite requirement.
 - No Credit is equivalent to fail, and student will not receive credit.
 - Students can request this for a maximum of 12 credits towards elective courses.
 - There was an attempt to amend this to include all courses that failed with a 30% in favour and 70% against.
- Possibility to expand grading scheme as individual programs and departments may choose to use grading scheme for some requirements.
 - As a result, it’s important to work to expand this and councilors and DSUs can help do so by lobbying individual departments.
- SUS has organized a survey to see what their membership thinks of this grading scheme to send to the Faculty of Science Administration.
- GSWS ran polls in their Instagram story which revealed that 95% of students who voted said that the scheme would not be helpful at all.

- Some comments sent in included how the scheme allows for exploration via electives but does not help the current situation, only benefits a small percentage of students, and adds unnecessary stress on students to figure it out without the benefits.
- ESU sent an email to department head, but they said there was nothing they could do.
 - ESU is also open to lobbying with FASS.
- If proof is needed to show departments that this in their hands now, the January 11th Senate Recording can be found here: <https://www.sfu.ca/itservices/technical/webcasting-and-video-recording/webcast-archive/2021/01/2021-01-11-senate.html>.
 - SFU Senate notes to leave decision to individual departments on whether they want to expand this pilot to all courses at 2:02:51 to 2:05:55.
 - SCUS is still developing a plan which is possibly where this disconnect in communication is happening.
- MBBSU has gotten in contact with their DUCC Committee, but the Chair did not add this item to the discussion because they are in support of the new grading scheme.
- Criminology department heads do not like this system at all. Criminology is drafting a request for some courses to not be applicable for this grading scheme, even as an elective, to decrease abuse of certificate program.
- Criminology students are also concerned what this would look like on their transcripts as some law and master's programs care a lot about the utilization of non-numerical grades.
- The deadline to opt in for this semester will be the last day of regularly scheduled classes, and in future it will be week eight.
- This is an optional grading scheme. Students must weigh their own options and see if they should apply the grading scheme to their transcript.
- Discord channel for this specific discussion will be created by Chair.
- If you and your DSU would like to see this scheme expanded, take some time to communicate with your department chair to discuss the grading scheme.
- VP Student Life has a long report of why Pass/Fail option is so important.
 - Please see attached file
- Feel free to reach out to your Faculty Representatives and VP University Relations if more information is needed.

10.2 TSC Working Groups

- Transition Steering Committee was established by the Board to ensure a smooth and strong transition from old by-laws to new by-laws.
- Three Working Groups
 - Governance which is chaired by VP University Relations and has been tasked to review relevant policies to transform it from SFSS Board Policies to SFSS Council Policies. There are currently three people on it including one councilor and one student union executive.
 - Training and Communications which is chaired by VP Finance and has been tasked to establish clear and efficient training structure so that incoming councilors are equipped with proper knowledge, training, and awareness of the new system and their role in holding the Executive Committee accountable. There are a couple of councilors and one student union executive in this group.
 - Operations which is chaired by the President and is looking at what new operational processes need to be implemented for this system to succeed such as if there is enough staff, if new positions need to be created or if old ones need to be amended. There is one councilor and one student union executive in this group.
- There's plenty of room for councilors to join the working groups, so please get in touch if you would like to.
- More discussion can happen in the Discord for this topic as well.

- Joining these working groups will clarify what is going to happen next year, especially for those who are planning to stay on as councilors for one more year.
- There are multiple methods that are being looked at for training.
 - Council Representatives now has the current Boards duties which includes a lot of fiduciary responsibility.
 - There will be training on what the Societies Act is, the duties of a director, what is effective governance, how SFSS is structured etc.
 - Development Sessions on different topics that's relevant to position as Board members will also be run. Previous ones have discussed anti-racism, what a collective agreement is, and colonialism.
- Lots of turnover is expected in the first year, so need to find a way to help the councilors who join in during the term.
- Lots of moving parts and details are being discussed.
- Suggestion was made that development sessions before the beginning of next semester might be beneficial to provide clarity and confidence.
 - TSC will be working on getting information out to DSUs before the term starts.
 - Councilors will get training before term starts as well during transition period.
 - Current councilors should understand anyways because they will need to lead the new Councilor.
- Under the new system, councilors should aim to serve the full year, but if they have plans to graduate in the middle of the term, they are expected to resign and have their student union run a by-election.

10.3 Burnaby Mountain Gondola Project

- Council did not have time to discuss this item.

11. ATTACHMENTS

11.1 Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences S.21-12

11.2 Jan. 29th Board Meeting Notes

11.3 Pass Fail Grading Considerations

12. ANNOUNCEMENTS

12.1 Next Council Meeting is February 17th

13. ADJOURNMENT

13.1 MOTION COUNCIL 2021-02-03:06

Ben/Lauren

Be it resolved to adjourn the meeting at 6:03PM.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY




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MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION	Senate	DATE	January 11, 2021
FROM	Wade Parkhouse, Chair Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (SCUS)	PAGES	1/4
RE:	Pilot Undergraduate Grading Scheme Spring, Summer, and Fall 2021 terms		

Action undertaken by SCUS on January 11, 2021 via electronic voting, gives rise to the following recommendation:

Motion:

That Senate approve a pilot to implement a new, temporary undergraduate grading system of Pass/Credit/No Credit (P/CR/NC) for the Spring, Summer, and Fall 2021 terms, and directs the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (SCUS) to develop an implementation plan as soon as possible.

Motion:

That Senate approve a pilot to implement a new, temporary undergraduate grading system of Pass/Credit/No Credit (P/CR/NC) for the Spring, Summer, and Fall 2021 terms, and directs the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies (SCUS) to develop an implementation plan as soon as possible.

This P/CR/NC grading scheme may be used towards a maximum of 12 units, deemed as elective(s) within a student's program, over the pilot period. Within a given term, no more than 6 units may be graded P/CR/NC for students enrolled in 9 or more units and no more than one course may be graded P/CR/NC for students enrolled in less than 9 units. Within the 12-unit maximum, individual programs may allow, on a restrictive basis, the utilization of a P/CR/NC grading system for certain program-specific requirements.

Students must choose this grading system no later than the last day of classes for the spring 2021 term. A student cannot change from a standard grade to a 'P/CR/NC' standing, or vice-versa, after the deadline to opt into the 'P/CR/NC' grading system.

Background:

It is recognized that the pandemic and remote learning environment have adversely affected students. Students have advocated for greater flexibility in grading, withdrawal and academic standing and continuance policies. Although SFU does not currently have a P/CR/NC grading system, a number of other comparator universities across Canada do (see Appendix). Initiating such a grading scheme, as a pilot, during the pandemic is seen as one of a number of important supports needed by students. It also provides an opportunity for SCUS to consider, in the longer-term, effective undergraduate grading systems.

In addition to the pilot P/CR/NC grading system for Spring 2021, the withdrawal (WD) deadline will be extended to the last day of classes.

Additional options for students:

SCUS will bring to Senate at its February meeting a proposal for:

- Creating a temporary amendment to the academic standing and continuance policy

In addition, the Registrar will work with SCUS to:

- Ease the Withdrawals under Extenuating Circumstances process for pandemic related reasons
- Add transcript notations to reference courses taken during pandemic

Students will be encouraged to seek guidance from an academic advisor in advance of making decisions about their options.

Additional information on implementation of P/CR/NC:

Credit will be awarded for 'P' and 'CR' grades and included in the number of total units earned. No credit will be awarded for 'NC' grades.

Courses taken under the 'P/CR/NC' standing will be excluded from the grade point average (GPA) calculations.

A 'P' grade will be awarded for grades of C- or higher and will fulfill the minimum grade required in a pre-requisite course and, for programs that permit it, will fulfill program-specific requirements.

A 'CR' grade will be awarded for a grade of D and will fulfill the total units required for degree completion.

An 'NC' grade will receive no credit.

Only standard letter grade courses will be used to meet the grade point average requirements for awards and scholarships, including honour roll designations and entrance scholarship renewals. P/CR/NC grades will not be used toward this requirement.

Appendix

Comparator Institution Policies

UBC - Credit/D/Fail

- No more than 6 credits per session (ie two terms), and 12 units in a degree program
- Courses must be electives
- CR for courses between 55%-100%, D 50-54%, In the case of programs or courses that define a pass as higher than 50%, only the standing of Cr and F
- Programs and courses may opt out
- Credit/D/Fail does not count towards academic performance or awards/scholarships

University of Toronto - Credit/No Credit

- No more than 2 credits per degree (ie two full year courses)
- Courses must be electives
- CR for courses with 50% grade, NC for 49% and below
- Programs/faculties have specific policies, such as Commerce and Engineering courses are ineligible

University of Calgary - Completed Requirements/D*/D+*

- Fall 2020 pandemic response
- One course only
- CR for courses with C- grade or higher
- May impact scholarship eligibility

McGill - Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (S/U)

- No more than one course per term, and no more than 10% of total degree credits
- Courses must be electives
- S for courses with grade A through C; D, F and J grades converted to U
- Programs have specific requirements, such as Engineering courses ineligible and those with practicums (ie Nursing)
- S/U does not count towards academic performance or awards/scholarships

01.29 - January 29

Important points:

- Meeting was only around 2 hours? :o
- 4 memes in this doc hehe
- [Burnaby Mountain Gondola](#)
 - There are some hurdles to overcome, so we need student voices and student engagement
 - There will be a meeting where Burnaby City Council will be voting on whether to go ahead with the Gondola project on February 22nd
 - This is why we need more student engagement and support for the gondola
 - Gift cards giveaways will be included in the campaign
 - Using NewMode to have students send out letters to Burnaby City Councillors and the Mayor
- [Social Justice Campaign Support Fund](#)
 - We could set aside some money each year to help students run campaigns
 - This would take the onus off students to pay out of their own pockets for initiatives that support the community
 - A key pillar of student unions is advocacy and facilitating collective action - this is part of our constitution
 - This would help students and student groups increase their capacity for advocacy
 - Can teach students campaigning as well and how to run a successful campaign (giving them resources and training)
 - We don't just want to fund campaigns - we want them to be successful
- [Spring and Summer Emergency Funding](#)
 - We might be able to distribute funding for Spring and Summer 2021
 - We will be distributing funding on our own since SFU has some restrictions on their funding distribution (GPA requirement, 9-credit course load requirement)
 - Ran into logistical hurdles as to how we can distribute funding ourselves
 - SFU wouldn't be able to get rid of the restrictions on their funding until next year (like 2022)
 - Funding model
 - Option 2: We provide \$500/student, allowing us to support up to 400 students per semester

- It was recommended that we do a 40/60 split in favour of international students, since domestic students have more support (provincial funding) and some costs may be greater for international students
- Can have a portion support LGBTQIA+ students
 - VP Student Life (Jennifer) asked if it was also possible to have a portion set aside for disabled students because costs of living are higher and some have to buy additional accommodations

Minutes (received and filed)

Board

- June 26, 2020
- July 10, 2020
- October 16, 2020
- December 11, 2020
- January 15, 2021

Accessibility Committee

- December 8, 2020

Events Committee

- December 2, 2020
- January 13, 2021

Executive Committee

- June 17, 2020
- July 29, 2020
- August 12, 2020
- December 17, 2020

Finance Committee

- September 24, 2020
- November 25, 2020

Governance

- July 27, 2020
- August 10, 2020
- November 25, 2020

University and Academic Affairs

- August 11, 2020
- October 29, 2020
- November 26, 2020



Motions

Update to Signing Officers

- Motion:
 - Whereas signing officers were appointed at the Board meetings on April 15th and July 10th 2020;
 - Be it resolved that as per By Law 6, Powers Duties and Obligations of Council (Board of Directors), Ayesha Khan, Operations Organizer, be appointed a Signing Officer effective January 29th 2021.

- Be it further resolved that Lawrence Jones, Transition Manager, be removed as a Signing Officer effective January 29th, 2021.
- Discussion:
 - It makes sense to have some staff as signing officers along with some Board members
 - Having both SFSS staff and Board members as signing officers acts as a check and balance especially for finances
- **Motion carried**

Bargaining Committee

- Motion:
 - Whereas the Collective Agreement between the SFSS and CUPE 3338 has expired;
 - Whereas the SFSS must make appointments to a Bargaining Committee to represent the Board of Directors to engage in collective bargaining;
 - Whereas SO-16: HR and Personnel Committee in the SFSS Board Policies outlines the purpose of the HR and Personnel Committee to include, but is not limited to negotiating the Collective Agreement with CUPE 3338;
 - Be it resolved to appoint HR and Personnel Committee members Osob Mohamed, President, Matthew Provost, VP Student Services, Corbett Gildersleve, VP Finance, and Ayesha Khan, Operations Organizer to the Bargaining Committee, for the purpose of re-negotiating our Collective Agreement with CUPE 3338.
- Discussion:
 - Bargaining/negotiating the Collective Agreement
 - It would make sense to have the people listed above on this committee because they are the same people on the HR and Personnel Committee
- **Motion carried**

NewMode Subscription

- Motion:
 - Whereas the SFSS actively engages in different campaigns to advocate on behalf of the student body;
 - Whereas NewMode has been used successfully in a number of SFSS campaigns during the Fall 2020 semester;
 - Be it resolved to continue the NewMode subscription at our current pricing through to April 30th, 2021.
 - Be it further resolved to direct the VP Finance to include the NewMode subscription in the budget draft for the 2021-2022 fiscal year.
- Discussion:

- We've used NewMode for a lot of different (and successful) campaigns this year
- This can help the upcoming Gondola campaign too
- Some Board members expressed support for this motion - NewMode was easy to use and was effective (like in the Athletics Team Name Change campaign)
- **Motion carried**

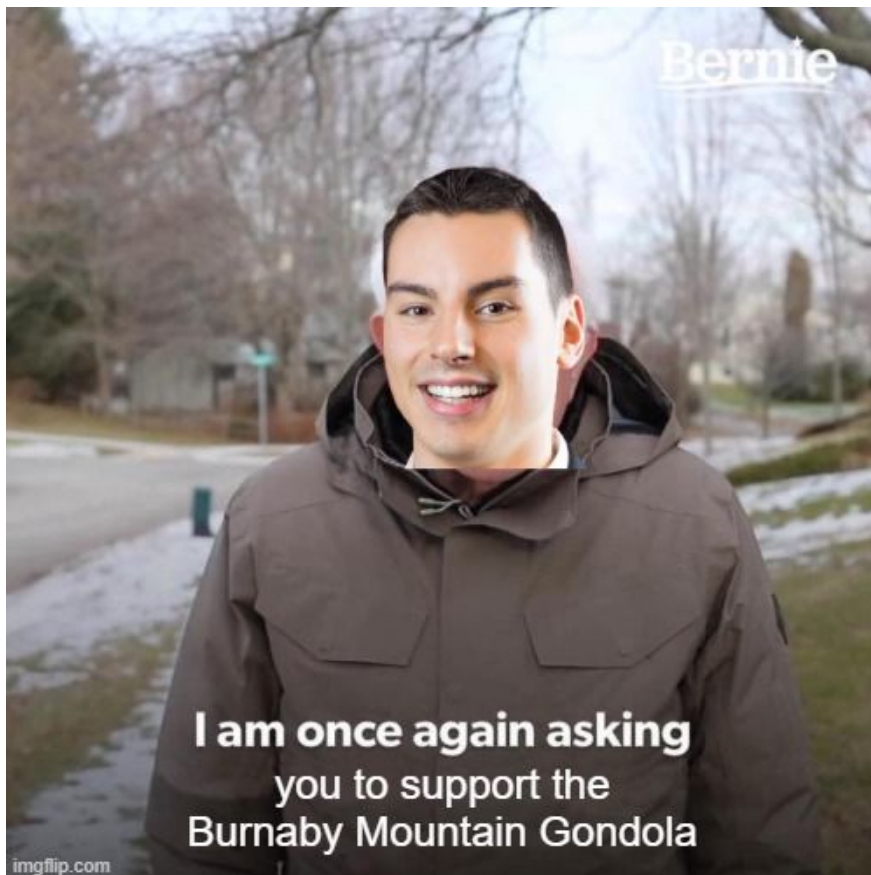
Using NewMode like



Burnaby Mountain Gondola

- Motion:
 - Whereas the Simon Fraser Student Society Strategic Plan outlines “enhanced student experience” and “successful advocacy campaigns” as indicators of success within our strategic priorities;
 - Whereas the successful completion of the Burnaby Mountain Gondola Project will greatly improve the transit experience for the more than 88% of our members who rely on public transit on a regular basis;
 - Whereas amplifying student voices through a successful digital campaign will have great influence on key decision makers, such as Burnaby City Council leading up to their meeting tentatively scheduled for February 22nd, 2021;
 - Be it resolved that the Board approves \$529.94 to come from line item 820/18 (Advocacy Initiatives) for incentives to promote the Burnaby Mountain Gondola campaign.
- Briefing note:
 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JbPq6oGteXV1EVWKNID_-JYLHruBZIIJ/vi?usp=sharing
- Discussion:

- There are some hurdles to overcome, so we need student voices and student engagement
- Translink has 2 phases to their community consultation campaign
- President (Osob) and VP University Relations (Gabe) attended the meetings and talked about how students strongly preferred the Gondola (especially route 1 which goes up through Production-Way)
- Gondola also costs less and saves \$35 million in taxpayer dollars
- There will be a meeting where Burnaby City Council will be voting on whether to go ahead with the Gondola project on February 22nd
 - This is why we need more student engagement and support for the gondola
- Gift cards have been popular among students (especially food delivery ones)
- Can also make memes to engage students
- Need to dig up pictures or videos of us suffering in the snow on Burnaby Mountain :(
- **Motion carried**



UAA Appointment

- Be it resolved to appoint Zoya Nari to the University and Academic Affairs Committee as a Student At-Large member.

- Zoya wasn't available for previous meeting times but this semester, she is
- **Motion carried**

Social Justice Campaign Support Fund

- Motion:
 - Whereas the last three years have seen a rise in student-led social justice campaigns within the SFU Community,
 - Whereas the costs to run, grow, and execute a campaign can be cost prohibitive for student organizers,
 - Whereas the relevant SFSS committees might not have the resources or capacity to collaborate with or take on a student-led campaign,
 - Whereas providing funding support to student organizers empowers them and helps build student power,
 - Be it resolved that the Board of Directors approve the pilot funding for a Social Justice Campaign Support Fund to be included in the 2021-2022 budget under Department 20 - Board
- Briefing note:
 - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1fiPrWl8ICS1JVVM4DpF2wy1yZXDg357U/view?usp=sharing>
- Discussion:
 - More campaigns happening now and they cost a lot of money (t-shirts, transportation) - plus not all of these campaigns align with specific SFSS Committees
 - We could set aside some money each year to help students run campaigns
 - Many Board members spoke up in support of this motion
 - This would take the onus off students to pay out of their own pockets for initiatives that support the community
 - A key pillar of student unions is advocacy and facilitating collective action - this is part of our constitution
 - This would help students and student groups increase their capacity for advocacy
 - This is an example of practically supporting student-led initiatives (and grassroots initiatives)
 - Can teach students campaigning as well and how to run a successful campaign (giving them resources and training)
 - We don't just want to fund campaigns - we want them to be successful
 - Can have staff create courses
 - This is similar to what Events has with training documents and funding to host various events

- There was excitement around empowering students and seeing what campaigns and initiatives future students will be able to run
- **Motion carried**

Spring and Summer Emergency Funding

- Motion:
 - Whereas the SFSS has updated their 2020-2021 annual budget
 - Whereas we are predicting a surplus that could be used towards supporting students in financial need
 - Be it resolved that the Board approve a Spring and Summer semester Emergency COVID-19 Funding of \$200,000 per term from line items selected by the VP Finance
 - Be it further resolved that the criteria for the funding be \$500 per student and a 40%/60% split between domestic and international students.
 - Be it further resolved that the President and VP Finance work with relevant SFSS departments and staff to communicate and distribute this funding.
- Briefing note:
 - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OrWd8E-P8cfeGcJHrZCVek7tAyxJNhcG/vi?usp=sharing>
- Discussion:
 - VP Finance (Corbett) has been working on this since around Fall 2020
 - Since going online, the grants have been under budget (club and student group events have been cheaper to run)
 - We could use this surplus for an emergency fund to help students
 - We might be able to distribute funding for Spring and Summer 2021
 - We will be distributing funding on our own since SFU has some restrictions on their funding distribution (GPA requirement, 9-credit course load requirement)
 - Ran into logistical hurdles as to how we can distribute funding ourselves
 - SFU wouldn't be able to get rid of the restrictions on their funding until next year (like 2022)
 - Funding model options
 - Option 1: We provide \$200/student, allowing us to support up to 1000 students per semester
 - **Option 2: We provide \$500/student, allowing us to support up to 400 students per semester (recommended)**
 - Option 3: We provide \$1000/student, allowing us to support up to 200 students per semester

- It was recommended that we do a 40/60 split in favour of international students, since domestic students have more support (provincial funding) and some costs may be greater for international students
- Can have a portion support LGBTQIA+ students
 - VP Student Life (Jennifer) asked if it was also possible to have a portion set aside for disabled students because costs of living are higher and some have to buy additional accommodations
- There was an announcement from Justin Trudeau (Canada's Prime Minister) regarding a mandatory quarantine cost (\$2,000)
 - "Travellers to pay 'more than \$2K' for new mandatory COVID-19 hotel quarantine"
 - https://globalnews.ca/news/7607191/covid-canada-international-travel-restrictions/?utm_source=GlobalBC
- How will funds be distributed to people who are overseas?
 - Currently talking about this with SFSS Finance Coordinators
- Some SFSS Board members expressed appreciation to the VP Finance (Corbett) and SFSS staff for getting this going
- **Motion carried**

Staff Liaison Officers

- Motion:
 - Whereas Article 3.3 of the Collective Agreement allows for 2 Staff Liaison Officers to be appointed for the purposes of our Collective Agreement with CUPE 3338;
 - Be it resolved to appoint Ayesha Khan, Operations Organizer, as a Staff Liaison Officer effective January 29th, 2021.
 - Be it further resolved that Lawrence Jones, Transition Manager be removed as a Staff Liaison Officer effective January 29th, 2021
- Discussion:
 - Our Transition Manager, Lawrence Jones, will be leaving SFSS and the Operations Organizer will be the new Staff Liaison Officer
- **Motion carried**

Discussion Items

COVID-19 SFSS Space Protocol

- SUB
 - We're using the BC Thrive Health to assess COVID risk
 - There's a SUB access spreadsheet
 - Only people signing cheques should be going in the SUB
 - Need to communicate with John, the SUB Manager, if accessing the SUB

- Surrey Campus
 - Security will only give keys to people who've told Shelley (Surrey Campus Coordinator) they will be going to the Surrey Campus office
 - Shelley will send an email to Security to give the keys to the Board member who requested access
 - Go only if you have an essential task

SFSS Burnaby Mountain Gondola Campaign

- Communications campaign for Gondola advocacy
- VP University Relations (Gabe) and President (Osob) were working with SFSS Communications department to create and post videos for the Gondola campaign
- Looking for a 30 second clip of Board members talking about why we support the gondola
 - 3 main points of gondola campaign: safety, efficiency, and sustainability
- Using NewMode to have students send out letters to Burnaby City Councillors and the Mayor
- Board members can't win any prizes but should still share the heck out of the campaign on social media

Webinar/Panel with [Migrant Students United](#), GSS (Graduate Student Society), and TSSU (Teaching Support Staff Union)

- They want to help and see where we can work together on international students' issues
- Possible topic: "International Student Workers Fighting for Change: How the PGWP extension was won?"
- If Board is in support, costs associated with the event would include speakers' honoraria
- March 2, 2021 around 5pm or 6pm
- SFSS Science Rep (WeiChun Kua) and VP External (Samad Raza) will be leading this from the SFSS' side

Events Committee Updates

- All details will be on https://www.instagram.com/sfss_events/ - please turn on post notifications and share when things are posted!
 - There's a stories highlight with instructions on how to turn on post and story notifications
- Feb 1, 2021: Mental Health Monday Giveaway (Skip The Dishes)
- Feb 5, 2021 at 5:30pm: Brooklyn Nine-Nine Trivia Night
- Feb 5, 2021 at 8:30pm: Global Talent Night
- Feb 9, 2021 at 7:00pm: Grey's Anatomy Trivia Night

- Feb 10, 2021 at 3:30pm: Valentine's Day Origami Rose and Letter-Writing Workshop
- Feb 12, 2021 at 5:00pm: Harry Potter Trivia Night

Federal Mandatory COVID-19 Hotel Quarantine

- <https://globalnews.ca/news/7607191/covid-canada-international-travel-restrictions/>
 - They're spending \$2 million for RCMP officers to do check-ins on people :(
 - Remember the Mona Wang case...
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/mona-wang-wellness-check-1.5624810>
- Justin Trudeau (Canada's Prime Minister) is making it mandatory to quarantine in a hotel when travelling from abroad...and people have to pay out of their own pocket (to deter unessential travel)
 - This will cost around \$2,000 and will disproportionately harm people who do need to travel for essential purposes (like international students)
- The [SFU CARES](#) (COVID Assistance and Remote Engagement Support) program supports students (including FIC students)
- Need the government to recognize the CARES program as official and satisfactory
- SFU CARES contacted SFSS, and we donated masks to them
- StudentCare expanded coverage to include COVID-related things like reimbursing for costs related to quarantine (retroactive to September 2021)
 - Valid trip delay coverage also covers quarantine due to a positive COVID-19 test result, denied entry, or contact tracing while at the destination. Meals and accommodation are covered up to \$200 per day, to a maximum of \$5,000.
 - (Need to save receipts for this I think)
- This is on SFU's radar and they're trying to learn what "approved hotels" means and whether the SFU CARES program would apply to this list of approved hotels
 - There are lobbying efforts happening to ensure SFU CARES does make it on the list
 - Universities Canada is lobbying on behalf of post-secondary institutions
- <https://tc.canada.ca/sites/default/files/2021-01/travel-restrictions-poster-overseas-en.pdf>
 - This document says who can and can't travel to Canada by air

BCFS Student Loan Interest Knock Out Campaign

- We passed a motion to support this campaign
- They started posting on social media, and all documents are ready to go out
- We can post things on social media to support the campaign

Notice of Motion

SFSS Board Policies

- Be it resolved that the Board of Directors amend SFSS Board Policies, Standing Order 1, as presented in the attached document titled “Proposed Amendment to SO-1: Duties of Committee Chairs”.
- Briefing note:
 - https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kmHNCqdGUEz_32DhWXCzRztWZ-EZmB8wz/view?usp=sharing

Announcements

Next Board meeting on February 12 at 2pm



Pass/Fail Grading Considerations

[Motion](#)

[Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#)

[Health and well-being](#)

[Impacts of COVID-19 on mental health](#)

[Impacts of COVID-19 on physical health](#)

[Barriers to mental healthcare](#)

[“Pass/Fail would allow students to slack off and not learn what they need to learn for their future.”](#)

[Grade inflation and accreditation](#)

[Other institutions with compassionate grading frameworks](#)

[Accreditation](#)

[Career and graduate school implications](#)

[Implications for students' future careers](#)

[Graduate school](#)

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[“Students know what they’re getting into now. Just take a lighter course load or take the semester off”](#)

[WD deadline](#)

[International students](#)

[Student loans](#)

[Indigenous band funding](#)

[Course offerings](#)

[Alternatives \(WE and AE\)](#)

[WE \(withdraw under extenuating circumstances\)](#)

[AE \(Compassionate Pass\)](#)

[Later semester start](#)

[Cheating](#)

[Curved classes](#)

[Meaningful consultation](#)

Motion

From: Gabe Liosis

Co-Sponsors: Osob Mohamed, Corbett Gildersleve, Samad Raza, Nafoni Modi, Daniel Lam, Allan Lam, Abhishek Parmar, Harry Preet Singh, Bryan Daniel, Alan Wong, and Tanishvir Singh.

Motion #1

THAT Senate approve, for the Spring 2021 term, and retroactively for the Fall 2020 term, in a manner akin to the Spring 2020 semester, students be allowed the choice to accept their final course grade or opt for a “Pass/Fail” grading basis for an individual course, where: 1) both “P” and “F” grades are excluded in the calculation of GPA; and 2) credit is earned for “P” grades and will count towards the total unit required for a degree.

Motion #2

THAT Senate commits to having a continuous and thorough discussion with students about COVID-19 related grading schemes.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

SFU has committed to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, but unfortunately this is not reflected in grading practices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, and SFU must consider this when enacting policies. BIPOC, low-income, and disabled students face significant barriers this semester, including lack of internet access, economic and housing instability, and lack of access to care, resources, or accommodations.

Enacting a more compassionate grading framework would acknowledge SFU's commitment to EDI and ensure our most marginalized students are not forgotten.

With the transition to online classes, many disabled students have been left behind¹. Accommodations do not always translate well to a virtual learning environment, which ends up being reflected in a students' grades. Additionally, adverse circumstances can be unpredictable and sudden. Considering the Centre for Accessible Learning only accepts new students up until week 10 of the semester, students are often left without adequate accommodations after this time. Even when students do have access to accommodations (which is not guaranteed), there are additional barriers to receiving these accommodations, like filling out forms and providing proof of a disability.

The pandemic is not accurately reflecting students' capacity to learn. There are so many extenuating factors which have limited the way we perform, and students should not be punished for the current situation we find ourselves in. Our grades are not a reflection of our abilities, but the circumstances we find ourselves in.

Health and well-being

The health consequences of this pandemic are far-reaching, deeply worrying, and compound the need for a more equitable grading framework at SFU.

Seeing as the shift to remote instruction is still relatively new, professors and students alike are still adapting to the virtual learning environment. Students should not be punished and should not have to compromise their mental health during this pandemic. Compassion and understanding **must** be prioritized here, and the Pass/Fail grading framework can alleviate some of the stress students are feeling right now.

¹ <https://bcedaccess.com/2020/07/22/children-with-disabilities-excluded-from-school-during-covid-19/> (this is for K-12 students, but K-12 students also often get more support and funding than post-secondary students, who are often left on their own. Source: lived experience)

Impacts of COVID-19 on mental health

An increasing number of studies throughout British Columbia have demonstrated just how far-reaching the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are. These studies show that younger Canadians report higher rates of depression, anxiety, loneliness, and poor social support. What's even more concerning is that suicidal ideation has increased around 50%, and 40% of Canadians needing mental healthcare are not receiving the support they need². Suicidal ideation has also increased especially among Indigenous people, disabled people, and people who identify as LGBTQ+³. Indigenous peoples are also disproportionately experiencing colonialism-related harm, like unsafe housing, lack of access to clean water, and extreme food insecurity, all of which contribute to increased risk in mental health⁴. This reaffirms the need for SFU to consider the effects of COVID-19 on marginalized communities, and rededicate ourselves to EDI.

At SFU, 48.9% of SFSS' survey respondents reported that they are experiencing mental health issues due to COVID-19, with many commenting that they were already experiencing mental health challenges that have worsened over the last two months. Students that had recovered from or were previously managing mental health illnesses such as anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, and eating disorders are now finding themselves in precarious positions. Furthermore, 17.6% of students reported that instructors have conducted themselves in a way that is not considerate of student health and well-being⁵.

It is crucial to note that a Pass/Fail grading framework would reduce some of the many stressors that students are facing right now. Many students have stated how difficult it is to focus on their academics when their mental health is so impacted by the effects of COVID-19. An increasing number of students are feeling burnt out, having to stay at home (which may not be a good study environment) all the time. According to an SFSS COVID-19 survey, 64.5% of students do not have a study space free from noise and distractions, making it difficult to study⁶.

The rise of COVID-19 cases have also had a profound impact on students' mental health. Not only are we expected to focus on academics, we are expected not to have

² <https://www.uvic.ca/news/topics/2020+knowledge-mental-health-impacts+news>

³

<https://news.ubc.ca/2020/06/25/covid-19-survey-highlights-growing-suicide-and-mental-health-risks-across-various-groups/>

⁴

<https://www.sfu.ca/sfunews/stories/2020/11/report-predicts-increased-youth-mental-health-struggles-related-.html>

⁵ <https://sfss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Survey-Report-4-1.pdf>

⁶ <https://sfss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Survey-Report-4-1.pdf>

the increasing number of COVID-19 cases (and deaths) impact our mental health and impede on our ability to study.

Seasonal depression has also compounded the negative effects of COVID-19. Combined with the onset of exams (some of which are proctored, thus adding more stress on students), it is no question why some students would feel depressed, anxious, and burnt out.

Impacts of COVID-19 on physical health

Students in different time zones are also feeling the effects of COVID-19. With mandatory synchronous course components, students often have to stay awake at abnormal hours, which impacts both their physical and mental health.

Students who share a work environment with others may also find their academic workload taking a toll on their physical health. For example, students who are unable to complete coursework during the day (due to having to work or inability to focus due to distractions) are forced to compromise their sleep schedule in order to focus on academics.

Seeing as previous conversations with SFU Administration (in Senate and various Senate committees) have emphasized that we cannot mandate the way professors run their courses, reinstating the Pass/Fail grading framework would be a compromise in which students can evaluate their own situations and make an informed decision about their grades. If professors lack the resources to provide quality education, a Pass/Fail option will ensure students are not punished.

Barriers to mental healthcare

Oftentimes, students are unable to simply see a counsellor or psychologist. Many students work part-time to be able to afford the rising costs of tuition, which leaves little time to see a psychologist. Additionally, the cost of mental healthcare is something that some students cannot afford.

While services like My SSP are offered, students have experienced delays or inadequate services. According to an SFSS Survey, students commented that no matter the mental health services offered by SFU, without fundamental changes to the grading system, the pressure of post-secondary education will negatively impact their mental health and well-being⁷.

⁷ <https://sfss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Survey-Report-4-1.pdf>

“Pass/Fail would allow students to slack off and not learn what they need to learn for their future.”

Some people believe that having Pass/Fail grading would cause students to lose their motivation to learn. In this case, we must remember the mental health impacts of COVID-19 and how the pandemic disproportionately impacts marginalized communities.

Should we punish students because they lack the necessary supports and resources to focus on their education?

A study from Harvard found that students who took a course with Pass/Fail options did not spend less time on the course. In fact, these students took the course just as seriously as those in the letter-graded version of the course, as long as the same expectations are set for both groups of students⁸. Pass/Fail grading has also been shown to reduce competition, support collaboration, and foster intrinsic motivation, which is key to self-regulated, lifelong learning^{9,10}. This study, and many others^{11,12,13}, demonstrate the benefits of moving towards a Pass/Fail grading framework, especially during these uncertain times.

SFU needs to prioritize the health of its students. We must remember to be understanding and compassionate during these stressful times, and not punish students who are disproportionately affected by the pandemic just because we fear some students may not be able to prioritize their academics.

Grade inflation and accreditation

A common argument against implementing the Pass/Fail grading framework is that it would inflate grades and make an SFU degree lose its value. Some programs, like mechatronic systems engineering, are also accredited and would be impacted by Pass/Fail grading.

⁸ https://cs.harvard.edu/malan/publications/Toward_an_Ungraded_CS50.pdf

⁹

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/40690117_Pass-fail_grading_Laying_the_foundation_for_self-regulated_learning

¹⁰ <https://www.scirp.org/journal/paperinformation.aspx?paperid=74099>

¹¹

<https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-05-21-grades-fail-at-motivating-students-intrinsic-motivation-works-better>

¹² <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1469787418819728>

¹³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0025619611612500>

Other institutions with compassionate grading frameworks

It is clear that many other universities have prioritized their students' health and well-being over institutional constructs. Prestigious universities such as Stanford¹⁴, Princeton¹⁵, Massachusetts Institute of Technology¹⁶, and Brown¹⁷ have all implemented more compassionate grading frameworks like Pass/Fail. A variety of Canadian universities have also done this, including but not limited to Carleton University¹⁸, University of Calgary¹⁹, Concordia University²⁰, Bishop's University²¹, and University of Manitoba²².

These institutions all share a commitment to prioritizing the well-being of their students and recognizing the inequities inherent to online learning. In response to the academic and personal turmoil that students are encountering this semester, these institutions have shown that this crisis-sensitive grading framework must be implemented to safeguard the academic, emotional, spiritual, and physical health of our community.

Accreditation

Some programs, like engineering, have expressed concerns relating to the Pass/Fail grading framework's effects on accreditation. However, Engineers Canada (Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB), which offers accreditation for SFU Engineering) has explicitly stated that **“such [Pass/Fail grading] changes will not adversely affect the programs' accreditation status” because “the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff are of great importance to [Engineers Canada] and [they] are supportive of institutions taking reasonable measures to balance safety and academic continuity²³.”**

Additionally, [as per the studies mentioned above](#), a Pass/Fail grading framework would encourage collaboration and teamwork, skills that are valued in the workplace. Many

¹⁴

<https://www.stanforddaily.com/2020/07/30/faculty-senate-approves-optional-credit-no-credit-grading-system-for-entirety-of-academic-year/>

¹⁵ <https://fall2020.princeton.edu/info/undergraduate-students/faqs>

¹⁶ <https://registrar.mit.edu/covid-19/grading/fall-2020>

¹⁷ <https://healthy.brown.edu/academics/policies-fall-2020>

¹⁸ <https://carleton.ca/provost/2020/sat-uns-fall-2020-winter-2021/>

¹⁹ <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/student-centre/grades>

²⁰ <https://www.concordia.ca/coronavirus/students/pass-disc.html>

²¹ <https://www.ubishops.ca/measures-to-support-student-success-and-relieve-stress-and-anxiety/>

²² <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/university-manitoba-alternative-grading-1.5827956>

²³

<https://engineerscanada.ca/news-and-events/news/for-regulators-march-31-2020-ceab-statement-on-covid-19>

companies that hire engineers prioritize work experience over CGPA²⁴, which is why co-op is required in the engineering program²⁵. A good engineer has to work with various types of people to solve problems and make products, using their experiences to inform their work. Grades cannot encapsulate this, and getting tested on ideas that have already been solved by other practitioners is not the only way to prepare a student for their career.

Career and graduate school implications

An important concern regarding Pass/Fail grading is its impacts on students' future careers and graduate school applications. However, these impacts can be mitigated by having a strong communications strategy and using an FAQ. This was implemented at the end of the Spring 2020 semester²⁶.

Implications for students' future careers

One may argue that Pass/Fail can work as a bandaid for emergency situations, but is ultimately unsustainable because it carries heavy implications for how education is viewed by employers. However, [as shown previously, many institutions have already implemented more compassionate grading frameworks](#), therefore normalizing it. As more and more institutions implement new grading frameworks in light of COVID-19's negative impacts on the student population, it will become normalized which mitigates some negative consequences of having Pass or Fail on a student's transcript. [Again, as previously mentioned, many companies nowadays weigh experience more heavily than grades anyway](#), and many employers would understand the circumstances (a worldwide pandemic) underlying a Pass or Fail grade. Some employers also look at CGPA only, which could be increased with the Pass/Fail grading framework to offset the negative and disproportionate impacts of COVID-19.

With the shift to a remote learning environment, some students have considered dropping out or changing out of their current major, all due to the amount of stress they are put under. To mitigate these adverse circumstances, SFU can offer Pass/Fail grading, which would encourage students to continue pursuing a degree and a career they are passionate about.

²⁴ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2008.tb00968.x>

²⁵ <http://www.sfu.ca/coop/programs/ensc.html>

²⁶ <https://www.sfu.ca/fass/news/2020/03/covid-19-info-for-fass-students.html>

Graduate school

Some graduate schools, such as UC Berkeley, have stated they will “make admissions decisions holistically,” considering factors outside of CGPA as well as being mindful of the COVID-19 pandemic’s effects on students²⁷. In fact, UC Berkeley and many other universities have implemented new admissions criteria, making it clear that “[they] will not penalize students for the adoption of P/NP and other grading options during this unprecedented period²⁸.”

For graduate schools who may penalize a Pass/Fail grade, SFU should consider making this very clear in [the FAQ](#). Additionally, only a minority of undergraduate students at SFU go to graduate school. **Is it fair to punish students who are not planning on going to graduate school, just because some graduate schools *may* look unfavourably upon a Pass/Fail grade (which is optional and not necessary for students to take)?**

Quality of education and workload

Throughout the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been two opposing perspectives on the quality of education since moving to remote instruction. On one hand, some claim the quality of education is unchanged; on the other hand, some are saying the quality of education has vastly decreased.

Unchanged quality of education

If the quality of education has stayed the same, implementing a Pass/Fail grading framework would not have a huge effect on the majority of students. Students could continue to learn from their professors, and do not need to opt for a Pass/Fail grade. **The only impact of the Pass/Fail system would be to help students who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in domains other than their academic life.** According to [SFU’s renewed dedication to EDI](#), it is ever more important to look out for marginalized groups who are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning a Pass/Fail grading framework is the most equitable solution.

Decreased quality of education

Many students, TAs, and faculty members alike have expressed concerns with the decreasing quality of education since the shift to a remote learning environment. If this

²⁷ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/13/how-will-passfail-affect-students-future>

²⁸ <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/13/how-will-passfail-affect-students-future>

is the case, a Pass/Fail grading framework would offset these adverse effects and make grading more fair for students who were unable to access the full range of support they needed.

Students

Students have many concerns regarding the decreasing quality of education since the shift to a remote learning environment.

The lack of support and communication from some professors have taken a toll on students' grades, severely limiting their understanding of course material. Although some professors still hold office hours via Zoom, some only hold them via email, which makes understanding course concepts even more difficult. **Since the SFU Senate cannot mandate what professors can and cannot do, implementing a Pass/Fail grading framework is most fair for students who are put in this adverse situation.** We must trust students to know what is best for their own situations, and not put additional stress on them to "prove" the hardships they go through.

Students have also experienced a vastly increased workload. Since the shift to online learning, some changes to courses had to be made, which resulted in more difficult exams to offset cheating, increased number of assignments or projects, and stressful proctored exams. All of this contributes to a decline in students' [mental health](#) as well as burnout.

According to the SFSS COVID-19 Survey, 45.6% of students do not have the necessary software to complete their studies since students are unable to use software available on campus computers. The survey also found that 47.9% of students experience a heavier workload with remote learning, and **12.9% of students felt unsafe, uncomfortable, or violated by an instructor's request.** 43.6% of students did not feel well-equipped to finish the semester, and 6.5% withdrew from their courses²⁹. SFU should take these survey results into consideration, and consider a more compassionate grading framework.

This is especially true in light of multiple studies stating that remote instruction cannot be compared at the same level as in-person instruction. While university test results may be similar for both online and in-person classes, students are more engaged with in-person classes³⁰. Furthermore, remote learning requires more self-discipline and self guidance, and research shows that scholarly instruction with minimal guidance is less

²⁹ <https://sfss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Survey-Report-4-1.pdf>

³⁰ <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.01278/full>

effective than teaching with strong guidance, even for students with considerable prior knowledge³¹.

Remote learning can also disadvantage students with learning disabilities. For example, online-based courses often require more reading than in-person courses, which can be more difficult for those with reading-based disabilities³². Once again we see marginalized populations are being disproportionately and adversely impacted by COVID-19.

TAs

Teaching Assistants have also noticed a decrease in support and quality of learning with the shift to remote instruction. Not only has workload dramatically increased, it has done so at a rate that the professor themselves cannot even keep up with the increasing number of assignments, projects, quizzes, and exams. This means that quizzes are often published later in the week than originally scheduled, and exam details are changed on the fly (less than 24 hours before the exam). **These sudden changes negatively affect students' ability to prepare, and hinders TAs' abilities to adequately assess their students.**

Faculty

Some faculty members have also expressed concerns with the quality of online instruction. There has been a decrease in the number of resources available, and communication regarding changes is confusing. **Instructors who are unfamiliar with remote instruction suddenly have to adapt to the online environment, which leads to many problems (glitches, unexpected technological challenges) that impact students' abilities to learn.**

All of these issues with remote instruction impact a student's ability to learn and demonstrate their knowledge, which can lead to a lower grade. This can be mitigated with the option to take a Pass/Fail grade, so students will not have to be punished for something they cannot control.

“Students know what they’re getting into now. Just take a lighter course load or take the semester off”

Unfortunately, many students do not have the luxury of taking a lighter course load or taking the semester off. Students, especially first-year students, are still unprepared for

³¹ https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/s15326985ep4102_1

³² <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ss.394>

remote courses, considering each course is heavily dependent on how prepared a professor is.

WD deadline

An extended WD deadline would not address this because students will not have adequate time to assess how they are doing in the course, especially after taking a final exam (which could be worth 20%-40% of a student's grade). Additionally, having a Pass/Fail option would give students the autonomy of deciding whether to keep a letter grade or opt for Pass/Fail **after trying their best in the course**. This is especially important if students are taking a required course.

International students

International students must take a full course load to participate in co-op. Additionally, not enrolling in courses full time will affect international students when applying for a post-grad work permit³³.

Student loans

According to StudentAid BC, students “**must attend school full-time**” in order to receive funding³⁴. If students do not attend school full time one semester, they must do so the next semester and submit a new application (which acts as an additional barrier that some students may not have the time for). Additionally, students who “withdraw from school two times while receiving B.C. student financial assistance...will be denied further funding by StudentAid BC.” This means that many students cannot afford to take a lighter course load or take the semester off.

Many students also rely on student loans for their living expenses.

Indigenous band funding

Some Indigenous students receive band funding (funding from their nation). When these students are band funded, typically they have to take full course load. If they decide to take a semester off or reduce their course load, these students would risk losing this band funding. This band funding is often the only way for these students to

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<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/study-permits/post-graduation-work-permit-program/eligibility.html>

³⁴ <https://studentaidbc.ca/maintain/responsibilities#continue-in-studies>

access a post-secondary education, which demonstrates, again, the [disproportionate effect that the COVID-19 pandemic has on marginalized communities](#).

Course offerings

Many courses have limited offerings throughout the year. By telling students to take a semester off or take a lighter course load, you are asking students to **disrupt their entire life plan and potentially delay their goals for a year or more**. This is simply not feasible for many students, which is why understanding students' variegated situations and showing compassion with a Pass/Fail grading system would be a viable solution.

Alternatives (WE and AE)

Some may argue we should consider alternatives such as WE or AE notation instead of Pass/Fail grading. However, these notations have additional barriers and can further disadvantage many students, especially marginalized ones.

WE (withdraw under extenuating circumstances)

Requesting a WE notation requires documentation, along with a long process (instead of going on go.sfu.ca to choose Pass/Fail by yourself).

Requesting additional documentation for a WE acts as a barrier for many students. If a student is depressed and is unable to access mental health support or get diagnosed by a psychologist (whether due to lack of time or lack of money), **they are punished for their inability to secure documentation**.

A WE can also be denied (who is to decide how much a student has suffered?), and processing WE requests can lead to admin overload. It also means a student would have to retake the course later on, which may be unfair if the reason the student wanted a WE was due to poor course design and lack of access to proper support or resources.

AE (Compassionate Pass)

An AE notation has the same issues as requesting a WE notation. Not only do students need to provide enough "proof" for someone to decide whether they deserve the AE, students also have to spend additional time undergoing the process of requesting an AE notation.

If there were less barriers and if this notation was given to anyone who requested it, it could be a viable alternative to Pass/Fail grading. However, we have a previously-established Pass/Fail grading framework from Spring 2020, so it may ease administrative load to re-establish that system instead of working on a new one.

Later semester start

The delayed start of the Spring 2021 semester does not adequately address the many issues outlined above, like students' mental health and how COVID-19 disproportionately impacts marginalized communities.

While some professors may have more time to prepare for their courses, 1 extra week does not guarantee *all* professors will optimize their courses for remote learning. Having a Pass/Fail option would be more equitable for all students to offset any effects of poor online course integration.

Cheating

A Pass/Fail grading framework may disincentivize cheating for many students.

Students may feel pressured to cheat in online learning environments because of the need to maintain a CGPA. With the Pass/Fail option, students' CGPA would not be in danger since opting for a Pass grade will not affect CGPA. **This would ease stress on students and disincentivize cheating** since their CGPA is no longer in danger of being lowered due to a bad semester.

Since CGPA is tied into everything from scholarships, bursaries, and more, a Pass/Fail helps devalue a course's grade and, as such, will reduce the desire to cheat.

If a student is caught cheating, they will be penalized for it. Pass/Fail does not have such adverse consequences, which further disincentivizes cheating. Since cheating has been shown to greatly impact curved classes, leading to honest students getting a lower grade, having Pass/Fail grading would ensure honest students are not punished.

Curved classes

Concerns about how curved classes will be affected by the Pass/Fail grading framework can be addressed the same way they were in Spring 2020—a Pass/Fail grade can be applied after the class grades have been curved.

Meaningful consultation

89.3% of SFU undergraduate students believe that SFU should consult more with students before making big decisions on topics such as grading options and instructor requirements³⁵. Additionally, over 7,000 students have signed a petition to bring back the Pass/Fail system³⁶.

All of this shows the importance of listening to students' input. Many students have been calling for a Pass/Fail grading framework, and must be meaningfully consulted.

³⁵ <https://sfss.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/COVID-19-Survey-Report-4-1.pdf>

³⁶ <https://www.change.org/p/simon-fraser-university-please-bring-back-the-pass-fail-system/>