

School of Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts | Part III | Dec 2020|

Instructional Policies and Student Support

In these final few weeks of the fall 2020 semester, these are important details to share with you about:

- Final exams
- Important academic deadlines
- Requests for late withdraws (W) and Assigning "I" grades
- Academic integrity, process and resources
- Students of concern, policies and resources
- Student basic needs resources

If you have any questions or student support needs, please feel encouraged to stay connected with your departments and the SSHA dean office.

Final Exams

Your courses may have scheduled final exams via the Registrar Office. If you are looking to provide flexibility to your students with managing time and technology access, some faculty have assigned “expanded exam or project time” as an alternative to a synchronous exam time. A project or exam can be completed during the time of instruction (or the final exam period) within a time range, e.g. a day or several days as the time period, with associated reminders about academic integrity expectations.

If you are administering a scheduled exam and would prefer this option, please connect with Instructional Services staff ssha.curriculum@ucmerced.edu to update information. Note: agreement from all students in your course is required if the exam time is being changed. Additional information can be found under [Final Exams in the UCM Catalog](#).

Important Academic Deadlines for Students

As a reminder, students have option to select P/NP as a grade option through the last day of instruction. Guidance on this grade option emphasizes that this is an exception and an important decision <https://registrar.ucmerced.edu/policies/grades/updates-grading-options> In addition to talking with instructors about this option, students can also be encouraged to connect with their academic advisor:

- For SSHA majors: <https://ssha-advising.ucmerced.edu/meet-your-advisor>
- For first-year students: <https://bobcat-advising-center.ucmerced.edu/>

Other important academic deadlines include:

- December 11th: Last day of instruction
- December 22nd: Finals grades due (by 12:00pm!)

Late Withdraw Requests and Assigning Incomplete Grades

Any request to withdraw beginning in the eleventh week of instruction will only be considered under exceptional circumstances (illness or injury substantiated by a doctor’s note, recent death in the immediate family or other circumstances of equal gravity), with both the signed approvals of the instructor of record and by the Dean's office of the School with which the student is affiliated.

A petition process exists for students who seek an exception to stated academic policies, procedures, and regulations. Approval for petitions will be granted by the appropriate deciding body only in cases where extenuating circumstances are evident and can be substantiated. See registrar.ucmerced.edu/policies/petition-academic-policy for additional information.

An incomplete grade of "I" may be assigned when the instructor determines that a student's work is of passing quality and represents a significant portion of the requirements for a final grade, but is incomplete for a good cause (which may include current illness, serious personal problems, an accident, a recent death in the immediate family, a large and necessary increase in working hours or other situations of equal gravity).

More information about assigning an "I" grade can be found here:

- <https://catalog.ucmerced.edu/content.php?catoid=17&navoid=1581#Incomplete>
- <https://registrar.ucmerced.edu/policies/grades#I>

Academic Integrity, Process and Resources

Academic integrity can be a nuanced topic; it helps to have clear guidelines for how academic work should be produced, or demonstrated in courses, and discussed actively with students as part of a research university culture. Best practices on how to support these learning experiences is in "[An Instructor's Guide to Preventing and Reporting Plagiarism](#)."

If there is an issue of academic integrity, [Senate policy](#) is that an instructor discusses the issues with the student as part of due process and educational commitments. An instructor may decide if a violation occurred and if more than a warning, impose an academic sanction (i.e., reduced grade, 0 on the assignment or exam, retake, or F in the course). If there is an academic penalty, [a report form needs to be completed](#) in discussion with the student, with notification to a department chair, and then is filed with the SSHA Dean Office for shared records with the Office of Students' Rights and Responsibilities. A report ensures communication and due process; this report is not part of a student's permanent record unless there is a comprehensive judicial process for significant cases.

If there are questions or additional help is needed with navigating the process, please feel encouraged to contact your department or the SSHA dean office.

Students of Concern

You may have students who are demonstrating a sudden change in or concerning behavior, the following website provides helpful information: <https://studentaffairs.ucmerced.edu/dean-students> or <https://osrr.ucmerced.edu/>. An important resource is the Student Response Team, which is a cross-section of experts on campus "to address academic, physical, psychological, and safety risk indicators experienced by students to avoid a crisis." Instructors have option to [complete a student of concern form](#) <<https://studentaffairs.ucmerced.edu/dean-students/students-concern-form>>, describing observations for consideration, which can help this organize support and action plans. This process and support are available for undergraduate and graduate students.*All noted support and policy connect to registered students, whether on-campus or elsewhere. *The Health Center and Counseling Services are open with daily services <https://counseling.ucmerced.edu/>.

Student Basic Needs Resources

UC Merced continues to be committed to providing students with academic, personal, and career resources as they learn and engage remotely. Below are some Fall 2020 resources:

UC Merced's Success Anywhere website provides a comprehensive list of resources to ensure students are informed, engaged, and well: <https://success.ucmerced.edu/>.

Food - Students experiencing difficulty affording groceries or accessing nutritious food may visit [Basic Needs](#) for a list of local and regional food-related resources or email Basicneed@ucmerced.edu.

Academic - Students with academic, personal, and career-related questions may visit [SSHA Advising](#) and the [Center for Career & Professional Advancement](#) to find resources and support options.

Housing - Students in need of temporary housing may request a meeting with the Dean of Students Office to discuss options. Students who are currently homeless or living in a home environment that is abusive and/or violent may apply for on-campus housing at housing.ucmerced.edu/apply.

Finances - If financial concerns surface, students may meet with a Financial Wellness Coordinator at <https://basicneeds.ucmerced.edu/economic-support> to engage in one-on-one financial wellness counseling. Additionally, the Dean of Students Office continues to provide emergency funds to students facing unexpected, unforeseen, and unavoidable emergency expenses surrounding situations such as accidents, illness, homelessness, fire damage, or need for temporary housing. Currently enrolled students may apply for funds when they have exhausted all other financial resources (student loans, personal resources, and payment plans).