

Grading Policy Guidance for Remote Learning (COVID-19)

The transition to remote learning has been a significant shift for New York City. Students, families, teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, service providers, and many others in students’ lives have had to overcome enormous challenges. During this time, our policies must reflect the wide range of experiences and challenges that we are facing as a community.

Grades are a way to communicate about progress with students and families, and teachers must continue to assess student work and provide meaningful feedback about what students are learning. Grades must be as clear and accurate as possible while also taking into consideration the varied circumstances that students and schools are facing. First and foremost, we must support students to advance in their learning through June and beyond.

While we assess student learning in new ways, we must continue to review student work holistically. At this point in the year, teachers have a great deal of information about student progress to inform student grades. As remote learning continues, schools must adapt their grading policies to reflect the realities of remote learning and their impact on each student’s performance. Schools must accommodate and support students who have faced challenges accessing remote learning. In addition, schools must adjust their grading scales so that final grades follow the guidelines in this document. This guidance is designed to help schools adapt—not recreate—their grading policies to meet students’ needs in a remote learning context.

As students participate in remote learning, teachers must grade their work and keep their gradebooks up to date, in alignment with expectations set by the principal. In alignment with existing systems, teachers must document students’ areas for improvement in gradebooks, report cards, and/or other platforms for recording student progress, so that this information is accessible in planning for summer and fall.

Use this document alongside the [Guide to Supporting High School Students and Families During Remote Learning](#). Schools should contact their [academic policy and systems lead](#) for additional support.

Contents

Grading Policy Flexibilities	2
Grading Scales	3
Final Grade Calculations	5
Parent/Guardian Choice of Grading Scale for Middle and High School	5
Grade Point Average and Rank	6
Completing Courses Beyond June 2020.....	6
Frequently Asked Questions	7

Grading Policy Flexibilities

Schools must review their grading policies and practices and make adjustments that acknowledge the impact of remote learning on the ways in which students complete their assigned work. This review must consider the following:

- **Student access to devices:** Schools must take into consideration students' access to devices and support them in catching up on their learning once they have received a device. Schools must consider modifying the expectations for work assigned before students had access to devices to ensure that students can sustain their learning without being overwhelmed. Work issued by schools prior to a student receiving a device (i.e., paper materials) must be reviewed and considered in teachers' overall assessment of whether students have met learning outcomes.
- **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 as remote learners. 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.
- **The applicability of pre-determined assignments:** Some planned assignments may not be practical or valid in a remote setting. Teachers must determine which assignments may need to be removed or substituted with comparable tasks.
- **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 because of the impact of COVID-19 on each individual student's circumstances. 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.

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 English language learners.

Schools may have chosen to extend their marking period dates during the transition to remote learning; these changes must also be documented in the revised grading policy.

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.

Grading Scales

The following policy changes apply through June 2020.

Grade Level	Requirements
Grades Kindergarten through 5	<p>Schools must use their existing grading scales for marking period grades for the rest of the year.</p> <p>Schools must award final grades of meets standards (MT) and needs improvement (N) only.</p> <p>Schools define how MT and N relate to their prior grading scales and practices. N must be used in cases where there is insufficient information to determine whether a student has met standards.</p> <p>For students who receive final grades of N, teachers must document students' areas for improvement in gradebooks, report cards, and other existing platforms for recording student progress, so that this information is accessible for further planning. The DOE provides standards-aligned report card comments in STARS which may be used for this purpose.</p>
Grade 6 through 8	<p>Schools must use their existing grading scales for marking period grades for the rest of the year.</p> <p>Schools must award final grades of meets standards (MT), needs improvement (N), and course in progress (NX) only.</p> <p>Schools define how MT and N relate to their prior grading scales and practices. NX must be used in the following cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students receive an NX if there is insufficient work to calculate a final grade. • Grade 8 students in accelerated (high school level) courses receive an NX in place of a failing grade, in alignment with the policy for grades 9-12. These students must not receive grades of N, as they have not met the learning outcomes to receive high school course credit. <p>For students who receive final grades of N or NX, teachers must document students' areas for improvement in gradebooks, report cards, and other existing platforms for recording student progress, so that this information is accessible for further planning. The DOE provides standards-aligned report card comments in STARS which may be used for this purpose.</p>

Grade Level	Requirements
Grades 9-12	<p>Schools must use their existing grading scales for marking period grades for the rest of the year.</p> <p>Schools must calculate final grades using their existing grading scales and calculation methods, with the following additional requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students whose final grades are failing must be awarded a grade of NX (course in progress). • Students for whom there is insufficient work to determine a final grade must be awarded a grade of NX. • If students’ final grades are passing, parents/guardians make the final decision about whether the final grade remains on the existing scale or is updated to credit (CR). This decision happens after final report cards are issued in June. See Parent/Guardian Choice of Grading Scale for High School. • Grades of CR are not included in students’ GPAs. <p>For students who receive final grades of NX, teachers must document students’ areas for improvement in gradebooks, report cards, and other existing platforms for recording student progress, so that this information is accessible for further planning. The DOE provides standards-aligned report card comments in STARS which may be used for this purpose.</p> <p>Schools that awarded final grades after the transition to remote learning and prior to the publication of this guidance should contact their academic policy and systems lead for support.</p>
Alternate Assessment	<p>Schools continue to award grades using the scales above as they coincide with the appropriate grade level. For students participating in alternate assessment, teachers must also indicate progress towards student IEP goals.</p>

Final Grade Calculations

Per their existing methodologies, some schools have defined the last marking period in a term as a cumulative, final grade that represents students' performance over the entire course. Other schools have defined the final marking period as a calculated average of individual marking period grades. Schools should apply the required final grades to their existing methods from prior to remote learning as follows:

- For schools in which the last marking period grade is considered the cumulative, final marking period grade, this grade must be awarded using the new, required scales as described in [Grading Scales](#).
- For schools in which the final grade is a calculated average of individual marking period grades, marking period grades must be awarded using the same grading scales and calculation methods from prior to remote learning. The resulting final grades must then be converted and recorded using the new, required scales as described in [Grading Scales](#).

Parent/Guardian Choice of Grading Scale for High School

High schools must provide every parent or guardian the option to replace passing final grades with grades of credit (CR). Parents have the final say in this determination; students need not meet specific criteria. Parents may choose the CR option for all passing courses or for 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:

- In June, schools calculate students' final grades using their existing scales and enter them into STARS.
- Upon issuing final report cards in June, schools must inform all parents of their right to select a grade of CR 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.
- 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 through transcript updates and provide families with updated report cards and transcripts within 30 days of the receipt of the request. Schools must prioritize making these updates for graduating students within 10 days so that their transcripts are accurate. Final grades may be updated in the following ways:
 - **Electronic Grade Gathering (EGG) File:** Schools can use an EGG file obtained from STARS Client to update, in bulk, final grades awarded to students. This EGG file must be obtained from the final marking period where grades were entered for display on the transcript. All revised final grades must be marked a final prior to uploading into STARS Client.
 - **STARS Classroom Download/Upload:** Schools can use STARS Classroom's download/upload feature, which allows teachers to upload student grades in a single batch using a spreadsheet.

- **Marking Period Grades Screen:** For updates to individual students' **final grades**, schools can use the Marking Period Grades screen within STARS Admin. Schools must select the final marking period from the marking period filter and update grades as needed. Revised grades must be marked as final prior to saving.
- **Transcript Update:** Schools completing a transcript update must select the reason **Change an existing grade** and select the sub-reason **Grade calculation/entry error**. Schools must also enter a comment of "Grade change due to COVID-19." As with any transcript update, schools must retain a copy of a completed [transcript update form](#), along with documentation of the request.
- Parents and have the right to submit or revise their preference through November 30, 2020. Schools must honor all such requests.

Parent choice does not apply to marking period grades, which remain on schools' existing grading scales.

Schools that awarded final grades after the transition to remote learning and prior to the publication of this guidance should contact their [academic policy and systems lead](#) for support.

Grade Point Average and Rank

Final grades of MT, N, NX, and CR for middle and high school students will not be included in student GPAs. See [Completing Courses Beyond June 2020](#) for more information about completing courses for which students receive NX grades.

Given the grading policy changes under remote learning, final grades awarded during remote learning must not be used for ranking purposes. As they plan toward the end of the year, 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 of becoming remote learners during the COVID-19 crisis.

Completing Courses Beyond June 2020

Students who receive a final grade of NX will have time after Spring 2020, including summer learning opportunities, to continue working on areas of improvement and to demonstrate proficiency.

- Students in grades 6 through 8 who receive a final grade of NX will be able to participate in summer learning opportunities to receive additional support to pursue passing grades by August. This includes grade 8 students who receive grades of NX for accelerated courses, so that they can continue pursuing course credit.
- High school students will have until January 2021 to complete outstanding coursework for grades of NX. High school seniors must be prioritized to complete outstanding coursework as soon after June as possible. Students who are relying on passing a Regents course in order to qualify for the corresponding Regents waiver must successfully complete outstanding courses by August 2020. The option to continue taking courses over the summer includes students who have turned 21 within the 2019-20 school year.

When students who receive final grades of NX complete outstanding work, schools must enter transcript updates to change those grades to passing grades using the procedures in the [Transcript Update guide](#) by January 2021.

- If students achieve the learning outcomes for the course by January 2021, the school must update the NX grade to a passing grade, with parent choice as to whether to record the calculated grade or "credit" (CR). See [Parent/Guardian Choice of Grading Scale for High School](#).

- If students do not achieve the course learning outcomes by January 2021, the school must update the NX grade to “no credit” (NC).
- Updates must be made to the original grade; new grades must not be added to the transcript.

Frequently Asked Questions

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

Yes, this policy applies to students with IEPs participating in both standardized and alternate assessment. Teachers continue to monitor progress toward IEP goals and report progress to parents on the schedule indicated in students’ IEPs.

2. How should schools define the equivalent of meets standards/MT and needs improvement/N based upon their prior grading scale?

Schools decide how to define MT and N, considering individual students’ experiences and ensuring that grades are a meaningful and supportive way of communicating students’ progress. As prior to remote learning, schools clearly communicate the ways in which grades are calculated and the expectations for completion assignments, assessments, and projects.

3. How will these policy changes impact middle and high school admissions?

The DOE will be developing additional guidance on admissions processes for the fall given the change to grading. The impacts of COVID-19 will not be held against any student in the admissions process.

4. Can students in grade 8 accelerated courses use the parent choice option for their final grades?

No. The remote learning grading policy is designed to establish as much consistency as possible within the same grade level, regardless of the instructional level of students’ courses. Students in grade 8 accelerated courses who pass their courses may receive either an N or an MT based on their performance in the course. Students who do not meet the learning outcomes receive a grade of NX.

5. How does receiving a grade of NX impact Regents waiver eligibility for high school students?

Students must receive passing grades in their Regents courses in order to be eligible for the corresponding Regents waiver. Since NX is not a passing grade, it does not qualify students for the waiver. Students may receive the waiver if they pass the course in August and their NX grade is updated to a passing final grade. See [Guide to Supporting High School Students and Families During Remote Learning](#).

6. How should grades be awarded for science labs?

NYSED has waived the requirement for students to complete 1200 minutes of laboratory experiences during remote learning. That said, schools may have embedded lab activities into their remote science instruction, with students still scheduled for separate, zero-credit lab courses in alignment with DOE course coding guidelines. In this case, students must receive a grade for science lab on the same basis as any other course to document whether they have met the learning outcomes. Science labs must be zero credits.

7. Must students receive grades in non-credit-bearing Regents prep courses, given the cancellation of the Regents?

If students are still participating in these courses as additional support in the subject area, then grades must be awarded on the same basis as any course, in alignment with the policies in this document. If students are no longer participating in Regents prep courses, grades must not be awarded.

8. Can parents of high school students request the credit (“CR”) option before the end of the year?

No. This option is contingent on whether the student passes the course in June. Schools must collect these preferences after report cards are issued in June and make adjustments accordingly as described in [Parent/Guardian Choice of Grading Scale for High School](#).

9. What resources are available for supporting students who may need extra help before the end of the term?

Schools can refer to resources on [TeachHub](#) as they support students during remote learning.