

Dear members of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP),

We understand that the CEP is likely to be meeting to discuss policies on grades and grading as the ULP strike continues towards the grading deadlines. We, the Graduate Student Association (GSA), are writing here with suggestions on topics that may be discussed at CEP meetings in the near future.

Broadly, we believe any changes that come from the CEP should not challenge the rights of workers, including faculty, lecturers, and graduate workers (GSIs, TAs, etc.). Workers have a legally-protected right to strike, and as such policies should not be designed to undermine their current strike. In addition, we also believe that educational quality and integrity should not be sacrificed in the process of considering changes to grading policies.

We have suggestions for the following topics, which we believe fall under CEP's mandate.

Final Grade Submission Deadlines

We understand that there have been discussions to extend the deadline to submit final grades, which has already occurred at UC Berkeley and other campuses. We would strongly suggest against this for two reasons.

First, changing the internal deadline for submitting grades does not change the external deadlines that grades are related to, for example, federal financial aid verification. Because of this, the effects of not submitting grades for undergraduate or graduate students would not be altered by changing the end date of grade submission.

Second, at other UC campuses it appears clear that the extension of grade deadlines was implemented to provide a period where faculty can be pressured to pick up struck labor and submit grades. After December 14th the appointments of graduate student workers as TAs, GSIs, and Readers end, which means that ASEs will not be responsible for grading. We expect that campus administrators will use that interim period to pressure faculty to grade struck work and submit grades. It is worth noting that the Council of UC Faculty Associations (CUCFA) and the UC-AFT have made very clear that faculty across the UC system are under no responsibility to pick up struck labor. We agree with the CUCFA and UC-AFT and believe it would be extremely unfair to all faculty. This means that the UC will be faced with a situation where there are no workers responsible for grading, because of their rights. How grades will make it into the grade book will be determined after the conclusion of the strike in a manner that does not violate the workload rights and rights to not pick up struck labor of ASEs, faculty, and lecturers, which could involve hiring readers. The UC can avert this, and the high costs associated with it, by bringing UAW a fair contract proposal.

Individual Grade Submissions

While we do not recommend extending grade deadlines, we do recommend allowing for individual grades to be submitted for individual students. We believe that it should be made possible to submit grades for students with specific circumstances, rather than entire rosters. This would help, for example, students who are on academic probation and require a quarterly

review of their grades in order to receive their financial aid. We do not want these students to be negatively impacted as they must be reviewed at the end of the quarter.

Changing the format of final exams

We believe that the CEP should make no policy requiring or encouraging instructors to change the format of their final exam. We believe that instructors should retain control over what their exams look like and not have to fundamentally alter the syllabi they've provided to students earlier in the quarter in light of the strike. Additionally, changing the format of final exams may also serve to undermine the labor of striking graduate student workers.

CEP policy to change grades from blank to passing after 30 days

Finally, we are aware of a CEP policy implemented in April 2020, which ensures that all grades that are left blank beyond a period of 30 days from final grade deadlines are changed to Passing ("P"). We strongly advise the CEP to strike this policy for the following five reasons.

First, the CEP adopted this policy in a different context, at the end of the 2020 UCSC wildcat strike when there were only a lingering number of final grades that had not been submitted. We are in a significantly different context today, where legally protected workers are on a ULP strike, and those protections include not submitting grades.

Second, the scale of the current strike would make the number of grades potentially changed to Ps as a result of this policy incredibly extensive. Because of the scale of the current strike, UC Santa Cruz converting tens of thousands of blank grades into passing grades will significantly undermine the institutional reputation of UCSC and the accreditation standards it must comply with, on the quality of the educational institution and student achievement.

Third, we believe this is unfair to all students. CUCFA has provided guidance to faculty that entering grades that are partial or non-representative is unfair to the quality of work that undergraduate students complete to achieve their final grades.

Fourth, other campuses, notably UC Berkeley, have clearly and explicitly stated that they will not be converting any blank grades into P grades. It is clear to us that other campuses also find it unacceptable to change a massive number of grades into Ps.

Fifth, we believe this policy undermines the ability of workers to exercise their right to strike. The conversion to P grades is, in essence, an automatic form of picking up struck labor. As such, we believe this policy should be removed.

We understand the enormous pressures all faculty and graduate student workers are facing during this period, and hope our suggestions provide clear guidance on final grades submission. We believe that any changes considered should not undermine the hard work of our graduate and undergraduate students, nor place an undue burden on faculty by taking on struck labor. We hope to see a just resolution to the ULP strike across the UC system and that UCSC faculty continue to support graduate students throughout this time.

Sincerely,

The Graduate Student Association Executive Board