



Dear colleagues and students in SAS and the College,

Please see below for an important message from Provost Wendell Pritchett and Vice Provost for Education Beth Winkelstein announcing University-wide academic initiatives on taking courses pass/fail and on the number of course units (c.u.) that may be taken per semester by undergraduates.

Please note that the College's current policy and practice regarding the number of c.u. that may be taken per semester are largely unaffected by these initiatives. First-year students (freshmen) in the College are limited to 4.5 c.u. for the first semester. After the first semester, College students are limited to 5.5 c.u. per semester. Students can raise these limits with permission from their pre-major or major advisor or the College Office. This generally requires evidence of good performance (a g.p.a. of 3.3 or better) in five courses and no outstanding Incompletes. (See <https://www.college.upenn.edu/courseload>.) The new overload limit announced below has been endorsed by the College in consultation with the Provost and the other undergraduate schools.

Best regards,

Paul Sniegowski  
Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Over the past year, we have joined with President Gutmann in a campus-wide campaign to reaffirm the importance of wellness in the Penn community. This campaign includes a series of specific academic initiatives designed to advance a robust culture of wellness among our student scholars.

As we begin the new semester, we are pleased to announce two important changes to Penn's academic procedures designed to further promote student wellness: (1) extending the deadline to declare a course Pass/Fail and (2) limiting the number of courses for which students can register.

The first change is a new, later deadline to declare a course Pass/Fail. This semester, the deadline will be Friday, October 26, the Friday before the start of advance registration. Previously, that deadline coincided with the last day to drop a course, which is much earlier in the semester. Future deadlines for declaring Pass/Fail will be set at the ninth full week of the term or just before advance registration, whichever comes first.

This modification came about because students shared with us and their undergraduate deans that a later deadline would relieve some of the pressure of making academic decisions early in the semester, giving them more time to evaluate their performance and to weigh options around changing a course to Pass/Fail. The proposal was discussed in detail by the Committee on

Undergraduate Education in the School of Arts and Sciences, which recommended the change to the Council of Undergraduate Deans. That Council endorsed the idea and recommended that we implement it. We are very grateful to Student Registration and Financial Services for making it happen quickly enough to be enacted this fall.

The second change is a rule limiting the number of Course Units (CUs) for which a student can register in a term to 7.5 CUs. In addition, the undergraduate deans of all four undergraduate schools have agreed to jointly enforce a maximum credit load of 5.5 CUs (6.5 CUs for dual degree students and seniors who need more CUs to graduate on time) during advance registration for all undergraduates.

The reasons for limiting the number of CUs are to:

- encourage thoughtful academic planning and deliberate decisions on what courses to take each term to fulfill a student's goals;
- promote wellness and reduce the stress and anxiety of carrying too large a course load; and
- prevent students from registering for more courses than they intend to complete which limits the course options for other students.

Students should be aware that different schools and programs have different rules governing the courses that may be declared Pass/Fail and different processes for requesting exceptions for CU limits. We encourage students to discuss these matters with their academic advisor if they have any questions about these new rules.

We are grateful to the academic leadership of the undergraduate schools and to the students who have worked with us to identify these and other improvements. We look forward to your continued partnership in implementing new ideas that help us sustain a vibrant culture of student success and wellness.

Wendell Pritchett, Provost  
Beth Winkelstein, Vice Provost for Education



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