

# Bedford High School

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**To:** Bedford School Committee  
**From:** Heather Galante, Principal & Alicia Linsey, Director of Counseling  
**RE:** Proposal for Handbook Change-T3/T4 and GPA Language Bedford High School

## **Introduction**

Given the complexities of this school closure, we are not teaching in the same manner nor are we able to assess in traditional ways. Bedford High School is committed to supporting all students. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education reports that the *“safety and well-being of students, families, and staff has been and must continue to be our top priority as an educational community. This crisis disproportionately affects our most vulnerable students in terms of their physical and mental health and also academically. Equity needs to be a top consideration in local planning efforts, especially as districts and schools make plans to manage an extended closure.”* While academic progress is important, the social and emotional health of all students are paramount. Therefore, Bedford High School has written a proposal for review by the School Committee that takes into account:

- guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education asking schools to introduce new material most critical for student success in the next grade level, while prioritizing the maintenance of meaningful connections with educators and peers;
- our equity work as a district in which no student is harmed and where decisions are made on behalf of the entire student population;
- an awareness of the challenges faced by students and their families during this uncertain time; and
- our partnership with Challenge Success which allows students to learn new material and pass courses while dealing with the loss and varied emotions that accompany this pandemic.

## **Term 3 (January 27 - April 10) and Term 4 (April 13 -June 19)**

As previously communicated by our district, term 3 and term 4 grades will be recorded as pass or fail. Due to the timing of the closure, third term grades are an incomplete reflection of the workload which had been assigned, much of which had yet to be turned in or completed. Therefore, the decision has been made that students are earning a grade of pass (P) or fail (F). Assignments are visible to parents and students in the Aspen portal and students will be able to track their progress in the same manner. Students who are not engaging in remote learning or not making progress are monitored, and contact is made by teachers, assistant principals, and/or the student's counselor.

## **Community Service**

Due to the pandemic, it is not possible for all seniors to complete their community service hours. Therefore, the community service requirement has been waived for the Class of 2020.

## **Final Exam Periods**

The decision has been made to cancel the senior and underclassmen final exam periods. Though teachers will be assessing student progress for summative purposes, the “high stakes” and “high stress” exam period will not take place for the 2019-2020 school year. Teachers will continue to teach new material and assess students on an as needed basis. The baseline assessments at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year will

provide a more accurate and meaningful measure of where students are to inform instruction for 2020-2021. The beginning of year assessment(s) will include the effects of remote learning March-June and any lapse/skill regression over the summer months.

### **GPA/Report Card Implications**

For school year 2019-2020 the following apply:

- Letter/numerical grades were used for terms 1 and 2 and the midyear exam. Terms 3 and 4 are P/F, and there are no final exams.
- A modified calculation that more heavily weighs terms 1 and 2 and the midyear exam and that accounts for the P/F grades in terms 3 and 4 will be the final grade reflected on the transcript for the 2019-2020 academic year. (See chart below.)
- A grade of “P” is factored into the GPA with a value of 100; a grade of F has a value of 59.

	Typical	2019-2020
Term 1	20%	30%
Term 2	20%	30%
Midyear Exam	10%	15%
Term 3	20%	15%
Term 4	20%	10%
Final Exam	10%	NA

Currently, a student's GPA is calculated after the completion of junior year and is not recalculated during senior year. For the classes of 2021, 2022, and 2023, the GPA will now include term 1 and term 2 of the student's senior year in the GPA calculation. (See chart below.) The GPA will be calculated after both term 1 and, again, after term 2. This practice will be revisited in three years to determine whether or not it will continue.

	Typical	Class of 2021	Class of 2022	Class of 2023
Senior year, terms 1 & 2	0%	16.7 %	16.7 %	16.7 %
Junior year	33.3 %	16.7 %	33.3 %	33.3 %
Sophomore year	33.3 %	33.3 %	16.7 %	33.3 %
Freshman year	33.3 %	33.3 %	33.3 %	16.7 %

### **Implications for College Admissions**

An understandable concern for all of our students, especially those in the Class of 2021, was carefully considered while drafting this proposal. It is important to recognize that all schools across the nation have been impacted; including colleges and universities who are facing the same challenges with their current students. They have been consistent in their communication with high school administrators that they will be flexible in how they are viewing students' transcripts. There will be language added to the school profile, student transcripts, and counselor recommendations so that colleges and universities understand how grading was impacted during the pandemic.

As documented in the resources linked below, the BHS Counseling Department has been in continual communication with public and private colleges and universities locally and nationally. All colleges review applicants through the context of the student's story - in college admissions terms it is known as a “holistic application review.” The transcript is one piece of that application review. Colleges are accustomed to reviewing a variety of transcripts (narrative, competency based, numeric scales from 4.0-12.0 and alphabetical grades). In the words of the Director of Admissions at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI):

"If this is just one additional wrinkle (P/F grading), I feel confident that admission professionals will be able to do that. They are going to be able to remember that we all lived through this together and (they) know working remotely is not the same... As a parent of two high schoolers who have expressed to me their anxiety... all admission professionals will pass on grace to applicants...we are going to review every applicant within their own unique experience."

Jennifer Cluett, Director of Admissions at WPI

The Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions at Boston College, Jeff Gallant, adds:

"Something that is always important in the application process is context. In talking with school counselors and your teachers and sharing that in your own words, in your application, provides us that context. We *feel* for the juniors...I would say, 'control the things you can control and the things you can't control, know we will work together'...And if this gives you any peace of mind, things beyond your control, you will not be penalized for." Jeff Gallant, Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions at Boston College and Vice President of New England Association for College Admission Counseling

You can find the latest college admissions information summarized here:

- [National Association for College Admission Counseling \(NACAC\) Covid-19 Update](#)
- [NACAC College Admissions Status Update 2.0](#)
- NACAC's [College Openings Update](#) is now available on the NACAC website
- [BHS College Admissions Information w/ Regard to Covid-19](#)
- [Junior Google Counseling Classroom](#) - additional resources including interviews with college admission representatives

In summary, "NACAC's core values suggest we must consider equity and fairness in all our decision-making and adhere to sound educational practice. Those guiding principles have never been more important as we confront the extraordinary hardships the coronavirus outbreak has placed on students applying to college in 2020-21." Jayne Caflin Fonash, NACAC President

Additionally, the 2020-2021 Common Application will provide students a dedicated space to elaborate on the impact of the pandemic, both personally and academically. The goal of a "common" space for this information is to provide consistent questions and language that colleges and universities can use to review applications. To view the specific question, please visit the [Common Application website](#).

As always, our counseling department is available to answer any questions students and families may have regarding post-secondary planning.

Sincerely,

Heather Galante  
Principal  
Bedford High School

Alicia Linsey  
Director of Counseling, PK-12  
Bedford Public Schools  
[NACAC National College Fair Committee](#)