**So You Want to go to Law School**

**Part 5**

March 27, 2020

**How will a pass/fail grade look on a transcript to an admissions officer?**

As with almost all questions about law school and the law in general, there is no one answer, no easy 2 + 2 = 4. How the admission officer at a law school views pass/fail grades on you transcripts depends on lots of things. So, ask yourself the following questions:

**1. How many pass/fails are we talking about?**

a. One? They probably won’t even notice one or two. However, if you are using the LSAC’s Credential Assembly Service (CAS), they will take those couple [or ten if you have that many] of pass/fail credits for the work in those courses, totaled them, and report them separately as [unconverted credits](https://www.lsac.org/applying-law-school/jd-application-process/cas/requesting/transcript-summarization#unconverted-credits). There are other things that count as unconverted credits, but we’ll save that for a later time.

b. Several? Five? Ten? Now we have a problem. Why so many? Ten is a year’s worth of classes. You may have a valid reason – maybe your major or minor is primarily pass/fail; or maybe you went to a very ‘progressive’ college with didn’t give grades for most courses because the college thought that the A, B, . . .F grading system was detrimental to a student’s progression or psyche. Fine. You can explain all that in the Addendum to your grades [see below].

**2. Law School View**: Regardless of how many pass/fails you have, no one can predict how an individual admission’s officer or admissions committee will view it. This is new territory when it comes to the pandemic. While some may think the Covid19 pandemic is a valid excuse, I’m not one of them, but I’m not on the admissions committee. And you can’t count on the admissions people thinking that the pandemic is a valid excuse for not studying and trying your best. HOWEVER, if you have the virus or are caring for someone with it, different story. Bottom line: I can’t tell you how someone will view taking several pass/fails because the University went on-line.

a. If you have previously been in contact with the law school’s admission office, ask them how they view pass/fail grades. They may respond back with a ‘we understand’, or a ‘who are you kidding – study and get a real grade’.

**3. Try to get a good grade**: If a student is concerned about how pass/fails will be viewed, study and do well in the course and earn a grade that will help your GPA. If you do that, pass/fail is not an issue. You probably have less distractions if you’re stuck at home because of the pandemic than if you’re partying with your college buds and no pandemic.

**4. An addendum**: If you take pass/fail grades and are concerned, you have the option of submitting an addendum with your grades. This is in addition to your personal statement. I wouldn’t discuss your pass/fail in your personal statement unless there is more to the story than you were stuck at home and school went to on-line classes. If you decide to write an addendum for the pass/fail or for any reason, here are some suggestions:

a. Explain, do NOT excuse. Whether a COVID19, DUI, MIP, or academic setback – take full responsibility for your actions. Nobody like a whiner.

b. Include all key details.

c. Make it as positive as possible [did you learn something from the experience].

d. Keep it simple and objective.

e. Only write an addendum if absolutely necessary. If you only have two pass/fails and the remainder of your GPA is 3.95, don’t write one.