DSU Council Update on Pass/ILL Senate Motion

December 03, 2020

On November 23rd, 2020, the Dalhousie Senate passed a motion (with just over 50% support) to give all students, in all faculties, access to PASS/ILL grading options. This motion is to be administered in the same manner as it was when passed in the Winter 2020 semester. However, due to concerns, Senate indicated that they would allow those faculties who did not want to offer their students a PASS/ILL option to submit a waiver to the Senate Planning and Governance Committee (SPGC) to opt-out of the motion.

Current PASS/ILL

On December 03, 2020, the SPGC met to consider six waivers. The following faculties applied for waivers, some with specific considerations:

1. Faculty of Dentistry: full opt-out
2. Faculty of Law: full opt-out
3. Faculty of Medicine: opt-out applies only to Doctor of Medicine program
4. Faculty of Graduate Studies: opt-out applies to grading outcomes of thesis defences, comprehensive/qualifying examinations, and internship/clinical placement/residency format courses
5. Faculty of Engineering: opt-out of PASS option, will offer ILL
6. Faculty of Management: no opt-out, but alternative administration of motion

When the DSU spoke with students from each of these faculties, there was majority support for the waivers in all faculties except Engineering. Students in Engineering were divided; some felt that risking the program’s accreditation wasn’t worth it, others felt that the lack of support for students this semester was unacceptable and that the PASS/ILL option is necessary.

The Chair of Senate has committed to meeting with the SPGC student representatives, the Provost and Vice President Academic, and members of the Engineering faculty to work towards a plan for the faculty to speak with the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB) in February, at their next meeting. This will allow the faculty to determine definitively whether a PASS/ILL option would pose an insurmountable risk to the faculty’s accreditation status. Since the CEAB meeting and the PASS/ILL deadline both occur in February, if the grading scheme can be applied, Engineering students would be able to make the choice to use PASS/ILL at that time.
The Chair of Senate has also indicated that they are willing to help the DSU communicate with administrators from all faculties that opted out of PASS/ILL to ensure they hear from students about what alternative accommodations they could provide to support students’ wellbeing. The DSU has been actively consulting with students from these faculties to hear what would apply best to their faculty’s unique circumstances.

**The SPGC approved the waivers of all six faculties.** Each of these faculties should be communicating with their students shortly, if they have not done so already. The DSU will also put out communications to make students aware of the changes to the motion’s administration.

**Retroactive PASS/ILL**

Since the news of Senate’s PASS/ILL motion, there has been discussion amongst Deans and Associate Academic Deans about the Summer 2020 Semester. A handful of students have also come to the DSU with questions about whether PASS/ILL could be back-dated to apply to that semester. The DSU met with the Associate Vice President Academic (AVPA), the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC) Chair, Dalhousie Legal, and folks from the Registrar this week to discuss. Based on that discussion, the DSU and AVPA have made plans to bring a motion to Senate regarding this matter in early 2021, most likely through the SLTC.

This motion will be specific, and apply only to certain groups of students in specific programs. Application of this motion will likely apply to students who had a virtual, full-time, mandatory summer course load in Summer 2020 that is not normally offered online. This motion will also likely only be available to students in programs where the PASS/ILL grading option is available in the Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 semesters.

There is still consultation and further discussion required on this motion before it materializes and moves forward. Nothing is certain at this time.

Questions regarding PASS/ILL can be directed to the DSU VP Academic/External (dsuvpae@dal.ca) or President (dsupres@dal.ca).