



UTM STUDENTS' UNION DEMANDS TO

EXTEND CREDIT / NON-CREDIT

UTMSU LOBBY WEEK



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INTRODUCTION

The UTMSU has been advocating for years to extend the deadline for credit-no-credit (CR/NCR) to after students receive their marks. The University of Toronto Mississauga's policy on CR/NCR does not align with The University of Toronto Scarborough or St. George campuses, placing UTM students at a disadvantage.

Extending the deadline for selecting CR/NCR gives students the opportunity to make an informed decision regarding where they stand in the course. The intended purpose of CR/NCR is to give students the opportunity to explore non-degree requirement courses without penalising them or negatively impacting their cGPA, and so, should have ample time and all of relevant information to make this decision.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

Extend the deadline for selecting CR/NCR to the last day students are to receive their final grades.

CONTEXT

The University of Toronto instituted the CR/NCR policy to encourage students to explore different courses, expand their horizons and discover new interests without jeopardising their cGPA. The UTMSU is lobbying to extend the deadline for CR/NCR to the day students receive their final mark.

With the current deadline, students are expected to make a decision about how well they think they'll do with a significant position of their final grade being unknown. Exams often make up a significant proportion of a student's course mark, making the exam a variable component that can largely impact one's final mark. For courses that have exams with high percentages, many students select CR/NCR in fearful assumptions of the exam being difficult and the negative repercussions of doing poorly. Moreover, as some courses do not have a final exam, the current deadline for CR/NCR being the last day of classes gives an unfair advantage to some students but not others.

This policy change for moving the deadline to the day students receive their final mark would create a levelled playing-field for all, and give an opportunity for students to make an informed decision about their grades and cGPA.

Between September 2022 - October 2023, The UTMSU surveyed over 250 students at the UTM campus about their experience with CR/NCR and how they think extending the deadline would affect them (illustrated in Figure 1). The overwhelming majority (98%) of our participants are in favour of extending the CR/NCR deadline to the last day students receive their final mark.

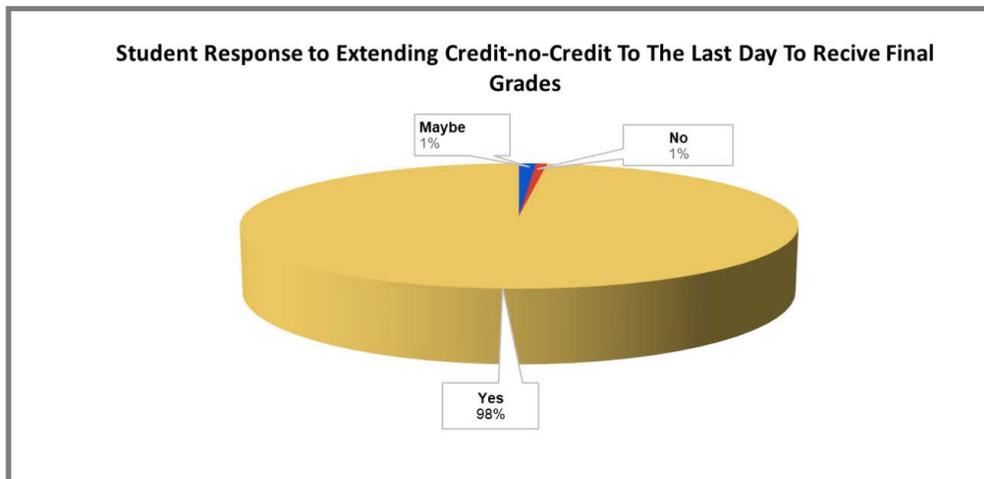


Figure 1

Within the survey, we see that students are generally 'moderately' confident about their overall course mark after completing their final exam (as illustrated in Figure 2). Extending the deadline to our proposed date would provide students with an informed decision before choosing to CR/NCR and increase student's confidence on their overall course mark.

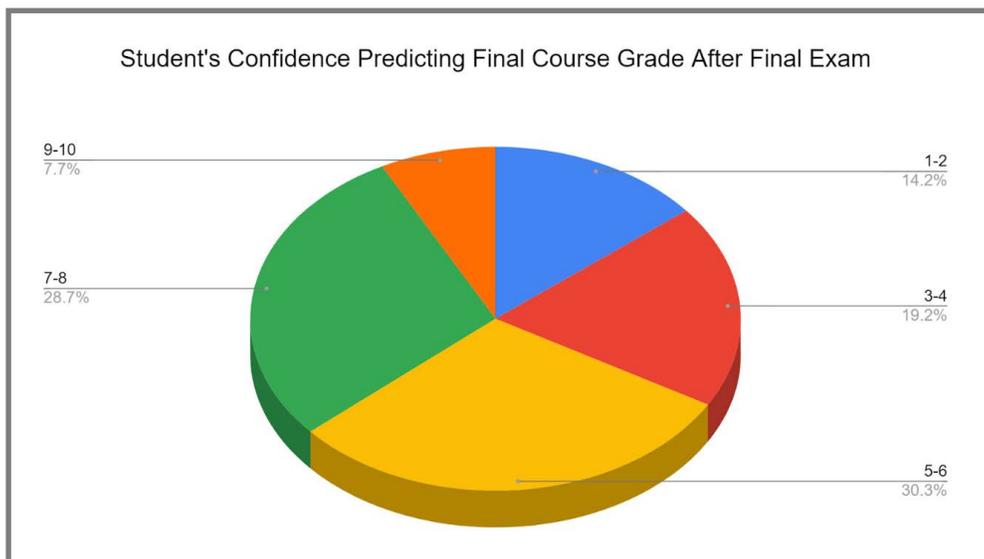


Figure 2

Finally, we hope that this recommendation will also alleviate anxiety and stress surrounding students' academics. The pressure students are put under to perform well at University is already high and should not face unnecessary stress associated with making the decision to select CR/NCR. So we decided to include a question surrounding the correlation between CR/NCR and mental health and the response was as follows: although the majority of student's experienced less stress after NCR a course, 20% of respondents became more stressed after making their decisions and 16% of respondents's stress levels stayed the same (as illustrated in Figure 3). This can be as a result of students feeling worried, stressed or anxious about whether they made the wrong decision.

Thus, extending the deadline will better prepare students and alleviate stress they may face surrounding CR/NCR. Moreover, by extending the deadline to after receiving their final grade, there will be less students petitioning to overturn a CR/NCR decision, alleviating the workload of the Office of Registrar.

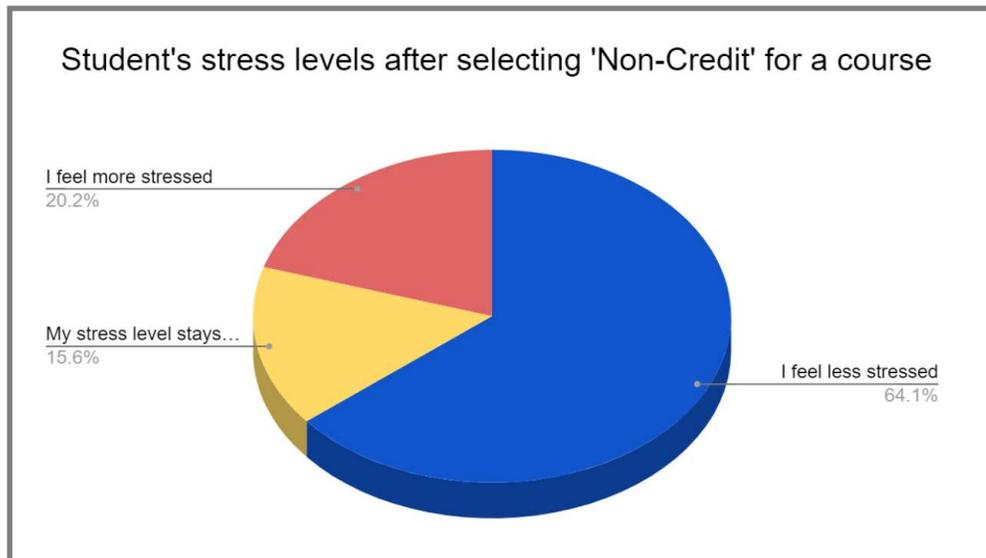


Figure 3

CONSULTATIONS

Within the survey, we have collected comments from students regarding the “Extend CR/NCR” campaign and their thoughts about it. We have only received comments in support of the campaign, and an overwhelming majority did mention a belief it would ease stress and improve mental health. Find some below:

“I don’t like the deadline, it’s way too early. It is prior to anyone getting a solid idea of their performance on the course so it’s literally a gamble!”

“I can attest to having had serious stress due to the fact that I did not CR/NCR a particular course that was being conducted during COVID times and up till now I am trying to recover my GPA.”

“I wish they would extend the deadline for CR/NCR even if not until the last day of exams, but towards a time when students are more certain of the potential grades they may receive.”

Additionally, we have met with multiple Chairs of Academic Departments at UTM to ask for their thoughts and recommendations, these include: Language Studies, Anthropology, Psychology, Biology, Political Science, and Chemical and Physical Sciences.

From these consultations, we found that the departments are not against the extension of CR/NCR as long as the number of allowed credits is kept the same (currently at 2.0 credits). Instructors also mentioned that students should not be able to change CR/NCR after the academic year has been completed.

CONCLUSION

According to our survey and from our consultations with academic departments and other student leaders, the majority are in favour of extending the deadline for CR/NCR to the last day of receiving their final grades. Implementing the extension will benefit student's mental health, allow students to make informed decisions when choosing to CR/NCR, and assist in alleviating the stress of reversed petitioning at the Office of the Registrar.





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