



MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
OFFICE OF COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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TO: Montana University System Chief Academic Officers

FROM: Brock Tessman, Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research, and Student Affairs

Date: April 23rd, 2020

Subject: **MUS guidance regarding undergraduate admissions and COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused Montana's high schools to shift to remote learning and has delayed in-person administrations of college entrance exams, including the ACT and SAT. While Montana's rising high school seniors will have an opportunity to take the ACT free of charge in October, institutions of higher education should take additional action to ensure that disruptions caused by COVID do not raise new barriers for Montana students looking to enter higher education.

For this reason, the Montana Board of Regents has temporarily suspended the requirement that students seeking entry to MUS 4-year campuses submit ACT or SAT scores and has added new avenues for students to demonstrate proficiency in mathematics and writing. The suspension of testing requirements and the additional avenues for demonstrating college readiness are temporary and only effective through September 1, 2021.

Many Montana high schools are moving temporarily to forms of credit/no-credit or pass-fail grading, in recognition of how COVID-19 has caused unforeseeable disruptions to students' learning. For Spring 2020 terms disrupted by COVID-19, MUS institutions will treat a "passing" course grade (when graded as pass/fail) as meeting course grade requirements for math and writing proficiency as set out in BOR policy 301.1. A "passing" course grade will also meet course grade requirements in the MUS Rigorous Core for purposes of administration of the MUS Honors Scholarship.

Attached to this message I include answers to frequently asked questions that I hope will aid your efforts to implement and communicate these changes.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brock Tessman".

Brock Tessman, PhD
Deputy Commissioner for Academic, Research and Student Affairs
Montana University System

MUS TEST OPTIONAL ADMISSIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How will this impact students who are able to take the SAT or ACT?

This change will have no impact on students who are able to take and submit scores from the ACT or SAT. They will be able to gain admission based on their college entrance exam scores as usual. Instead, it removes the requirement that scores be submitted and provides additional avenues for students to demonstrate math and writing. Students whose ACT or SAT scores fall below admissions criteria may still be admitted based on their high school GPA or class standing.

How will this impact merit scholarships?

Students will still need to submit ACT or SAT scores to be considered for the MUS Honors Scholarship and a variety of campus-based merit scholarships. OCHE will encourage campuses too take extra care to communicate this requirement to students and, where possible, to shift merit awards to criteria other than test scores. Scores from a Fall 2020 statewide administration of the ACT to high school seniors will be available in time for use in awarding the 2021 MUS Honors Scholarship. Fall 2020 MUS Honors Scholarships have already been awarded.

For students who do not submit SAT or ACT scores, what threshold will they need to meet to be admitted?

To be admitted, students will need to complete the Regents College Preparatory Core and meet one of two criteria listed in part D of policy 301.1:

1. Have a high school GPA of 2.5 or greater, or
2. Graduate in the top half of their high school class.

They will **also** need to demonstrate their math and writing proficiency to be fully admitted. Policy 301.1 describes several routes. This change provides additional options for students:

1. IN MATH, in addition to previous options
 - a. A cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater
 - b. A cumulative GPA of 2.5 or greater AND an Algebra II course with a grade of C or better.
2. IN ENGLISH, in addition to previous options
 - a. A cumulative GPA of 3.0 or greater
 - b. A cumulative GPA of 2.5 or greater AND an 11th grade English course with a grade of C or better.

Will this impact students applying to 2-year institutions?

No. These admissions criteria only apply to applicants to MUS 4-year institutions.

To whom does the pass/fail accommodation apply?

MUS campuses will accept “passing” grades for Spring 2020 terms as meeting minimum grade requirements for admissions, math and writing proficiency, and the MUS Honors Scholarship. This applies to all currently enrolled high school students, not just this year’s graduating class or rising seniors.