



BROWN

College Curriculum Council Guidelines on Grades Used for Determining Eligibility for Honors in the Concentration

The College Curriculum Council has approved the following guidelines with regard to the criteria used by concentrations to admit students to their Honors program.

Students may be selected to become Honors candidates on the basis of a number of criteria, including, but not limited to, standing and grades in the concentration.

Concentrations should only establish grading criteria based on the number or percentages of grades of “A” or “S with distinction” (defined in the Faculty Rules as the equivalent of an “A”) earned in the concentration.¹ Such criteria must be aligned with the philosophical approach and policies of Brown’s Open Curriculum. For instance, as Brown does not calculate a Grade Point Average, concentrations may not use this criteria to determine Honors candidacy. Similarly, since the Faculty Rules allow any student to select the Satisfactory/No Credit (S/NC) grading option for any course, concentrations may not exclude courses taken S/NC from consideration for Honors, nor may they impose any limit on the number of courses that may be taken S/NC for Honors or for completion of the concentration more generally.

Rationale

In establishing these guidelines, the College Curriculum Council is ensuring that all concentrations’ policies and practices regarding Honors align with the University’s commitment to the Statement of Principles that frames the Open Curriculum. The Faculty’s choice not to restrict use of the S/NC grade option and not to calculate GPAs is intended to “provide the student with the maximum opportunity to formulate and achieve their educational objectives.” Similarly, Honors in the concentration are intended to facilitate cumulative, rigorous, and independent work in the concentration during a student’s final semesters. Pursuing Honors in the concentration exemplifies the active participation of students in framing their own education by developing strong relationships with professors, fellow students, and the material they approach together. The recommendations of the CCC not to use GPAs in determining eligibility for honors and to make explicit pathways to Honors for students using the S/NC option reflect the University’s commitment to these principles.

¹ According to Faculty Rules (2.4.III.G, p. 68), information about grades of “S with distinction” “will be made available to the student upon request, and also to members of the Faculty where reasonable need exists, as, for example, for purposes of nomination for post-graduate fellowships or election to academic honor societies.” The Registrar is thus able to provide information about the achievement of students taking courses S/NC to departments who wish to make determinations about admission to their honors program.