Accommodations for students during the coronavirus period

Dear Students,

We are reaching the close of the spring semester, and exam period is upon us. All of us – academic faculty, administrative staff and students alike – have struggled with a period of online learning, accompanied by academic, health and personal issues. I am proud that through teamwork and cooperation – we have successfully met the challenges that we’ve faced until now.

Back at the start of the corona crisis, Bar-Ilan decided on a number of accommodations for students, out of consideration for the circumstances:

1. Bar-Ilan immediately transitioned to distance learning so that our students would not lose the semester.
2. In-class attendance was no longer obligatory.
3. Guidelines for accommodations in Moed Bet exams were formulated as requested by the Student Union.
4. Accommodations were given for late submissions in course assignments for students who are parents of young children or have worked extensively in the health care / security services (only 80% of assignments must be submitted and 50% extension in time was granted for submission).
5. Lecturers undertook to determine the final exam format ahead of time and notify the students as such, with no option for change even if finals are moved from a classroom to an online setting.
6. Faculty lecturers were instructed to accommodate students wherever possible in a number of ways: reducing the number of semester assignments, increasing the weight of the intermediate assignments to reduce student stress, give bonus assignments, extend due dates of assignments, reduce difficulty of exams, and others.

The university in cooperation with the Student Union has decided to broaden accommodations for the spring semester exam period. As such, lecturers have been asked to ease exam conditions for students however possible. At this time, I would like to thank the leaders of the Student Union for presenting the issues and difficulties students are facing and the understandings that we have reached so that we could help our students wherever possible without compromising our academic standards.

1. In most cases exams will be held on campus in classrooms, with full adherence to MoH guidelines. Alternative assignments will be allowed in exceptional cases only, with approval of the Vice Rector. If conditions change and MoH guidelines no longer allow in-class exams, all exams will be held online on the originally scheduled date and in the agreed-upon exam format (take-home, essay or multiple choice).
2. High-risk students (as defined by MoH guidelines and on the basis of an explicit medical note) who cannot be tested in Moed Aleph will be given a special exam window this year. The Accessibility Section of the Dean of Students Office will be able to approve an alternative assignment (an online exam concurrently with the in-class exam, or a take-home test) in coordination with the relevant university department. Details on this will be forthcoming from the office of the Dean of Students.

3. Beyond lecture material, exams will only include support material that was available to students online.

4. Pass/fail grades: any student may choose to change a numerical grade to a “pass” for one course of the spring semester in which they passed the exam and course assignments.

5. Curve grading: if the grade average of a course is lower than the course average for the preceding three years, students will be graded on a curve to raise the averages to the average of the preceding three years.

6. In courses in which intermediate assignments are worth 50% or higher of the final grade, students may choose to use only the weighted grades from those assignments for determining their final grade, provided they have not yet taken the final exam.

   This option is not available for course in which the final exam tests skills that are significantly different from the intermediate assignments (e.g. EFL or lab courses).

7. Master’s degree students who must defer their thesis submission due to the corona crisis may submit a request for deferral to the end of the fall semester of the 2020-2021 school year with no additional tuition. The request must contain justification for the delay. Details will be forthcoming by the School of Graduate Studies.

Dear students, I’d like to wish the best of health to you and your families, and best of luck on your upcoming exams.

Sincerely,

Prof. Amnon Albeck
Vice Rector