Pass-Fail

Freshmen are registering today, beginning the second term of the Pass-Fail experiment. The end of the first term of this experiment brings several questions to mind. In evaluating the results of the first term, will the Committee on the Evaluation of Freshman Performance continue to feel that there is a stake in the experiment? And, will they attempt to use what they learn to change the mechanics of the program.

On the first point, it is clear that the Freshmen themselves and their instructors are far from the only people who are or will be influenced by its results. Obviously, the whole academic structure of the Institute, i.e., all the courses where grades are given, are affected, as well as the Administration, and all the facilities of MIT set up to deal with problems brought on by Pass-Fail.

It is feeling that the experiment is now, and will continue to affect other groups probably not included in the experiment. For instance, if a student feels his time has been divided up between the room and the classroom itself, will the CEEP try to pin down these effects, if they can be pinned down?

And, will the experiment be made in the program. Almost no one was satisfied with the Performance Evaluation sheets used this time—most thought they failed to give the student enough feedback on his progress, or to warn him that his performance in his work was inadequate. Will the second term see a change? Perhaps the frequency at which the sheets are handed out should be changed, or the form of itself. Perhaps, as has been suggested, both student and teacher merely need "practice" in this form of communication. Will any attempt be made to find out whether this is so, and can we make that test by merely continuing on for another term with poor feedback? Any student here who goes for two terms in the dark may not be here by the time a third one comes. We must be sure to use this information.

We must admit, we are not members of the CEEP or the FAC. If we were, our suggestions here would be more likely to be taken. We do not have the abilities to obtain information on the effects of the Pass-Fail experiment should stem breadth of contribution. And we hope that the results obtained from this investigation can be used to improve the program, rather than leaving it unchanced for the sake of objectivity or scientific accuracy.

For the Pass-Fail experiment is not like a laboratory set-up. With Pass-Fail, we are trying to help people, too.

Footnotes

1. The Tech is a weekly student publication.