To all students enrolled in Mathematics courses:

We began this quarter with a rapid transition to remote education in response to a global pandemic. Just as we began to come to terms with this continuing crisis, we are now reminded of an interrelated and equally alarming crisis: ongoing, systematized, and institutionalized racism towards African Americans. The racial inequalities in our society have been exposed starkly by the horrific killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and far too many others; the civil unrest, police actions, and disturbing political events that have followed leave our (and every) community ailing. These events remind us that the ideals of inclusiveness and fairness that we aspire towards in this world, as articulated in the UC San Diego Principles of Community

https://ucsd.edu/about/principles.html

are fragile; it is up to us to continue the hard work, every day, required to realize the vision of a unified community.

We can only imagine how stressed and upset students are feeling right now; the entire UCSD community is shocked and outraged by these ongoing events. The fact that we are all physically isolated from each other due to the Covid-19 pandemic only makes this much harder to deal with.

The campus is offering support to all students dealing with these stark realities just as we transition to final exams. The Academic Senate has extended the deadline for students to change their grading option between Letter and P/NP until the end of Final Exam week. Many departments (including Math) have made exceptions to major requirements to allow students to take more P/NP classes for credit in their major. Faculty have been given guidance to help implement final exam policies that allow for flexibility, support, and compassion towards students. Some are considering changes to exam procedures and length that may mitigate stress while maintaining exam and course integrity. Some may consider offering new optional grading schemes to mitigate the effects of exam stress.

It is very important to note that there are no universal policies being put in place regarding exams, nor can there be. Each class is unique, with distinct pedagogical and logistical requirements. Some instructors have already built-in exam accommodations based on the Covid-19 crisis, and could not add new large-scale exam accommodations without sacrificing their course integrity. Please understand that your instructor wants to offer as much support as they can, while
balancing the current crisis with the high standards of education and integrity that make UCSD the great institution that it is.

If the available accommodations and course policies still leave you in a difficult position, please don’t hesitate to contact your instructor directly. They will work with you to find a solution, such as offering an Incomplete grade if appropriate, or helping you petition for a late Withdrawal if your circumstances make it the best option. Your academic advisors and your college advising Dean are also standing by to help you navigate your academic progress in this challenging time. And, as always, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is available to provide students with remote, confidential counseling; see

https://wellness.ucsd.edu/caps

There is no question that these are among the most challenging times in recent history. We face them together, and we will help our students through them to the greatest extent possible. Let us finish this quarter together, supporting each other as best we can, with our heads held high, maintaining the Triton spirit even, and especially, in these difficult times.

Lei Ni
Chair, Mathematics.