

**Senate Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)
March 21, 2018
Minutes of the Meeting**

These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University of Minnesota Senate; none of the comments, conclusions or actions reported in these minutes represent the views of, nor are they binding on, the senate, the administration or the Board of Regents.

[In these minutes: Update on Grading Group Work; Administrative Policy: *Grading and Transcripts*; Proposal to Amend Twin Cities/Rochester Academic Calendars for Academic Year 19-20, 20-21, and 21-22; S/N Limits]

PRESENT: Kenneth Leopold (chairing in Professor Goodnough's absence), Nicola Alexander, Elaine Darst, Stacy Doepner-Hove, Gayle Golden, Jude Goossens, Lauren Mitchell, Brian Sick, Nevin Young

REGRETS: Jennifer Goodnough, Giancarlo Casale, Michelle Dobbratz, Sydney Elliott, Scott Lanyon, Bob McMaster, Robert Poch

ABSENT: Michael Anderson, Keith Mayes, Abby Vogel

GUESTS: Katie Russell, assistant to the vice provost, Undergraduate Education; Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance, Academic Support Resources

OTHERS: Leslie Schiff, associate dean, University Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education; Karen Starry, assistant to the vice provost, Graduate Education

1. Update on Grading Group Work

Professor Ken Leopold, who was chairing the meeting in Professor Jennifer Goodnough's absence, called the meeting to order. He announced that he and Stacy Doepner-Hove had met to discuss wording on grading group work to be added to the Administrative Policy: [*Grading and Transcripts*](#) under the GPA Calculation and Other Provisions section. Members provided additional feedback and approved the following wording:

“In courses with graded group work, instructors are expected to make efforts to ensure that students' grades accurately reflect each the student's own level of accomplishment each student's grade accurately reflects the degree to which they have met the stated goals of the assignment. When an instructor believes that a grade that will appear on a student's permanent transcript will be significantly adversely affected by the actions or inactions of peers, the instructor is encouraged to identify ways to alleviate this.”

Leopold and Doepner-Hove also suggested wording for a number of FAQs on the topic.

2. Administrative Policy: *Grading and Transcripts*

Next, the committee continued its discussion of the Administrative Policy: *Grading and Transcripts*. Stacey Tidball, director, Compliance, Academic Support Resources, explained that K grades are meant to be used for courses still in progress at the time grades are due, such as for a practicum. She said that this grade is often used inappropriately, and proposed adding wording to clarify when it should be used, as well as a FAQ addressing the difference between X, K, and I grades. Tidball said that it would also be useful to include information about the effect of each grade on the student, such as the fact that before it is completed, an I grade has the same financial aid implications as an F.

Tidball proposed minor edits to the Scholastic Dishonesty section; members had no comments on these changes.

Regarding zero-credit courses, Brian Sick noted that he had been told that these are not allowed. Tidball clarified that zero-credit courses do exist, but they are being eliminated gradually. Leslie Schiff, associate dean, University Curriculum, Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE), said that OUE's philosophy is that students should get credit for fulfilling requirements, and added that half-credit courses are possible. Sick explained that in the Academic Health Center, a use of zero-credit courses in the past was to extend University malpractice insurance to students during required volunteer work. He said that zero-credit courses are no longer used for the volunteer program he manages at the Phillips Neighborhood Clinic, but that some programs are reluctant to stop using zero-credit courses unless policy disallows this. Gayle Golden posited a question about text in the policy reading, "such courses carry normal tuition and fee charges"—usually zero-credit courses are tuition-free, she said. Elaine Darst agreed, noting that internships in the School of Nursing used to be zero-credit; now that they are credit-bearing, students have to pay to do an internship.

In the interest of time, this discussion was tabled until the April 2018 SCEP meeting.

3. Proposal to Amend Twin Cities/Rochester Academic Calendars for Academic Year 19-20, 20-21, and 21-22

Next, Tidball informed members about a proposal to move spring break one week earlier in academic year 2019-20 and beyond for the Twin Cities and Rochester campuses. The reason for this proposal, she explained, was that starting in spring 2019, spring semesters will be shortened to 70 instructional days. The shorter semester, paired with the current spring break schedule, causes awkward timing for A and B term courses. In spring 2019, A and B term courses will follow this schedule:

- B-term begins the Tuesday before spring break
 - A Term runs January 22 - March 11, 2019 (35 days - beginning on a Tuesday and ending on a Monday)
 - B Term runs March 12 - May 6, 2019 (35 days - beginning on a Tuesday and ending on a Monday)
- Each course day gets seven meeting times, but there is a gap in instructional time after first meeting of the B term.

It is too late to change the schedule for spring 2019, but for spring 2020 and beyond, moving spring break one week earlier and changing the timing of A and B terms to begin on Mondays and end on Fridays, as depicted below, would eliminate the gap after the first week of the B term:

March 2020 - current/approved

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--|--|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| 8 | 9 Last Day, A-Term Classes | 10 First Day, B-Term Classes | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
|  | | | | | | |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |

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March 2020 - proposal

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--|---------|-----------|----------|--|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 Last Day, A-Term Classes | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|  | | | | | | |
| 15 | 16 First Day, B-Term Classes | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |

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However, Tidball clarified, the proposal would impact courses that only meet once per week: A-term Monday meeting patterns would lose one day of instructional time (6 meetings), and B-term Monday meeting patterns gain one day of instructional time (8 meetings). All other one day per week classes would meet seven times.

Members agreed that having one class and then spring break is not ideal, but expressed concern about B-term Monday courses only having six meeting dates. Members suggested moving spring break but not changing the days of the week that A and B term begin and end. Under this

proposal, depicted below, spring break would occur before the final course of the A term, but members agreed that this was preferable to both previous options.

| March 2020 | | | | | | |
|------------|-----------------------|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| | proposed Spring Break | | | | | |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| | Last Day A Term | First Day B Term | | | | |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | |

Doepner-Hove expressed a desire to consult with her colleagues in the Carlson School of Management about this proposal. Tidball suggested returning to this topic at the April 2018 SCEP meeting in order to allow for further discussion.

4. S/N Limits

Discussion then turned to the Administrative Policy: [Credit and Grade Point Requirements for an Undergraduate \(Baccalaureate\) Degree](#) and a proposal to amend the S/N limit from 25% of total credits to a numerical limit of 20 credits. Tidball and Katie Russell, assistant to the vice provost, Undergraduate Education, explained that the current policy allows students to apply “S” grades to up to 25% of the credits toward their degree (30 credits if 120 are used to complete a degree). Russell said that the application and monitoring of this limit causes student confusion and can delay students’ graduation. The primary tool for tracking undergraduate degree progress is the [Academic Progress Audit System \(APAS\)](#), which monitors whether the S/N limit has been exceeded. However, the system cannot determine whether a course is registered as S/N or A/F; it can only calculate whether the limit is exceeded after the final grade is submitted. Thus, a student can register S/N and the advisor or student may not know they exceed will the limit until after the course is completed. When students register in MyU, the system can warn students that there is an S/N limit, but can not provide a percentage calculation. A numerical limit is easier to understand clearly for both students and advisors and students will more easily understand whether they are approaching the limit when looking at their APAS report or transcript, they explained.

The university already uses a numerical limit for students taking fewer than 30 credits on this campus (up to 8 of the 30 credits may be taken S/N). This limit is clear to both students and advisors. The issue of students exceeding the S/N limit tends to occur near the end of a student’s career at the University, and the solution requires either retaking coursework on the correct grading basis or taking additional A/F credits, both of which can delay graduation by a semester

or more. Hand calculating the S/N percentage limit is possible, but it is a calculation that presents problems. For example, the total number of credits to degree is often uncertain, so students and advisors are calculating a percentage of an *estimated* total credits. Additionally, the hand calculation is easy to misunderstand due to other related rules, such as transfer credit looking like S/N credit. Tidball and Russell noted that the numerical limit would also place the University in line with peer institutions, support degree progress, maintains the integrity of the degree, and maintains consistency with the curriculum.

Russell and Tidball provided the committee with a [review of peer institutions](#), demonstrating that numerical, rather than percentage, limits for S/N or pass-fail credits is the preferred practice. Limits ranged from 8 credits at Rutgers University (varies by college) to up to 30 at the University of Michigan. However, Michigan includes transfer credit in this limit. Most institutions have limits lower than 20 and/or have more restrictions on how the credits can be used. In addition to numerical limits, some institutions had additional restrictions such as requiring advisor approval before registration or not using pass-fail credits to satisfy liberal education requirements.

Tidball and Russell then explained the reason that 20 credits was selected as the proposed limit. Selecting the appropriate numerical limit must balance flexibility for students and the need to maintain the integrity of University degrees and students' degree progress. Because S/N credits generally do not count toward the major, selecting a high numerical limit could negatively impact degree progress. Furthermore, they added, a limit of 20 credits is more generous than a majority of the limits in place at Big 10 institutions.

Russell said that a review of students' registration indicated that 20 credits would provide sufficient flexibility for students. For the cohort graduating 2011-12, only 2% of students earned more than 20 "S" credits, and only 5% earned more than 16. This data is consistent with a recent review for the cohort graduating 2016-17. For this group, only 2% of students earned more than 16 "S" credits and less than .5% earned over 20 "S" credits. For the small percentage that exceeded 20 S/N credits, a shift in just one course (or an exception for a single course) would resolve their issue. It is also possible for students to petition their college to allow them to exceed the stated limit, added Russell.

The 20 credit limit would not apply to transfer credits being used to satisfy degree requirements, including the 120 credit requirement.

Finally, Tidball and Russell shared the proposed new wording for the policy:

8. Limits on use of S/N grades (see Administrative Policy: *Grading and Transcripts* for definitions of S and N).
 - a. The maximum proportion of University of Minnesota S/N credits permitted within the total of University credits in the degree is 25%.
 - b. [Twin Cities only] The maximum ~~proportion~~ number of University of Minnesota S/N credits permitted within the total of University credits in the degree is ~~25%~~ 20. No unit will allow S/N grading in major course work unless the S/N grading system is preset by the unit for specific courses.
 - c. [Twin Cities only] For a student who completes only the minimum number of 30 credits at the University, no more than 8 of the 30 credits may be taken S/N.
 - d. [Twin Cities only] Subject to the overall University policy contained in 8a, above, colleges, campuses, and programs may specify what courses or proportion of courses taken by its students or its prospective students must be on the A-F or S-N grading system, not to exceed 20 required S/N credits.
 - e. [Crookston only] Courses being used to satisfy Crookston major and liberal education requirements must be taken A/F unless the course is only offered S/N.

Leopold wondered whether there should be language around liberal education courses, noting that under this system, students could take all liberal education courses S/N. Tidball said that this may come up in the current discussions around redesigning the liberal education requirements. Leopold then asked whether the 8 credits allowed for students who only take 30 credits at the University should be changed as well. Tidball acknowledged that 8 out of 30 credits is a lot, but said she did not have a read on those students or their experience. However, she added, it is relatively uncommon that any student does only 30 credits at the University. Russell added that the S/N limit could have been set that way for students taking basically their last year at the University, as many programs require internships in the last year, and these are often graded on an S/N basis.

With no further discussion, a vote was called and the committee approved the above language.

Hearing no further business, Leopold adjourned the meeting.

Amber Bathke
University Senate Office