

Minutes
Senate Scholastic Standards Committee
April 1, 2008
(Approved by Email – Apr.15, 2008)

Members: (attending members in bold): **Andrew Moiseff (Chair), John Bennett, Francine DeFranco, Gerald Dunne, Gerald Gianutsos, Lynne Goodstein, Lawrence Gramling, Katrina Higgins, Dirk Keaton, Jose Machado, Diane Lillo-Martin, Jeffrey von Munkwitz-Smith, Yuhang Rong, Lauren Smith, David Wagner, Robert Weiner**
Guests: **Reed Solomon, Gay Douglas, David Knecht**

1. The March 18 minutes approved.

2. Reed Solomon (Math) spoke to us about Math's proposal concerning minors. The scholastic standards committee thanks him for helping us understand the issue at hand with respect to some students seeking a minor in Math and especially the Math department's interest in providing a standardized mechanism for students to remedy their poor performance in one of the courses constituting the minor.

The committee felt that the change in the Minors policy proposed by the Math department was not in the best interest of the University. First, a student earning a minor in a discipline should demonstrate mastery in those courses that have been designated as being required for the Minor. We did not feel that a 'C-' constitutes mastery. Second, the proposed change could have unintentional consequences for other departments including the strong possibility that departments might be pressured by students to make exceptions for poor course performance in courses required for the Minor.

Several items were discussed by the committee.

1 - Why not allow credit by exam to replace the poor grade in the required course? If a mastery of a given course is not that important, remove the requirement and replace it with a suitable alternative.

2 - Math could allow out-of-sequence courses so that the course in question could be retaken. They could restrict this option to math minors. We understand however that Math has justifiable reasons to not allow students to retake a course out-of-sequence.

3 - One suggestion that was favored by the committee was to add an additional course(s) to the Minor requirements that could be used to offset a bad grade in one of the other courses. For example, Track 2 could be reworded to provide alternatives to a poor performance in Math210/211 by specifying "Two of: Math 210, 211, XXX, or YYY). Then a student that has done well in, e.g, 211 could apply it towards the minor, but a student receiving a C- in 211 could take an approved alternative course, XXX or YYY and apply the grade for the alternate course towards the minor in place of 211.

We recognize the difficulty that Math faces in dealing with this situation and recommend that they redefine their Minor requirements to provide them with 1) the flexibility they desire to accommodate students and at the same time providing a standardized procedure that can be applied uniformly to all students seeking a minor in their discipline. Discipline specific changes to the requirements for a minor should be made at the Department level and go through the standard review/approval by the CLAS C&CC.

The Scholastic Standards Committee voted NOT to forward the Mathematics Department's proposal to the Senate at this time.

3. Gay Douglas (Ass't Dean of Students) spoke to the committee about rescheduling exams.

This Fall 323 requests for rescheduling exams were handled by the DOS office. Rescheduling due to 'bunched exams' was handled by the information desk; this year's total of 489 (bunched finals) was higher than the more typical number of about 200 due to the compression of the final schedule. Health services saw 50 students. Among the students requesting makeups, 26 were due to 'student error' such as oversleeping or not knowing the correct date of the final.

The review/approval process was discussed:

Sample forms and requests distributed. DOS prints out exam schedules to confirm that exams are indeed 'bunched'. Reason must be 'Valid' & 'legitimate'.

Categories of justifications for student requests include: "Unavoidable" circumstances. E.g., scheduled future medical needs (documentation required); hospitalizations; employment conflicts that cannot be resolved (e.g., termination if don't go to work); military service; UConn athletic events; court appearances; commuting problems; professional examination conflicts; student travel – domestic travel, problem is with parents not changing reservations; religious observance; traumatic occurrences.

Questionable requests: e.g., weddings – particularly for international students; family events – e.g., cruises, etc.; attendance at non UConn events; child care issues; graduations (typically refused); student error (oversleeping, misread schedule, etc.); student anxiety issues;

DOS tries to work with parents to make it clear the importance of the final exam schedule. Students need to understand that the faculty member determines whether to reschedule the exam and that students have, at most, until 3-weeks into next semester to take the exam.

The committee brought up several concerns. It seems as though more students that have overslept and/or missed exam have recently been permitted to retake their exams. A couple of years ago DOS was very strict, they are now reviewing more on a student-by-student basis. This is under evaluation. It also seems like the number of approved makeups has increased in general and that faculty notification (of approval) has been late. As a result of delayed notification, faculty who schedule early-make-ups cannot plan appropriately.

4. A revised version of the "Definitions of Academic Misconduct" will be circulated to the committee by EMail for approval to present it at the April 28 meeting of the Senate.

5. These minutes will be circulated by EMail for committee approval.