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Academic Standards Subcommittee Minutes, March 26, 2015

Utah State University

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Academic Standards Subcommittee minutes

26 March 2015

A meeting of the Academic Standards Subcommittee was held on 26 March 2015 at 2:00 pm in Old Main 136 (Champ Hall Conference Room)

Present: Scott Bates, Chair, Emma Eccles Jones College of Education & Human Services
Roland Squire, Registrar’s Office (represented by Eric Humphrey)
Dawn Kirby, College of Humanities & Social Sciences
Deidri Nielson, Secretary
Thom Fronk, Engineering
Marci Smith, Registrar’s Office
Karen Mock, Quinney College of Natural Resources

Absent: Stephanie Hamblin, Advising
Nathan Straight, Regional Campuses
Doug Fiefia, USUSA President

Visitors: Krystin Deschamps, Student Services

I. Old Business

A. Scott presented the Excused Absence Policy that includes revisions previously discussed. Minor edits were suggested and are reflected in the approved Excused Absence Policy. (Policy attached)

   Thomas Fronk motioned to accept the Excused Absence Policy with edits. Karen seconded. Outcome: motion passed; the draft will now be distributed for additional feedback

B. The Grading Policy was discussed (see attached). This policy change removes the requirement for dean’s signature for a change of grade related to thesis and dissertation course (courses numbered 6990 and 7990).

   Dawn Kirby motioned to accept the Grading Policy. Karen Mock seconded.
   Outcome: motion passed

C. The Student Code of Conduct was discussed. A two-tiered violations policy with an easy to use Academic Integrity Violations form (possibly for Canvas) and training for faculty were among the ideas discussed. Krystin Deschamps will make revisions to the policy to present at a future Academic Standards meeting.

D. Undergraduate Degree Enrichment proposal was discussed. After Roland presented various ideas and options, it was determined that it was a matter for the EPC.
DRAFT – Academic Standards Subcommittee of the EPC

Attendance & Excused Absences

Introduction

Instructors set course content and structure and are responsible for determining if a student has met the minimum requirements for completion of the course. The university views class attendance as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments in accordance with individual instructor and course policies.

The excused absence policy does not guarantee that a student’s absences from a course will not negatively impact his or her success in the course. Furthermore, it is the student’s responsibility to ensure that excused absences do not conflict with clearly established instructor policies on course attendance and participation.

There are multiple mechanisms that should be considered if absence from a class is necessary:

- **Incomplete (I) Grade**: If a student is unable to complete all of the coursework because of extenuating circumstances, a grade of “I” (Incomplete) may be submitted by the instructor. Refer to Incomplete policy for details.
- **Withdrawal**: Students may drop courses without notation on the permanent record through the first 20% of the class. If a student drops a course following the first 20% of the class, a “W” will be permanently affixed to the student’s record. After 60% of the class is completed, the student’s academic advisor must sign any drop request, and a “W” with a grade assigned by the instructor will be entered on the student’s permanent record. Under normal circumstances, a student may not drop a course after 75% of the class is completed. (Check General Catalog for exact dates.)
- **Excused Absence**: An absence may be excused for the reasons and in accordance with the procedures outlined below. Students who are requesting an excused absence are expected to uphold the Student Code of Conduct.

Excused Absences

**Reasons**

A student who is requesting an excused absence is responsible for providing satisfactory evidence to the instructor to substantiate the reason for absence.

Excused absences may not exceed 20% of the class meetings.

Among the reasons absences are considered excused by the university are the following:

1. Participation in a university sponsored or sanctioned activity.
2. Mandatory participation as a student-athlete in NCAA-sanctioned competition.
3. Death or major illness in a student’s immediate family (as defined in Policy 346.1 of the USU Policies Manual).
4. Illness of a dependent family member.
5. Participation in legal proceedings or administrative procedures that require a student’s presence.
6. Religious holy day.
7. Injury or Illness that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class.
   a. **Injury or illness of 3 or more days.** For injury or illness that requires a student to be absent from classes for three or more class meetings, the student should obtain a medical confirmation note from his or her medical provider. The Student Health & Wellness Center or an off-campus medical professional can provide a medical confirmation note only if medical professionals are involved in the medical care of the student. The medical confirmation note must contain the date and time of the visit for the injury or illness and the medical professional’s confirmation of needed absence.
   b. **Injury or illness less than 3 days.** Faculty members may require confirmation of student injury or illness that is serious enough for a student to be absent from class for a period less than 3 or more class meetings. At the discretion of the faculty member, as outlined in the course syllabus, injury or illness confirmation may be obtained through a note from a health care professional affirming the date and time of visit.
   c. An absence for a non-acute medical service does not constitute an excused absence.
8. Required participation in military duties.
9. Mandatory admissions interviews for professional or graduate school, or internships, that cannot be rescheduled.
10. In accordance with Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, Utah State University shall treat pregnancy and related conditions as a justification for an excused absence for so long a period of time as is deemed medically necessary by the student’s physician. Requests for excused absence related to pregnancy should be directed to the instructor; questions about Title IX should be directed to the University Title IX Coordinator.

**Procedures**

Students may be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student’s grade, for the reasons stated above or for other reasons deemed appropriate by the student’s instructor. For reason #1 (Participation in a university sponsored or sanctioned activity) or #2 (Mandatory participation as a student-athlete in NCAA-sanctioned competition), a dean or vice president (or the designee) must provide a letter for the student to provide to instructors that verifies the student’s absence as excused.

**Student**

Excused absence notifications should be provided to instructors as soon as possible. In some cases, such as athletics or other university-sponsored and sanctioned events with known schedules, instructors should be informed during the first week of classes. Instructors have the right to deny any request that exceeds 20% of class sessions.

To be excused, the student must notify his or her instructor in writing (acknowledged e-mail message is acceptable) prior to the date of absence if such notification is feasible. In cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. accident or emergency), the student must provide
notification by the end of the second working day after the absence. This notification should include an explanation of why notice could not be sent prior to the class. Accommodations sought for absences due to the observance of a religious holiday can be sought either prior to or after the absence, but not later than two working days after the absence. On request of the instructor, the student must provide additional documentation substantiating the reason for the absence, which is satisfactory to the instructor, within one week of the last date of the absence.

**Instructor**

Instructors are under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence.

If the absence is excused, the instructor must either provide the student an opportunity to make up any quiz, exam, or other work that contributes to the final grade or provide a satisfactory alternative by a date agreed on by the student and instructor. Students with an excused absence shall be “held harmless” and benefit from all classroom policies. In some cases, such as classes that include time-dependent group-, field-, lab-, or studio-work, instructors are not required to recreate a precisely equivalent experience, but should identify a suitable alternative that respects their time, the student’s time, and meets educational goals.

Any make-up work must be completed in a timeframe not to exceed 14 calendar days from the last day of the initial absence.

**Appeal Procedures**

A student may appeal an instructor’s decision that an absence is unexcused on the grounds that evidence has been presented to the instructor that substantiates one or more of the reasons deemed sufficient for an excused absence or on the grounds that the instructor’s decision was arbitrary, capricious, or prejudicial. Any appeal must be initiated within three class days of the instructor’s decision. In the appeal process, the burden of proof shall be on the student. The student may make an appeal to the following persons or bodies in the sequence in which they are listed:

1. The head of the academic department in which the course is offered.
2. The dean or designee of the undergraduate college in which the course is offered or the director of graduate studies in the case of graduate students.
3. The Provost.
Grading Policy (current as of March 26, 2015)

Grading is the main symbolic method of recording the evaluation of a student's academic performance. This academic evaluation is both the responsibility and the prerogative of the individual instructor. Where appropriate, the instructor may delegate authority but not responsibility in this matter. The instructor is the ultimate arbiter of grades in the course. All grades must be submitted within 96 hours after the final examination for the course.

The instructor of record of a course has the responsibility for any grade reported. Once a grade has been reported to the Office of the Registrar, it may be changed upon the signed authorization of the instructor of record who issued the original grade. In case the instructor is not available, the department head has authority to change the grade. This applies also to the grade of Incomplete (I). A change of grade after more than one year also requires the signature of the academic dean of the college in which the course is offered.

The establishment of grading policy devolves on the Faculty Senate as the representative of the individual instructor. The Faculty Senate Committee charged with the establishment and review of grading policy is the Academic Standards Subcommittee of the Educational Policies Committee, which has student representatives, since students are directly affected by changes in grading policy. All matters regarding grading policy throughout the University shall, therefore, be referred to this subcommittee.
Grading Policy (NEW)

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