

Ed Pol Minutes, 3/18/2020
ZOOM Virtual Meeting, 3:00-4:40 PM

Attendees: Ed Webb (Chair); Frank Gunter (COB); Katrina Zalatan (COB); Ginny McSwain (CAS); Linda Bell (RAS); Susan Szczepanski (CAS); Greg Tonkay (RCEAS); Ed Lotto (CAS); Zach Vinik (student, COB); Evan Chansky (student, RCEAS); Julia Adamson (student, CAS); Mary Beth Deily (COB); Steven Wilson (secretary); Natasha Vermaak (RCEAS).

- 1. Approve minutes from 2/26/2020**
→ Approved.

- 2. Definitions of Grades proposal (R&P 3.8.1; see pre-read).**

RECALL Proposed Revisions (from proposal pre-read):

Option 1: Courses in which grades of F, W, ~~N, X, Z~~, or NR are recorded do not meet prerequisite requirements. *The parenthetical grade included with a N, X, or Z grade can be used to meet the prerequisite requirements of a course or program.*

Option 2: Courses in which grades of F, W, ~~N, X, Z~~, or NR are recorded do not meet prerequisite requirements. *With the approval of a student's Associate Dean, the parenthetical grade included with a N, X, or Z grade can be used to meet the prerequisite requirements of a course or program.* Rationale: In the case of multiple N, X, and Z for the same student in the same semester or in the case of low parenthetical grades e.g. D-, it might be appropriate to deny the use of these parenthetical grades to meet prerequisite requirements.

Option 3: Courses in which grades of F, W, ~~N, X, Z~~, or NR are recorded do not meet prerequisite requirements. *With the approval of the Committee on Standing of Students, the parenthetical grade included with a N, X, or Z grade can be used to meet the prerequisite requirements of a course or program.* Rationale: Would ensure more standard treatment of such cases across the University.

→Gunter re-opened discussion of proposal from our February meetings with some urgency in light of COVID-19 and the intent to be more accommodating of students who may not be able to take the final exams and/or are unable to complete one or more assignments this semester. For example, in some courses, students could “get a zero” on the final exam, and the worst grade they would receive in this situation of missing the final would be a C, i.e. “X(C)”. In this situation, current R&P does not allow the N, X, or Z grades to meet prerequisites. This could impede the students’ progress during the subsequent semester (Fall Semester in our example -- signing up for their next courses that rely on the X(C) course as prerequisite). Making this change to R&P could help remove barriers to student progress, especially in these already difficult and uncertain times with the ongoing pandemic. Further discussion and concerns were raised including:

- This change may not apply to many students. In the experience of the committee members who deal with this, a vast majority of X and N grades are NF, XF.
- Most faculty are not aware of the rules and circumstances for using N, X, or Z grades. Their incorrect use could allow students to move on prematurely and to their greater detriment. An educational campaign for faculty regarding the proper use of these grades is suggested.
- As we are in a special circumstance, could the semester midterm grade act as grounds to decide prerequisite status or some other measure? Do we need to change R&P?
- These are highly uncertain times fraught with the possibility of extended family emergencies so if the change could positively impact some students, it is worthwhile.

→Gunter moved to vote on Option 1. It was seconded and there was further discussion:

- Option 2 might be better as it would provide a fail-safe mechanism that N, X, or Z grades have been appropriately assigned. (In the case of multiple N, X, and Z for the same student in the same semester or in the case of low parenthetical grades e.g. D-, it might be appropriate to deny the use of these parenthetical grades to meet prerequisite requirements.)
- Concern regarding accreditation. ABET checks we follow our own policies and procedures.
- Request to monitor and keep track of how much and how often this situation comes up going forward (i.e. N, X, Z are used for prerequisites).
- Reminder that every change to R&P is an experiment that we can further improve upon later.
→VOTE FOR OPTION 1 --- Unanimous YES (12 votes)

3. Grading procedure for Spring 2020 remote learning mode.

At 12:31pm on Wed. March 18, the Lehigh University Leadership and Crisis Management Team (incovid@lehigh.edu) sent out an email update to members of the campus community and Lehigh families. This update included a section on “Remote coursework update” under New Information (second bullet point) stating: *“In this first week of classes in this new mode of teaching and learning, we recognize there are some bumps that need to be worked out with regard to live instruction, questions around grading policies, and others. These items are under active discussion and faculty and students can expect to receive additional guidance through email addressing these questions. At this time, we have decided to provide the option for students to take their courses on a credit or no-credit basis. Students who choose to take their courses for a grade may still do so. Additional guidance will be provided through email by Friday.”*

- This communication reflects a growing anxiety among our community.
- There are many inconsistencies from a student perspective regarding accessibility and how online courses are being handled by professors (even across sections of the same course). Some students may have very limited access to wi-fi or computers or access that requires them to go against social-distancing recommendations, to name a few concerns.
- Recently there was a student petition (through change.org), signed by thousands, asking for Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit (C/NC) or similar options to be offered at Lehigh this semester.
- The grading procedure is ultimately a Provost-level decision, but input is being gathered from as many voices in the campus community as possible.
- Some discussion around the pros/cons of PASS/FAIL (P/F) and Credit/No Credit (C/NC).
 - R&P has clear guidelines for P/F (when to declare, limited number allowed over student career, professor is not informed about P/F, how courses are pre-approved to allow for P/F etc.)
 - R&P currently has little detail to provide for C/NC
 - P/F is counted towards GPA
 - C/NC would not count towards GPA
 - Consensus that P/F is NOT the best fit for our situation this semester.
- ABOUT the DEFAULT-- Current communication (email excerpt above) is unclear regarding what the DEFAULT is. (OPT-IN to get C/NC so that default is that you see your grades? Do you have to request to see your grades?) Further discussion of DEFAULT for GRADING
 - Administration overall intent is to be in the best interest of the student and lessen the burden on the student. Recognizing that this is a higher stress semester for students than normal, they want to alleviate some stress for students.
 - Find option that we think the majority of students will need and let that be the default.
 - Perhaps default is C/NC, but you can request to see your grades. You have to then ACT to change your default C/NC to the assigned final grade (A-F) from professor.
 - Student perspective is that a majority of students will want to have their normal grades as default. They want the CHOICE to OPT-IN for a C/NC on a course-by-course basis.
 - Students most anxious about whether they have CHOICE or not? Will they be forced into C/NC for everything or not?

- Several professors reported they are getting 80-90% online participation and they expect to be able to give grades normally.
 - The choice of default could instead be made based on other factors:
 - Make decision based on how we want to set the tone for future emergency situations, what we want to highlight as important (F. Gunter AGREES with Zach and Evan on this!)
 - Keeping assigned grades (A-F) as default communicates a strong sense of normalcy.
 - From a behavioralist perspective, Defaults Are Powerful. If you make the default C/NC more students will end up doing it that way than if otherwise.
- More on the Credit/No Credit option and implications:
 - C/NC has 3 levels:
 - **CR** -- (A through C-)
 - **DCR** -- (D) does not count as prerequisite. As long as your major does not have a minimum grade it would still count towards major.
 - **NCR** (F)
 - **None are counted for GPA**
→The committee prefers this 3 level approach to simple C/NC.
 - This should be a conversation between students/RAS. Professor out of loop.
 - A lot for students is tied to their grades so there could be unintended consequences of the Opt-In C/NC system.
 - Potentially no Dean's List this semester. C/NC could open new avenues for cherry-picking / gaming the system.
 - Concern about making policy based on the rare 'bad actors'
 - UGRAD representatives (Julia, Evan, Zack) offered that administration can send a draft of final communication about C/NC announcement to them – to get their perspective on student interpretation.
- **WHEN** should the Opt-In choice be made?
 - We don't know what the students are/will be dealing with or how bad it will be.
 - Some epidemiologists predict that mid to late May will coincide with peak hospitalizations in the US.
 - CMU is allowing 1 week after final grades announced to make the final decision on credit/no credit.
 - Requiring decision before final exam is taken forces the students to gamble unnecessarily in these already stressful times.
 - Let students have all the information to decide whether the grade impacts their GPA. Some faculty may not be clear (themselves or with the students) about how the final grades this semester will be made so having all the information would be best for students to make the Opt-In decisions.
 - To further relieve student burden, final grades could be delivered with an addendum of calculations to reveal how a replacement of C/NC for each course would affect their degree progress or similar. Calculate scenarios to help identify the student interest.
 - Once you have made the Opt-In choices, they become final (exceptional cases can use SOS appeal system). For example, if a student is ill at the deadline and misses it, they may appeal through SOS.
 - June 1st and May 23rd were suggested for Opt-In choice deadlines.
 - May 23rd is better for graduating seniors and others that have time-sensitive transcript deadlines for the next steps in their career.
 - Grades due and announced May 16th. May 23rd is one week later for students to decide on C/NC opt-in on a course-by-course basis. RAS needs approximately 1 more week after that to turn around final transcripts to send out (by approx. June 1).

Points of committee consensus:

- Pass/Fail is NOT the best fit for our situation this semester.
- The default should be seeing your grades as in a normal semester.
- Let the students know now that they have the choice to OPT-IN to a Credit/No Credit grade replacement.
- This optional Credit/No Credit grade replacement would be on a Course by Course basis. (NOT all or none).
- The 3 level Credit/No Credit option (CR, DCR, NCR) explained as under consideration is highly favored over the simple C/NC
- There must be a clear deadline for the Opt-in Choice.
- The Opt-in Choice deadline should be AFTER final exams and AFTER students see their final grades but not too late for graduating seniors. May 23rd may meet these requirements.
- The Opt-In Choice should be communicated strictly between RAS and students (professors out of the loop).
- Students suggested an open/rolling opt-in starting now until final deadline that was favored. “Effective immediately, ANYONE CAN OPT-IN UNTIL THE DEADLINE (May 23)”

Adjourned at 4:40pm.