

ACADEMIC POLICIES COMMITTEE
February 16, 2022
Zoom Meeting from 2-3 p.m.

Members Present: Cassandra Garcia, Keith Goyne (Chair), Robin Panneton, Susan Sumner,
Keith Thompson

Members Absent: Kimberly Smith

Recorder: Arlice Banks, Executive Administrative Assistant, College of Natural Resources
and Environment

Keith Goyne (Chair) called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

I. Review and vote upon

- A. The February 2, 2022 meeting minutes were approved without modification.

II. Review and approve agenda

- A. The February 16, 2022 agenda was approved without modification.

III. Notifications

- A. Keith Goyne hasn't heard from Rick Sparks or Rachel Holloway since the draft policy to Steven Capaldo, Associate University Legal Counsel, for review.

IV. Old Business

- A. Review of edits from the last meeting
 - 1. Section 3.4—Removal of Holds Associated with Academic Relief: The last sentence of the second paragraph was edited to reflect that “Not all students receiving academic relief will have a hold placed on their accounts (see Section 3.2); thus, the following steps should only be used as needed.” The committee approved these edits.

V. New Business

- A. Discussion about necessary changes to PPM 196: What data or information do we need to move forward if any?
 - 1. Is there any data or other information we should collect before moving forward? Do we need to review practices at other institutes at this point?
 - 2. It would be a good idea to see what other institutes are doing. We want to ensure that any revisions we make positively affect our student's academic recovery instead of feeling punitive.

- B. Discussion about the use of Ws after final grades: Should we permit Ws to be used after final grades are posted?
1. For students who want to free up their time to focus on their other classes, waiting until final grades are posted is a disadvantage—they have an opportunity to see their grades before making a decision. However, for the borderline student trying to figure out what to do, it might be in their best interest to wait until grades are posted because there isn't an opportunity to talk with an advisor and explore options. After all, the semester is over.
 2. We could run a campaign and identify students for which a W would make a difference in their term GPA—a proactive approach.
 3. There are a lot of cases where students should use a W, and there are lots of cases where students shouldn't. We also discussed that students would indicate their intentions to take a W and not initiate a request until their final grade was posted. Still, they had to indicate their intention before final exams. So, if there were some way to enter their request and not have it finalized, they would have to finalize it.
- C. Discussion about the use of Ws after final grades: Should students be restricted to using Ws only after final grades are posted? In other words, they would not be able to use a W mid-semester.
1. To free up their course load, some students want to decide earlier to stop attending class, and presumably, the instructor would have some way of knowing this, so they aren't wondering why the student isn't attending class. If we restrict the use of Ws until after the semester, students don't have that option.
 2. When a student considers taking a W, I encourage them to stay enrolled to see and hear the material through the second half of the course. If they must repeat the course, hearing the material and trying to understand the second half of this course might make them more successful the next time around.
- D. Discussion about the use of Ws after final grades: Should we restrict Ws to only C- through F grades?
1. If a student gets a C- or better, they should keep that grade and move forward because a C- or better will satisfy most prerequisites across the university.
 2. We must align Policy 91 with what we are discussing now. In some departments, a C is not considered a passing grade.
 3. If PPM196 is changed to say C- and below, a student could use a W. Does that begin to influence some of the other policies?

4. Suppose we don't restrict the use of the W until after the semester, adding in the criteria that a student must have a C- or below to use the W. Students might use a W early because they know their grade isn't reported at that time as opposed to waiting until the end of the semester. In that case, students will probably apply even earlier to use a W. It might create a reverse reaction. Then this restriction is imposed on them.
5. At my former institute, faculty members were required to inform the student whether or not they were passing or failing a course if the student asked. We gave students a form, and we told them that they need to take this to their faculty members and write down their grades, so they are making an informed decision about the use of this W. The student used a second form to accept the W.
6. Some students won't accept a C- because that is their mindset. For most of these students, I think their fears are related to staying in a program or getting into it. It's an access issue.
7. For many students, the use of Ws for only C- grades and below is more about the next steps in their careers (law school, medical school, etc.) than getting a degree in their major.
8. I could see some scenarios where some students would want to get rid of a C- because it's going to prevent them from going on probation or prevent them from getting a 2.5 GPA.
9. Suppose when a student attempts to use a W, the system alerts someone of the intention to use W for a course. The student could initiate this process any time after the drop deadline. Once the final grades are posted, the student completes the request to apply for the W grade. Faculty would use the system to see the student's request to use a W for the course, and the faculty member doesn't have to do anything except submit the final grades.
10. I don't want a process that is too complicated. Most of our W requests come in at the deadline or the week before the deadline, and we spend the next two weeks processing these requests after the deadline.
11. Whatever system is used must interact with Banner, and I wonder if Banner has structural interface limits that would make it difficult for such a system to be implemented.
12. Perhaps we should keep the status quo—students can apply for the W whenever they want, up to the last day of classes, but then we allow them to opt-out of that. If they take the final and pass the course, they can stop the request.
13. The challenge is that the W is already there, so where would the faculty member enter the grade?
14. The simplest thing to do is change the deadline to allow a retroactive W after grades are posted, which might remove anxiety for many students before their final exams (or after their exams), understanding their options after seeing their grades.

15. I think it depends on the student. This approach would be helpful for some students, but for others who have already decided that they are going to use a W, they give up. I don't think waiting until grades are posted is a bad option, but some restrictions would be necessary, especially for first-year students who want to use a W on a C- grade.
- E. Discussion about the number of Ws afforded to students and the division of Ws for use in 1000-2000 and 3000-4000 level courses
1. I favor using two Ws for 1000-2000 level courses and two Ws for 3000-4000 courses. If they could be coded, it would automatically determine which W is applied to which course level.
 2. Maybe we should give the students all four Ws, but they can only use two Ws in one semester, not three.
 3. I like the idea that the first W used is free. The student goes into Hokie Spa requests without needing any approvals. For every subsequent W request, if the student attempts to enter two simultaneously, the system alerts the student to obtain authorization.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:58 p.m.