

TO: Simon Bott, Chair
Undergraduate Council

APPROVED FEB 23 2011

FROM: Richard Scamell
Academic Policies and Procedures Committee

as amended [Signature]

SUBJECT: UC 11269 10F: Proposed Catalog Changes – College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics
UC 11281 11S: Proposal to Change the University of Houston Repeat Rule

DATE: February 9, 2011

The Academic Policies and Procedures Committee met on Wednesday, February 9 to consider two proposals from the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. Participating in the discussion were committee members Betty Barr, Martha Dunkelberger, Debbie Hermann-Henry, Peter Lam, Richard Scamell, Larry Williams, and Louis Williams. Ian Evans attended the meeting as a guest.

UC 11269 10F: Proposed Catalog Changes – College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics Section

The first part of UC 11269 10F changes the requirements for current University of Houston students who seek a change of major into or within the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. The current wording in the Expected Background of Entering Freshmen in the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics Academic Information section of the catalog along with suggested catalog wording contained in UC 11269 10F follows. Substantive changes appear highlighted and in bold.

Current Catalog Wording

Students seeking a change of major into or within the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics must have established a minimum 2.00 cumulative UH grade point average. Some departments may have additional requirements and students should refer to the department section of this catalog for further information.

Proposed Catalog Wording

*Students seeking a change of major into or within the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics must have established a minimum cumulative UH grade point average of at least 2.00 **as well as a minimum cumulative grade point average of at least 2.00 based on all math and sciences courses taken at UH.** Students seeking majors in the Departments of Biology & Biochemistry, Chemistry, Computer Science, Earth & Atmospheric Sciences, and Physics must have completed a minimum of three semester hours of mathematics (MATH 1330 or equivalent or higher) and three semester hours of science applicable to the degree being sought. Students seeking majors in the Department of Mathematics must have completed a minimum of six semester hours in mathematics (MATH 1330 or equivalent or higher). Some departments may have additional requirements and students should refer to the department section of this catalog for further information.*

amendment

The second part of UC 11269 10F focuses on students who wish to transfer to the University of Houston from some other institution.

The following italicized language is proposed for inclusion on the current University of Houston Admissions website in the Special Major Requirements section. The proposal calls for this language to be inserted on the website between the transfer requirements for Music Majors and Pre-Pharmacy Majors. The language recommended by the Committee and endorsed by the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics reads as follows:

Natural Sciences and Mathematics

Students transferring to the University of Houston and specifying an NSM major must have completed at least three semester hours of math and at least three semester hours of science courses, and have earned a minimum cumulative grade point average of at least 2.00 based on all attempted non-UH

mathematics and science courses that are applicable to degrees offered by departments within the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

For example, a student attending Houston Community College who had taken (a) the equivalent to CHEM 1331 twice, one time earning a grade of F and a second time earning a grade of B and (b) the equivalent of MATH 1431 twice, one time earning a grade of F and a second time earning a grade of A would fail to meet the proposed requirement for transfer students seeking an NSM major.

Recommendation

The Committee unanimously endorses UC 11269 10F. The Committee agrees with the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics concerning both current University of Houston students and transfer students who wish to change their major to a discipline within NSM. Students who are unable to meet the minimum requirement of a 2.00 grade point average in math and science courses already attempted are unlikely to thrive in the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics.

UC 11281 11S: Proposal to Change the Repeat Rule

The Curriculum Committee of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics has requested that the Undergraduate Council revisit the University of Houston "repeat rule." Their proposal calls for the removal of the following language from the catalog:

"When a course is repeated, only the most recent attempt will count toward satisfying degree requirements. This does not mean that the later course grade replaces earlier grades."

Adoption of UC 11281 11S would result in the Cumulative Grade Point Average section of the catalog being worded as follows:

The cumulative grade point average is based upon all work taken at the University of Houston, including courses that are repeated, for which grade point values are assigned.

A repeated course, including courses repeated during a summer session, is equivalent to a new course both in the determination of classification and in computing the cumulative grade point average.

Students may not enroll in any course more than three times, including W, F, and I grades, without permission from the college of their major. ~~When a course is repeated, only the most recent attempt will count toward satisfying degree requirements. This does not mean that the later course grade replaces earlier grades.~~ All attempts will remain on the student's official transcript. This policy does not apply to courses listed in the catalog as repeatable (e.g. Selected Topics courses).

Discussion

This proposal addresses a problem that occurs when a student retakes a course to improve his or her grade (perhaps to improve chances for admission to a graduate program). For example, suppose a student has taken a course in a degree program where a grade of C or above is required for the course to count to fulfillment of the degree requirements for that program and earns a grade of C. Subsequently, the student decides to retake the course in an effort to improve his or her mastery of the subject material and/or to improve their cumulative grade point average.

- Under the **current "repeat rule,"** should the student retake the course and earn a grade of C-, the student's initial grade of C in the course would no longer count toward satisfying degree requirements. In an extreme case, this could put a student in a position where he or she could be denied graduation because the initial grade of C cannot be used.

*Withdraw
for further
discussion by
App Committee.
Must change
language to
accommodate
PeopleSoft
processes.*

- Under the **proposed “repeat rule,”** the C-, while certainly not improving the student’s grade point average, would not jeopardize the course as having fulfilled degree requirements.

The “Repeat Rule” Through the Years

Credit for repeated courses was first addressed by the Undergraduate Council in November 1989 when Shirley Ezell, Associate Vice President for Academic Programs, asked the Council to “clarify the status of course credit when a student repeats a course in which a passing grade was made and earns a lower or failing grade in the second attempt. Does the student lose credit for the course if the second grade is an ‘F’ or a ‘D’ in a course in which the department accepts no grade lower than a ‘C’?” (UC 3160 89F). The Academic Operations and Standards Committee made the following recommendation in UC 3946 92S).¹

Students do not lose credit for courses they pass and subsequently fail, but cannot satisfy any degree requirements with courses in which the latest grade they earn is below the minimum necessary to meet requirements, unless they receive permission from the dean of the college of their major.

Repeated courses were next brought to the attention of the Undergraduate Council in UC 9184 06F, a proposal from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences which among other things asked that “the repeat policy be explicitly stated in the catalog and that the policy clarify that when a course is repeated (other than courses listed in the catalog as repeatable), only the course taken later is to be used towards a student’s degree.”

The Academic Policies and Procedures Committee responded to UC 9184 06F in a report dated April 4, 2007 (UC 9275 07S). This report called for the following language to be added to page 63 of the Undergraduate Catalog. New language is indicated in bold.

Cumulative Grade Point Average

The cumulative grade point average is based upon all work taken at the University of Houston, including courses that are repeated, for which grade point values are assigned.

A repeated course, including courses repeated during a summer session, is equivalent to a new course both in the determination of classification and in computing the cumulative grade point average.

Students may not repeat any course more than three times, including W, F, and I grades, without permission from the college of their major. When a course is repeated, only the most recent attempt will count toward satisfying degree requirements. This does not mean that the later course grade replaces earlier grades. All attempts will remain on the student’s official transcript. This policy does not apply to courses listed in the catalog as repeatable (e.g. Selected Topics courses).

Please note that the first sentence of the third paragraph in the current catalog now begins: “Students may not enroll in any course ...” as opposed to “Students may not repeat any course” When and why this change of wording occurred is not known by the Committee.

¹ The two-and-a-half year difference between the Fall 1989 Semester and the Spring 1992 semester was caused by a delay in the court case initiated by a College of Engineering student whose graduation had been delayed as a result of taking a course a second time and failing it, after having successfully passed it the first time around. It was the situation surrounding this student that precipitated Shirley Ezell’s question to the Undergraduate Council.

Recommendation

The issue here is quite clear: do we want to deny a student graduation when they may have already satisfied a degree requirement by successfully completing a course once but subsequently failed to satisfy the same degree requirement after retaking it a second time? Although it should be noted that the number of cases is small where the current policy impacts a student's graduation, the current policy says that we choose to deny these students graduation until they retake the course and receive a grade in that course that satisfies the degree requirement. The Committee recommends that the current policy be replaced by the proposed policy.

A Final Comment

Adoption of the proposed "repeat rule" means that

- A lower grade in a repeated course would not jeopardize the course as having fulfilled degree requirements if the previous attempt at the course had fulfilled degree requirements.
- All grades earned in a repeated course are included in the calculation of grade point averages used for purposes of graduation. This would include cumulative grade point average as well as grade point average in the major or minor if the repeated course fell into the major or minor category.