

**Committee on Educational Policy  
October 30, 2019**

**In attendance: Faculty: Tekla Harms; Edward Melillo, chair; Christian Rogowski; Krupa Shandilya; Adam Sitze. Provost and Dean of the Faculty: Catherine Epstein, ex officio. Students: Sterling Kee '23; Julia Ralph '21. Recorder: Nancy Ratner, Director of Academic Projects.**

Edward Melillo, chair of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. in Clark House 100. The committee approved the minutes of October 23, 2019.

**Course proposals**

The committee discussed additional course proposals and approved the revised versions.

**Policy issues**

The committee returned next to the questions from the class deans about recently approved policies. Edward said he discussed the committee's suggestions with the class deans who thought many of the proposed revisions would be acceptable to them. He said he is still waiting for confirmation from one more class dean and from the registrar. When the committee has finished reviewing all of the newest policies, Edward said he will then write a letter to the Committee of Six recommending revisions to the College Catalog. The committee then took up the remaining questions.

***What constitutes "exceptional circumstances" in the Flexible Grading Option (FGO)?***

Returning to the question about what would constitute "exceptional circumstances" under the new Flexible Grading Option (FGO), Christian suggested adding the following parenthetical phrase to the final two paragraphs of the guidelines, under Flexible Grading and Pass/Fail Options on page 61 of the Course Catalog:

In exceptional circumstances (**HERE UNDERSTOOD AS DOCUMENTED EMERGENCIES, RATHER THAN ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES**), and only once while enrolled at Amherst College, students who have not previously exhausted their FGOs and have not elected an FGO in that semester may, with the permission of their instructor, academic advisor, and class dean, convert one course to an FGO after the end of the add/drop period.

In exceptional circumstances (**HERE UNDERSTOOD AS DOCUMENTED EMERGENCIES, RATHER THAN ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES**), and only once while enrolled at Amherst College, students may, with the permission of their instructor, academic advisor, and class dean, convert one course to a Pass/Fail after the end of the add/drop period.

The committee approved these revisions.

***Half courses, reduced loads, and maximum loads***

Returning to the question of when the class deans should approve a lighter or heavier load, Adam and Tekla suggested the policy on Course Requirements, page 66 of the Course Catalog, be revised as follows:

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

All students except Independent Scholars are normally required to elect four full courses each semester. **FOR COURSES WITH AN ASSOCIATED LAB (WHERE THE LAB AND LECTURE CARRY THE SAME COURSE NUMBER), THE LAB COMPONENT NEED NOT BE COUNTED AS AN ADDITIONAL**

**HALF COURSE AND DOES NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES REQUIRE ADDITIONAL PERMISSIONS.** Students may elect one or two half courses **THAT ARE NOT ASSOCIATED LAB SECTIONS** in addition to four full courses at their discretion and without special permission. Half courses are not normally included in the requirement of thirty-two courses for the degree; ~~however, with the permission of the academic advisor and the class dean, a studentS~~ may combine two half courses to be counted as equivalent to a full course **ONLY** if (1) ~~the studentS~~ **FIRST** completes 4.5 courses in one semester and **THEN COMPLETE** 3.5 courses in a subsequent semester, **AND THE TWO HALVES MATCH IN A MANNER DESIGNATED BY THE OFFERING DEPARTMENTS, AND WITH PERMISSION OF THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR;** or (2) the two halves match ~~within the same semester~~ in a manner designated by the offering departments, with the approval of the offering department (in this case, the student's program will be three or four full courses and two half courses), **AND WITH PERMISSION OF THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR AND THE CLASS DEAN.** No more than four half courses may be so combined for credit toward the degree.

In exceptional cases a student may, with the permission of both the student's academic advisor and class dean, take five full courses for credit during a given semester (**WITHOUT REGARD TO HALF COURSES**). Such permission is normally granted only to students of demonstrated superior academic ability, responsibility, and will. Fifth courses cannot be used to accelerate graduation. On occasion, a student who has failed a course may be permitted to take a fifth course in a given semester if, in the judgment of the Committee on Academic Standing, this additional work can be undertaken without jeopardizing the successful completion of all courses taken in that semester. Students may only retake a course for which they have received a failing grade or from which they have withdrawn in a prior semester.

A student who by failing a course incurs a deficiency in the number of courses required for normal progress toward graduation is usually expected to make up that course deficiency by taking a three- or four-semester hour course at another approved institution during the summer prior to the first semester of the next academic year and no later than the semester prior to the student's last semester at Amherst.

Students may not add courses after the last day of add/drop at the beginning of each semester or drop courses after this date except as follows:

In any semester prior to the final year, a student who experiences severe academic difficulty and has exhausted all academic resources (i.e., met with professors during office hours, received tutoring, met with class deans, etc.) may be allowed to withdraw from a course without penalty and graduate with 31 courses. This ~~exception~~ **AMHERST COLLEGE COURSE WITHDRAWAL** may be invoked only once, and requires permission of the instructor, advisor, and class dean. The deadline for withdrawal requests is the end of the tenth week of the semester.

**STUDENTS STUDYING OFF-CAMPUS IN AN APPROVED PROGRAM MAY EXERCISE THEIR SINGLE AMHERST COLLEGE COURSE WITHDRAWAL WITH THE APPROVAL OF THEIR ACADEMIC ADVISOR AND THEIR CLASS DEAN, PROVIDED THEY HAVE EXHAUSTED THOSE ACADEMIC RESOURCES THAT ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAM AND PROVIDED THEIR REQUEST IS MADE TO THEIR CLASS DEAN PRIOR TO THE FINAL THREE WEEKS OF THE OFF-CAMPUS STUDY PROGRAM.**

Further exceptions shall be made for **DOCUMENTED EMERGENCIES, (HERE UNDERSTOOD AS disabling medical reasons or ~~for reason of~~ grave personal emergencies, RATHER THAN ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES)**, and shall be made by the class dean.

All course deficiencies must normally be made up prior to the first semester of the final year, except those arising in the final year, in which case they must be made up prior to graduation. All make-up courses must be approved in advance by the registrar.

Courses taken by a student after withdrawing from Amherst College, as part of a graduate or professional program in which that student is enrolled, are not applicable toward an Amherst College undergraduate degree.

Adam noted that in the first two paragraphs, this revision distinguishes between the first option which requires approval from the student's advisor and the second option which requires permission of the academic advisor and the class dean. Tekla added that the other revisions would provide assistance to students studying away who encounter serious academic challenges and clarified the circumstances in which exceptions might be permitted. The committee did not believe academic difficulties represented the sort of emergency they had envisioned when approving exceptions to the policies; these were intended to be grave documented emergencies. Additional new language would allow a student who is failing a course while studying abroad or at another approved study-away program to drop the course but would require students to use their Amherst College single course withdrawal option to do so. The committee approved the revisions.

#### ***Re-enrolling at Amherst after transferring to another institution***

Edward reported that the class deans would advise returning to the old transfer-back policy, which did not allow students to re-enroll at Amherst after transferring to another institution. They recommended re-inserting the following language to the College Catalog:

Amherst College students who are considering transferring to other institutions should understand that the College will not readmit those who choose to become degree candidates at other colleges and universities. All Amherst College students who transfer to and enroll as degree candidates at other institutions will forfeit their opportunity to re-enroll in the College.

Members of the committee suggested allowing the Admissions Office a rare exception for particular non-curricular situations (for example, students who wish to transfer back after their assailants in a sexual assault case have left the college). Any transfer exceptions would require a letter stating that the applicants remain in good standing at their current institution.

#### ***General Regulations – Deficiencies***

Tekla next suggested revising the policy on making up deficiencies on page 64 of the Course Catalog to clarify the policy on re-admission after a third academic dismissal:

General Regulations – Deficiencies:

At the midpoint and end of each semester, the academic records of all students are reviewed by the class deans and the Committee on Academic Standing. Those students who have failed to meet minimum academic requirements are dismissed from the College. The academic records of others about whom the Committee has some concern are also carefully examined. Depending on the degree of difficulty a student has experienced, they may be regularly reviewed, issued an academic warning or placed on probation. Students who, by failing a course, incur a deficiency in the number of courses required for normal progress toward graduation are expected to make up that course deficiency before being permitted to register for the next academic year. (See Course Requirements.)

Students belonging to one or more of the following groups may not expect to continue at Amherst College:

- a. Those who in any semester fail in two or more courses. Withdrawal from a course while failing it shall count as a failure.\*
- b. Those who in any semester fail a course and receive an average of less than 7 in courses passed.\*
- c. Those who in any semester pass all courses but receive an average of less than 6.
- d. Those who have accumulated deficiencies in three or more courses during their college careers.
- e. Those who have been on probation and have failed to meet the conditions of their probation.

Normally, a student dismissed from the College for reasons of unsatisfactory academic performance, will not be eligible for readmission until the student has been away from the College for two semesters. During the period of academic dismissal (separation from the College) the student is usually expected to demonstrate readiness to return by simultaneously completing and passing at least two liberal arts courses at another accredited college or university each with grades of C or higher (a C– is not satisfactory). The courses must be approved (in advance) by the Registrar and the class dean before the student enrolls. The student will be granted credit towards his/her Amherst degree for deficiencies only. Any remaining course deficiencies, after the two-course requirement has been met, must be completed before returning. Other conditions for readmission shall be set forth clearly in writing and must be met by the student before they can be considered for readmission to the College. (See section on Readmission.) **READMISSION TO THE COLLEGE IS NOT POSSIBLE AFTER A STUDENT HAS EXPERIENCED THREE ACADEMIC DISMISSALS.**

Students who have been suspended from their studies for an academic or disciplinary infraction may not participate in educational leave. Academic or disciplinary warning may also prohibit a student from studying abroad until they are in good standing and can discuss this scenario with the Director of Education Abroad.

A student readmitted to the College following an academic dismissal returns on academic warning.

Students taking courses in a summer school to make up a deficiency incurred at Amherst College must have their summer school courses approved in advance by the Registrar. The College does not grant transfer credit for courses completed with a grade below “C.”

The committee noted that this only applies to academic dismissal and then approved her recommendation.

### **Curricular Practical Training (CPT)**

Catherine reported that Amherst could offer a half course (a one semester colloquium) in the fall semester that would be available to students who have spent their summer engaged in off-campus work under Curricular Practical Training (CPT). International students, in particular, would need to be advised that CPT must be directly related to the student’s major area of study. The course would allow students to integrate their summer employment with their academic study. Catherine said the half course could appear on the transcript but would not be eligible as credit towards graduation. The committee thought this would be acceptable since there is precedent for reporting non-credit-bearing courses on the transcript. This already occurs with Five College certificate programs which sometimes require students to take courses that do not count towards graduation but do appear on the transcript. It also occurs when students enroll in more than the four half courses; all half courses appear on the transcript, but only four may be eligible to count towards the diploma.

Committee members noted that there would need to be a course proposal if the course is to be offered as a colloquium. Catherine said she would ask Nick Horton to write some language, based on the course he is offering this semester. The committee recommended that the provost provide additional remuneration to faculty members who teach this half course, since it would constitute an overload. Catherine said she would let Hanna Bliss know about this policy so Hanna can advise students doing CPT to register for this course next fall.

### **Writing-intensive instruction**

Catherine explained that the college should offer between six and eight writing-intensive courses per year to meet students' writing instruction needs. Unfortunately, the recent retirements of Michele Barale and Ben Lieber have resulted in a dearth of writing-intensive instruction. While three departments (Classics, Music, and Philosophy) received FTE lines based on their agreement to offer an annual writing-intensive course, none of the three has done so this year, and only one writing-intensive course is being offered in the spring. Tekla said that it was the will of the faculty at the time of the Committee on Academic Priorities (CAP) that these courses be taught by Amherst College faculty, and the faculty voted at that time to parcel out FTEs to support this policy. Catherine asked the committee to discuss this problem at its next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.