

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
AGENDA FOR THE FACULTY SENATE MEETING
OCTOBER 4, 2017
Robinson Hall B113, 3:00 – 4:20 p.m.**

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Approval of the Minutes of September 6, 2017**
- III. Announcements**
 - President Cabrera
 - Provost Wu
 - Reminder: Faculty Senate Reception @ Mathy House: THU 10/5 5:30pm
- IV. Committee Reports**
 - A. Senate Standing Committees**
 - Executive Committee*
 - Academic Policies* [Attachment A](#)
 - Budget and Resources*
 - Faculty Matters* [Attachment B](#)
 - Faculty Evaluation of Administrators – revisions to process
 - Evaluations of Department Chairs
 - Nominations*
 - Organization and Operations*
 - B. Other Committees/Faculty Representatives**
- V. New Business**
- VI. Remarks for the Good of the General Faculty**
- VII. Adjournment**

Attachment A

Academic Policies Committee Faculty Senate meeting, Oct. 4, 2017

Repeating Courses and Termination from the Major Policies

Part I

Introduction: Courses often have “repeat limits” that specify a maximum number of times a student can repeat a course. Recently, some units have attempted to put “repeat limits” on courses, but have been informed that they cannot do so unless they also have a policy in place for “Termination from the Major.” As the Academic Policies Committee was not aware of this restriction, the committee considered **the issue of whether an academic program can impose a limit on the number of times a student can repeat a given course, without also having in place a policy for Termination from the Major.**

Background: A summary of previous Faculty Senate consideration of these two policies, “Repeating a Course AP 1.3.4” and “Termination from the Major AP 5.2.4” (with links to the original documents), as well as current relevant practices, is presented on the final page of this document.

Conclusion: The Academic Policies Committee concluded that **existing university academic policy does not require a program to have a Termination of the Major policy in place in order to limit repeats of certain courses.**

Part II

After reviewing the two policies, the AP Committee proposes revisions to correct unclear language and omissions, that include:

1) **Due process language in the Termination from the Major policy**—It is indeed sensible for a program to link these two policies when the courses with repeat limits are taken only or predominantly by their major students. It is necessary that both the Termination from the Major policy and the procedure for appeal be published.

and

2) **Provision for extending the repeat limit for a student**—There are several units in the University that teach courses to many students who are not their majors, and those students may repeat these courses excessively. So, while the units can impose repeat limits in the absence of a Termination from the Major policy, as stated in Part I, new language is proposed that clarifies this point and that allows consultation between the program offering the course, the student's major program and the student so that a student can repeat a course beyond the stated limit.

The proposed revisions are shown on the next three pages.

MOTION

- The Academic Policies Committee **moves** that the Repeating a Course policy and the Termination from the Major policy be revised as shown and that the policy revisions be effective immediately upon approval.

Reorganized, but essentially unchanged, text is shown in blue. Deleted words from the current policy are shown in green. New language suggested for the revised policy is shown in red.

Policy in the 2017-2018 Catalog
AP.5.2.4 Termination from the Major

Undergraduate students in any retention category may be reviewed for possible termination by their dean. Termination from a major—or from all majors in a college—may be imposed as a result of excessive repeating of required courses without achieving the minimum standard, and for other evidence of continued failure to make adequate progress toward completion of the major. Students must be informed a semester in advance and given a chance to meet the standard or appeal. Once a termination decision has been made, a letter of termination is sent to the student by the dean or director of the school, college, or institute, and notification of termination from the major is affixed to the student's academic record. Students who are terminated are no longer eligible to pursue that major, but may transfer to a different major within the university to complete their undergraduate degree.

Suggested Revision
AP 5.2.4 Termination from the Major

Undergraduate students in any retention category may be reviewed for possible termination from the major by their dean according to the published policy approved by the major program. Termination from the major—or from all majors in a college—may be imposed as a result of excessive repeating of required courses without achieving a minimum standard, and for other evidence of continued failure to make adequate progress toward completion of the major. Students must be informed a semester in advance and given a chance to meet the standard or to appeal according to published college procedures. Once a termination decision has been made, a letter of termination is sent to the student by the dean, and notification of termination from the major is affixed to the student's academic record. Students who are terminated are no longer eligible to pursue that major, but may declare a different major within the university to complete their undergraduate degree.

[Notes: There must be due process for students before being terminated. Major programs and colleges must have a previously-published policy on termination to initiate the process.]

Policy in the 2017-18 Catalog

AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course

Effective July 1, 2011 Federal Regulations no longer allow federal student aid funds to apply to courses that a student has already taken twice with a passing grade. This limitation does not include courses that are "repeatable for credit," as described below. Students should contact the Office of Student Financial Aid to determine how repeated course work would affect their financial aid eligibility.

Some courses are annotated in the catalog as "repeatable for credit." These are courses which students may repeat and receive additional credit for each time the course is taken. The maximum number of credits is specified in each course's description. Special topics and independent study courses are examples. For all other courses, the following conditions apply:

- Graduate students who have passed a course with a satisfactory grade are not permitted to repeat the course for replacement credit. Grades of B- are considered satisfactory, unless the academic program specifies a higher minimum satisfactory grade. Students must obtain permission from their academic program to repeat a course in which they have earned an unsatisfactory grade. Each unit establishes procedures for granting such permission. Duplicate credit is not earned. When a course is repeated, all credits attempted are used to determine warning, termination, or dismissal; the transcript shows grades for all courses attempted; and only one grade per course may be presented on the degree application.
- Some courses, such as special topics courses, are repeatable for a limited number of additional credits. As long as students do not exceed the maximum allowable credits for repeatable courses, all takings of the course count for credit and in the student's GPA. In cases where the student has exceeded allowable credits in a repeatable class, the transcript will exclude the grade and credits of the earliest taking of the class.

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Suggested revision:

AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course

Effective July 1, 2011 Federal Regulations no longer allow federal student aid funds to apply to courses that a student has already taken twice with a passing grade. This limitation does not include courses that are "repeatable for credit," as described below. Students should contact the Office of Student Financial Aid to determine how repeated course work would affect their financial aid eligibility.

- Some courses are annotated in the catalog as "repeatable for credit." These are courses which students may repeat and receive additional credit for each time the course is taken. The maximum number of credits is specified in each course's description. Special topics and independent study courses are examples. As long as students do not exceed the maximum allowable credits for repeatable courses, all takings of the course count for credit and in calculation of the student's GPA. In cases where the student has exceeded allowable credits in a repeatable class, the transcript will exclude the grade and credits of the earliest taking of the class.
- Graduate students who have earned a satisfactory grade in a course that is not repeatable for credit are not permitted to repeat the course for replacement credit. Grades of B- are considered satisfactory unless the academic program specifies a higher minimum satisfactory grade. Students must obtain permission from their academic program to repeat a course in which they have earned an unsatisfactory grade. Each unit establishes procedures for granting such permission. Duplicate credit is not earned. When a course is repeated, all credits attempted are used to determine warning, termination, or dismissal; the transcript shows grades for all courses attempted; and only one grade per course may be presented on the degree application.

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- For undergraduate classes not repeatable for credit, undergraduate degree students may repeat courses for which they seek a higher grade. Academic programs may restrict repeats of certain departmental or college courses in the major. Excessive repeats may result in termination from the major by a student's dean. A grade received in a repeated course will replace the grade in a prior takings of the same course in the calculation of the cumulative GPA, even if the more recent grade is lower. Duplicate credit is not given. Repeat rules apply to taking the same course and courses designated in the catalog as equivalent. Repeat rules apply throughout a student's academic history. All instances of courses and their grades remain part of the student's transcript. No adjustment to the cumulative GPA will be made when the grade in the repeated course is W. A grade in a Mason course will not be excluded from the cumulative GPA based on a subsequent taking of an equivalent course via study elsewhere. The exclusion of earlier grades of repeated courses will not change the academic standing or dean's list notations for the earlier semester. Note that individual programs may disallow students from retaking certain high-demand courses simply for the purpose of improving their grade. Programs may also require departmental permission for students to repeat certain department, school, or college courses.

- For undergraduate classes not repeatable for credit, undergraduate degree students may repeat courses for which they seek a higher grade. This policy applies only to repeating the same course, or courses that are designated in the catalog as equivalent. The grade received in a repeated course will replace the earlier grade in the calculation of the cumulative GPA, even if the more recent grade is lower. No adjustment to the cumulative GPA will be made when the grade in the repeated course is W. A grade in a Mason course will not be excluded from the cumulative GPA based on a subsequent taking of an equivalent course via study elsewhere. Duplicate credit is not earned. All instances of courses and their grades remain part of the student's transcript. The exclusion of earlier grades of repeated courses will not change the academic standing or dean's list notations for the earlier semester.

Academic programs may disallow students from repeating certain high-demand courses simply for the purpose of improving a satisfactory grade. Academic programs may restrict repeats of certain courses by all students. However, a student who is not a major in the program may be given permission to repeat a course beyond the limit after consultation between the academic program and the student's major program. Academic programs may restrict repeats of certain courses by students in their major. Excessive repeats may result in termination from the major. (See AP 5.2.4 Termination from the Major.)

[Note: The rules for Study Elsewhere exclude taking courses that have already been attempted at Mason.]

Summary of “Repeating a Course” and “Termination from the Major” Policies

In **Spring 2004**, when the university changed to a GPA-based grading system, a course repeat policy principle was approved by the Faculty Senate [[FS Minutes Jan. 21, 2004](#)]. The policy appeared in the [2004-2005 University Catalog](#), p. 31.

The policy allowed unlimited attempts by students to improve a grade, but specifically says "*Despite the preceding policy, individual programs may disallow students from retaking certain high demand courses simply for the purpose of improving their grade.*" This is the first instance of restricting course repeats.

In **Spring, 2009**, the Faculty Senate approved a Termination from the Major policy and added two new statements to the Repeating a Course policy that further allowed programs to restrict course repeats [[FS Minutes Mar. 4, 2009](#)]. These are the two statements:

"Different academic programs may restrict repeats of certain departmental or college courses in the major. Excessive repeats may result in termination from the major by a student's dean."

"Programs may also require departmental permission for students to repeat certain department, school or college courses."

The statements made by the Chair of the Academic Policies Committee at the Faculty Senate meeting included these: "Individual units currently have the capacity to limit the amount of repeats for specific courses." and "After due consideration, the Committee decided not to impose a limit on the number of times a student could repeat a course but rather to leave this decision to the local academic units."

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- Currently, there is at least one program that limits course repeats for all students, consistent with the second statement incorporated in 2009 as shown in the Catalog under Computer Science for repeating courses in VSE ("*Students may attempt an undergraduate course taught by the Volgenau School of Engineering twice. A third attempt requires approval of the department offering the course.*"). Note that this statement is distinct from their policy limiting course repeats for major students and that is linked to their Termination of the Major policy.

Attachment B

This year, in response to requests from faculty and some other stakeholders (e.g., some deans) the Faculty Matters Committee will be reviewing current practice regarding faculty evaluation of administrators and department chairs. To inform this review, the committee invites input from Faculty Senators on these issues as described below.

Faculty Evaluation of University Administrators

As mandated in the Faculty Handbook, the Faculty Matters Committee currently organizes an annual survey of faculty regarding their evaluation of the President, Provost, and Deans. Each faculty member can complete the evaluation survey for the President, Provost, and the Dean of their home School/College. Survey results are made available to the university's Board of Visitors, administrators, and all faculty.

One common concern expressed about the faculty evaluation of administrators is that it is unclear what impact, if any, the annual faculty survey is having. We seek input on the following questions:

- Do you feel the current process for faculty evaluation of administrators is working well or should be revised?
- If you feel the process should be revised, what changes would you suggest making?

Faculty Evaluation of Department Chairs

As far as the Faculty Matters Committee can tell, faculty evaluation of department chairs varies greatly across the university, with faculty in some departments conducting an annual review of their chair and faculty in other departments doing little or nothing in the way of evaluation of the chair.

We seek input on the following questions:

- What is current practice in your department regarding faculty evaluation of the department chair?
- What practices, if any, would you like to see in place for faculty evaluation of department chairs?