

Office of Graduate & Professional Studies

University Graduate Committee Agenda

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

3:00 - 5:00 pm via Zoom

Meeting Details

Zoom

<https://nau.zoom.us/j/81213575479?pwd=K3liYzA1dGxJRHIhUnhxa3V2ZkVCZz09>

Meeting ID: 812 1357 5479

Password: 077527

Supporting Materials

Vice Provost Announcements February 2024.pdf

Associate Vice Provost Announcements February 2024.pdf

2023-11-15 UGC Meeting Minutes - DRAFT.docx

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Announcements

Maribeth Watwood, Vice Provost for Academic Programming and Graduate Studies

Vice Provost Announcements February 2024.pdf

Laura Bounds, Associate Vice Provost, Graduate Studies

Associate Vice Provost Announcements February 2024.pdf

Current Business: Action Items [* possible vote, (sponsor / facilitator)]

[1] November UGC Minutes *

(Kyle N. Winfree)

2023-11-15 UGC Meeting Minutes - DRAFT.docx

[2] Co-Chair Elections - Update

(Kyle N. Winfree)

Two candidates have stepped forward, [Nicole Hampton](#) and [Natalie Randolph](#). Both candidates have been asked to prepare a one page (or less) statement responding to the following prompts. Both candidates will also be asked to verbalize their statement for the committee at the March 20, 2024 meeting, and will be given five minutes to present followed by fifteen minutes for questions from the committee. Candidates have been asked to answer the following questions:

- Why do you want to be chair next year?
- What have you achieved or accomplished in a group setting that you were most proud of?
- Why are you interested in policy?
- What is your leadership philosophy when leading diverse multidisciplinary groups or teams?

[3] Ombuds Office Observations and Student Concerns

(Laura Umphrey)

Vice Provost Announcements February 2024.pdf, item 3.

[4] Concurrent Master's to Dual Degrees - Update

(Melinda Treml)

[5] Satisfactory Academic Process *

(Melinda Treml, Kyle N. Winfree)

See Appendix A as part of this agenda.

Some possible outcomes from a vote on this topic could include:

- No change to current practice;
- Adoption of one or more aspects of the noted solutions;
- Formation of a subcommittee to consider:
 - recommendations of change to practice,
 - a new policy that indicates requirements of practice.

[6] Course Repeat, Graduate (Grade Replacement) Policy *
(Viacheslav Fofanov)

See Appendix B as part of this agenda.

Some possible outcomes from a vote on this topic could include:

- No change to current practice;
- Adoption of one or more aspects of the noted changes;
- Formation of a subcommittee to consider:
 - recommendations of change to practice,
 - a new policy that indicates requirements of practice.

[7] Open Discussion

(Kyle N. Winfree)

The last 30 minutes of meetings this semester will be reserved for open discussion whenever possible. Committee members may contact the Chair to recommend topics, which may be shared with the committee anonymously or with attribution at the recommender's request.

Open Discussion Time (~ 4:30 to 5:00 pm)

Topic(s) for this week

- "Grading Up" - what is this and does this align with either policy or intention?
- xx799 Contracts - what do units do to ensure students are working on and making progress toward their dissertation?

Good of the Order

Adjournment *

Future Business

To propose future business, please email Kyle N. Winfree and Laura Bounds, with the subject line "UGC Business"

Generative Artificial Intelligence in _____

[5] Satisfactory Academic Process - Appendix A

Area of Investigation: PHD programs wherein students receive financial aid.

As part of the Dissertation process, current practice is that students who are in PHD programs are provided with a grade of “IP” for all of their dissertation coursework until the student successfully passes their dissertation defense, at which point all “IP” grades are converted to “P” grades.

An impact that occurs if students conduct lengthy dissertation processes is to be issued a letter from the Federal Government that they have not made “satisfactory progress” toward the completion of their degree. This occurs in relation to the Department of Education’s standard called “Pace of Progress” wherein:

“All NAU students must maintain a minimum 67% pace of progress, which is calculated by the total sum of successfully completed credit hours divided by the total attempted credit hours, i.e., $Completed \div Attempted = Pace\ of\ Progress$. Transfer hours count as both completed and attempted. Incompletes (I) and In Progress (IP) are considered attempted, but not completed until the grade(s) are posted.”¹

If this occurs, the student(s) receive a letter from the Federal Government that they are not making Satisfactory Academic Progress, and their financial aid will be forfeit unless they present evidence of Satisfactory Academic Progress. At this point, the student, faculty, advisor, chair, and Graduate College Associate Dean, and Graduate College Coordinators are all alerted to this issue as an emergency. It usually occurs close to the enrollment of a new semester, so this can halt students’ ability to enroll in future coursework.

The group of faculty and admin then work with the faculty member/advisor to verify that, according to policy, the faculty member/advisor for the student has completed the “memos or contracts” for Dissertation that identify the milestones/objectives and actions for the student to obtain the credit hours for the dissertation for that semester. Most faculty already do these with their students. If these have been completed, then we are able to have the faculty member convert the student’s “IP” grades to Pass, and then the student can continue their progress toward degree completion with financial aid.

¹ <https://nau.edu/office-of-scholarships-and-financial-aid/satisfactory-academic-progress/>

Steps to Improve this Process for Students

The University Graduate Executive Committee has considered that it may be best for programs change their process for Dissertation in at least one primary way, and recommends that the committee or an appointed subcommittee consider:

- 1) Faculty supervising students in the PhD program agree that they will complete contracts for their students that document the milestones, objectives and actions that students complete for their semester's work. Contracts / Memos align with ABOR Policy 2-224, and NAU Policy for Academic Credit ², wherein 45 hours of work is equivalent to one unit of credit; e.g., students complete 405 hours of work for 9 units of credit. This could support the students by requiring clear objectives and direct connection to their dissertation project.

Faculty should meet with students enrolled in their 799s frequently, and at minimum at the end of the semester to review the student's progress in relation to the contract / memo. This final evaluation can then establish the appropriate grade, a P/IP for that semester:

P = completed the milestones/contract objectives

IP = Still working toward the milestones/contract objectives

- 2) Would it help to identify a clear means to separate the "Dissertation Progress" work on the transcript from the "Dissertation Defense," consider the following two paradigms:
 - a) Curriculum & Assessment creates two different Dissertation courses that students would sign up for:
 - i) New Course Line: 798 "Dissertation Progress"
 - ii) Title change for Course Line: 799 "Dissertation Defense"
 - iii) Students would sign up for the 798 course until they are ready to complete their defense; then the student would sign up for the course Dissertation Defense.

OR

- b) Faculty add topic names to their 799 course, so that every course either has "Dissertation Progress" or "Dissertation Defense."

Point 1) alone would remove the Federal Government's Satisfactory Academic Progress element from student's experience, and solve most of the problem.

² <https://nau.edu/university-policy-library/academic-credit/> See Policy.B.

[6] Course Repeat, Graduate (Grade Replacement) Policy - Appendix B

Current Policy ³ (100318):

“Graduate students do not normally repeat courses. However, if a grade of “C”, “D”, or “F” is received in a graduate course, students may repeat that course with advisor approval.

*Courses repeated under the regular grading scale **do not** replace the grade for the prior course, and both grades are used in the computation of the cumulative grade point average (GPA).*

*Courses repeated under the P/F grading scale **do** replace the grade for the prior course, and only the repeated course grade will be used in the computation of the cumulative GPA.*

Units earned for repeated courses may only be used once to fulfill graduation requirements.”

Interaction with the Academic Integrity Policy ⁴ (100601):

Discussion of this topic in November illuminated the concern of the interaction of the [Graduate] Course Repeat Policy with the Academic Integrity Policy. If the current policy stands as is, then a student could retake the course in question (assuming advisor approval) and the earlier grade would still stand on the transcript, and impact the student’s GPA as such.

If the policy were changed as follows, then the earlier grade attached to the Academic Integrity Violation would not be counted towards the student’s GPA, but would remain on the transcript none-the-less.

“Graduate students do not normally repeat courses. However, if a grade of “C”, “D”, or “F” is received in a graduate course, students may repeat that course with advisor approval.

~~*Courses repeated under the regular grading scale **do not** replace the grade for the prior course, and both grades are used in the computation of the cumulative grade point average (GPA).*~~

Courses repeated under the regular grading scale [would appear on the transcript, but only the higher of the two grades will be considered in calculation of the GPA.]

³ <https://www9.nau.edu/policies/Client/Details/519>

⁴ <https://www9.nau.edu/policies/Client/Details/1443>

*Courses repeated under the P/F grading scale **do** replace the grade for the prior course, and only the repeated course grade will be used in the computation of the cumulative GPA.*

Units earned for repeated courses may only be used once to fulfill graduation requirements.”

Consider:

- Does it make sense to penalize those who are doing poorly, prohibiting them from replacing a poor grade and reducing their ability to succeed when on an academic improvement plan, because we are concerned that other students may not retain an F that was from an academic integrity violation in their GPA?

Committee Member Proposed Constraints

- Allow a cap of 6 credit hour replacement in the total [graduate] career.
- Enforce that a grade replacement cannot happen with an academic integrity violation attached to that course.
 - Students can still retake a class, but both grades factor into the GPA.

Is it Appropriate to Mix These Policies?

Consider:

- An F from an academic integrity violation is assigned for a specific term.
- When an undergraduate student replaces an F or D grade, the older grade remains on record (the transcript), and only the new grade is factored into the GPA.
- An awarded F in a course in response to an academic integrity violation does not outright prevent an undergraduate student from ever taking the course again.
 - If that is the intention, then should such a penalty be defined in the academic integrity policy and be part of that process?
 - In response to an academic integrity violation in a course, do we want to prevent students from ever taking a course again?
 - In response to multiple violations, does it make sense to prohibit a student from taking courses in a program for either a definite or indefinite period? (the current Academic Integrity Policy has provisions for this)
- The only transcripts that reflect a clear and delineated record of academic integrity violation are those where the student has been expelled from the institution. These cases are rare and truly egregious.