

SPECIAL REPORT
of the
ACADEMIC MATTERS COUNCIL
concerning
CHANGES TO THE REPEATED COURSES POLICY

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1. Background

The Academic Matters Council recommended that the AMC Policy Subcommittee review the current university policy on repeated courses. There were two reasons for this review. The first was the persistent and valid criticism of students, faculty, academic deans and advisors that the current policy was confusing and very difficult to interpret (see Appendix 1).

The second reason concerns new compliance requirements in the Federal Higher Education Equal Opportunity Act (HEOA) legislation that was passed in 2008. Effective in Fall 2010 there are new compliance regulations on how repeated courses affect students' eligibility for Title IV financial aid. In brief, a student can now only include repeated credits towards their full time status for financial aid purposes (12 credits) **ONCE** when they repeat a course that they previously received a passing grade in the class (i.e., higher than an F – See Appendix 2 for examples). Many of our peer institutions have already clarified their class repeat policies because of the new compliance legislation.

2. Analysis

The Registrar's office analyzed all the repeated courses from Fall 2006 through Spring 2011 and compared it to the current policy. The first thing that was noted that the "five courses rule" on repeats was unnecessary. The analysis showed that the majority of the "beyond five" were for students who were part of Fresh Start and they are already monitored by the Registrar's office.

Over the 10 semesters, the average number of extra repeat attempts (taking a course a fourth time after an initial attempt and two repeats) per semester was 160 out of a total term repeat average of 827. From this analysis, it was clear that the policy should be simplified so faculty can best advise students who do need to repeat a course.

3. Recommendation

The new policy preserves the essentials of the current process, eliminates the unnecessary "five courses rule," clarifies the grade substitution process and will support faculty and advisors to make the best decision with the student for their academic requirements. The course substitution policy is the same, but will be set apart from the body of the repeated course policy.

New Repeated Course Policy

No course for which a grade of C or higher was earned may be repeated. A course for which a grade of C-, D+, D or F (or CD before 2004) was earned may be repeated one time without permission. A course may be repeated a second time, for a total of three times, only with prior permission of the undergraduate dean of the school or college in which the student is enrolled. Under no circumstances may a student take a course more than three times. Successful registration for a course does not constitute permission.

All enrollments and all grades will appear on the transcript, but the last grade will be calculated in the GPA unless the dean files an appeal with the Registrar.

Repeating a UMass Amherst course at another of the Five Colleges, at another campus of the University of Massachusetts, or at any other institution will not result in grade substitution.

If an academic honesty sanction has been imposed, the grade specified in the sanction will always be calculated in the GPA.

NOTE: Repeating a course can have **negative consequences**. For example, if a passing grade of C-, D+ or D (or CD before 2004) was received in the first enrollment, but a failing grade is received when the course is repeated, no credit would be earned for either attempt. Repeating a previously passed course may also have an effect on financial aid eligibility. Students considering repeating previously passed courses should consult their academic advisors and Financial Aid staff.

Course Substitution Policy

A student may propose a substitution for a required course. The course content of the proposed substitute must be **substantially similar** to that of the original required course. A proposal for substitution must be endorsed by the undergraduate dean of the school or college in which the student is enrolled and is subject to final approval by the Registrar.

MOVED: That the Faculty Senate approve the Changes to the Repeated Courses Policy, as
43-12 presented in Sen. Doc. No. 12-032.

Appendix 1. Current Repeated Courses Policy

Students may repeat courses, taken before Fall 2004, in which they have earned grades of CD, D or F. Students may repeat courses, taken in Fall 2004 and later, in which they earn grades of C-, D+, D, or F. In the first five courses repeated, the second grade earned will be automatically substituted for the first (see number 1 below). A student who has repeated fewer than five courses and wishes to repeat a course without grade substitution must notify the Registrar's Office of this intent within the Add/Drop period of the semester in which the course is repeated. If the student withdraws from the second enrollment, the second enrollment will not count as a course repetition.

1. **Grade Substitution:** For the first five courses which a student repeats, the second course grade earned will be substituted for the first grade earned. The credits attempted and grade earned in the repeated enrollment will be used for determination of credit earned toward satisfaction of graduation requirements and in the calculation of the grade point average. The grade earned in the first enrollment will remain noted on the student's transcript, as will the original notations regarding the student's academic status, but will not affect the student's cumulative grade point average.
 - (a) If a student originally passes a course with a grade of C-, CD, D+ or D, and fails the course on a repeated enrollment, the student will lose the credit previously earned toward graduation requirements (including degree credit, and satisfaction of General Education, college, or major requirements).
 - (b) Grade substitution is automatic only with one repeat per course. Grade substitution for a third or subsequent enrollment in a course requires permission of the undergraduate dean.
 - (c) A student's undergraduate dean may recommend the replacement of an original course with a different course, as long as the course content is substantially similar to the original course. The request is then submitted to the Registrar's Office for final approval.
 - (d) Grade substitution is available only for repeated enrollment on the UMass Amherst campus. Repeating a UMass Amherst course at another of the Five Colleges, at another campus of the University, or at any other institution will not result in grade substitution.
 - (e) The grade substitution option became effective in fall 1993, and cannot be retroactively applied to courses repeated prior to that semester.
2. **Courses that are repeated without grade substitution:** Credits attempted and grades earned in both enrollments of a repeated course will be included in the computation of the student's semester and cumulative grade point averages. Degree credit will be awarded only once. This applies to any repeated courses beyond five, any course repeated more than once without approval, and any course intentionally repeated without grade substitution.
3. A course in which a student earns a grade of C or higher may not be repeated for either credits or a grade. In unusual circumstances, students who re-enter after an extended period may, with the approval of an undergraduate dean, repeat courses originally graded C or better and receive a grade but no further graduation credit.
4. A course in which a student has an academic dishonesty sanction may not be repeated for grade forgiveness.

Appendix 2. Examples of HEOA Repeat Compliance on Financial Aid

Ex 1	F	D	C-	DONE	
Ex 2	D	F	DONE		
Ex 3	F	F	D	D	DONE

DONE = Repeated course no longer counts for full-time status for Title IV Financial Aid