

To: UMD Senate Executive Committee

From: Educational Affairs Committee
Neil V. Blough, Chair

RE: Review of the University's Final Exam Policy

Date: 12/7/09

On September 3, 2009, the Senate Executive Committee charged the Senate Educational Affairs Committee to review the University's Final Exam Policy. Under current policy guidelines, "students whose class schedule requires them to take more than three final examinations on the same day have the right to reschedule examinations so they have no more than three on a given day." Based on information provided to the committee by the Registrar, the current policy affects approximately 31 students each semester, only ~ 0.1% of the total student population. Changing this policy to read "no more than two final examinations on the given day" would increase the number of affected students by approximately 30- to 40-fold (~1000 to 1200 students), but this population still represents a very small percentage of the total student body (~3.2%). It was the consensus of the committee that taking more than two exams on a given day is particularly taxing to the students and that their performance on exams in this situation may not adequately reflect their knowledge of the subject material. Further, it was the view of the committee that current university policies on rescheduling final exams are, for the most part (see below), well delineated (Sections 3-5 within the University Policy with Regard to Final Examinations) and should provide the framework necessary for accommodating this small population of additional students without the need for the Registrar to extend the final exam period. In summary, the committee felt that the best interests of the students superseded the possible additional burden that might be placed on the faculty due to implementation of this policy change.

Recommendation 1:

The committee recommends that the current University Policy with Regard to Final Examinations be changed to read: "Students whose class schedule requires them to take more than two final examinations on the same day have the right to reschedule examinations so they have no more than two on a given day."

Although students are strongly encouraged to check the final exam schedule before registering for courses (both in the University Registration Guide and University Policy with Regard to Final Examinations), the committee noted that it may not be evident to students at the time of registration that their schedule will require them to take more than two final exams on the same day. In some instances, it appears that final exam dates are

not finalized until after the drop period. Thus, the committee also recommends that the following policies be instituted:

Recommendation 2:

The committee recommends that the final exam schedule, as much as possible, be set by the Registrar at the time of registration, and further, that conflicts (more than two final exams on a given day) be flagged during the registration process so that students (and their advisors) are made fully aware of these conflicts at the beginning of the semester. Students should be required to acknowledge conflicts at the time of registration and provide evidence that the conflict has been resolved prior to the add/drop period. Any course whose final exam is set after the add/drop period would be required to provide the make-up exam in the event of a conflict.

The committee also noted that the guidelines for determining the priority of the course providing the make-up exam under section 4 of the University Policy with Regard to Final Examinations could conflict. The committee thus recommends the following changes to this section:

Recommendation 3:

Under “The following guidelines may be used:” in section 4 of the University Policy with Regard to Final Examinations, the guideline “The smaller course should have the make-up exam” should be accorded first priority, whereas the guideline “The lower level course should have the make-up exam” should be accorded secondary priority.