



## University Senate TRANSMITTAL FORM

<b>Senate Document #:</b>	09-10-07
<b>PCC ID #:</b>	N/A
<b>Title:</b>	Review of the Final Exam Policy
<b>Presenter:</b>	Neil Blough, Chair of Senate Educational Affairs Committee
<b>Date of SEC Review:</b>	May 14, 2010
<b>Date of Senate Review:</b>	N/A
<b>Voting (highlight one):</b>	On resolutions or recommendations one by one, or In a single vote To endorse entire report
<b>Statement of Issue:</b>	There are a number of situations which may hinder students' ability to know their final exam schedule at the time of class registration, which may result in the scheduling of multiple final exams on the same day.
<b>Relevant Policy # &amp; URL:</b>	N/A
<b>Recommendation:</b>	Due to the potential situations that may preclude students from knowing their final exam schedule at the time of registration, particularly for those students in the sciences, who expressed the highest levels of stress associated with too many exams on one day, the committee makes six recommendations for administrative action, all of which are listed in the attached report.
<b>Committee Work:</b>	<p>In 2002, the Senate Academic Procedures and Standards (APAS) Committee recommended that a change be made to the Undergraduate Catalog which would allow students whose class schedule requires them to take more than three final exams on the same day have the right to reschedule exams so they have no more than three on a given day. In subsequent years, the Office of the Registrar has conducted reviews regarding whether this practice is useful, or whether the total number of applicable final exams scheduled on the same day should be reduced from three to two.</p> <p>At the beginning of the Fall 2009 Semester, the Senate Educational Affairs Committee was charged with reviewing whether students should have the right to reschedule their final</p>

	<p>exams if they have more than two on the same day. Following review, the Committee submitted a report to the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) in December 2009. The SEC sent the report back to the Committee, in light of new background documents, with a revised charge. The 2009-2010 Educational Affairs Committee continued to research and review the issue of students having multiple final exams scheduled on the same day.</p> <p>The Educational Affairs Committee reviewed data and statistics provided by the Office of the Registrar, as well as met with representatives of the Office of the Registrar and the Office of the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost during the course of its review.</p> <p>At its meeting on April 20, 2010, the Educational Affairs Committee voted in favor of putting forth the attached recommendations. The Committee also voted in favor of creating and disseminating an electronic survey to students with three or more final exams scheduled on the same day during the 2009-2010 Final Exam Week. The data collected from this survey will help the committee to further assess the scope of any potential issues that may exist. The Committee plans to highlight this work in its Annual Report, and continue to examine this topic during the 2010-2011 academic year. After the survey is evaluated, the committee will consider whether additional action is needed to minimize the number of students who have three or more exams in one day.</p>
<b>Alternatives:</b>	Alternate administrators/administrative units could be identified as appropriate in order to carry out these recommendations.
<b>Risks:</b>	There are no associated risks.
<b>Financial Implications:</b>	There are no financial implications.
<b>Further Approvals Required:</b> <i>(*Important for PCC Items)</i>	N/A

## Senate Educational Affairs

### Recommendations Regarding Final Exams

E. Beise, April 20, 2010

While the majority of classes have fixed final exam schedules, thus allowing students to avoid taking multiple exams on the same day, if they so choose, the following situations foil the possibility for students to know their exam schedule at the time of registration.

- 1) The final exam time is theoretically known, but the instructor selects to move the final to another time without informing the Registrar's office. Likewise, some instructors cancel the exam, give a take-home exam, or assign some other culminating project; however, these actions should not affect the likelihood of a student taking multiple exams on the same day.
- 2) The course is designated "non-standard", meaning that it meets at a time that does not allow for fitting it into the standardized exam schedule. Some of these courses have schedules that are known at the start of the registration period for a given semester, but the exam schedule and room is not set until the final enrollment is known in order to optimize the match between enrollment and room size.
- 3) The course is not designated as "non-standard" at the time of registration, but the department and college have approved the schedule change upon the instructor's request and ask the Registrar's office to change the meeting time. If the class time is changed from a "standard" time to a "non-standard" time, the information about what would have been the "standard" exam time is lost, so there is no way to impose that the final exam be held during the original slot.

In Fall 2009, 417 sections (361 instructors and 9148 seats) had "non-standard" times (out of about 6000 sections). Analyses conducted by the Registrar's Office suggest that many of these courses/sections were not likely to have had final exams. Furthermore, many were graduate courses, where the issue of moving the final exam has a much smaller impact, since graduate students are much more likely to have all of their courses in a single department or program. The analysis here focuses only on undergraduate courses, and removes all courses that appear to be the following type: research, independent study, seminars, colloquia, and all courses with fewer than 3 credits. The number of "non-standard" sections in this group was 135 (125 instructors and 4228 seats). The two tables below indicate the distribution by course level and by college.

level	#courses	# sections	# seats
100	6	7	918
200	18	22	730
300	37	44	1112
400	57	63	1468
total	118	136	4228

college	# courses	# sections	# seats
AGNR	4	4	132
ARCH	3	3	194
ARHU	28	29	800
BMGT	1	1	12
BSOS	13	15	990
CLFS	1	1	15
CMPS	3	3	60
EDUC	38	48	1,230
ENGR	6	8	268
JOUR	10	13	178
SPHL	7	7	277
UGST	4	4	72
total	118	136	4,228

There are a couple of points to note:

- The majority of “non-standard” courses (but not seats) are at the 300-400 level. Of 918 seats offered at the 100 level, three courses accounted for the majority of the enrollment: CCJS 100 (417 seats), HIST 156 (140 seats) and HIST 157 (237 seats). These are very popular courses so it may be of interest to further explore why these are in this “non-standard” category. For example, CCJS100 uses online tools for one of its three class hours and that may be why. Of the 200-level courses, almost half the enrollment was in two courses: CCJS230, which has one section that meets only once per week, and ARCH225, which meets TuTh 9-10:15, whereas the “standard” time is 9:30-10:45.
- Very few “non-standard” courses are in the science colleges, which is where students had indicated a high level of stress related to more than two exams in one day. Therefore, students with heavy course loads in the sciences can for the most part know their exam schedule at the time of registration. On the other hand, because the science and engineering courses tend to be highly sequential, students may not have complete freedom in formulating their class schedule each semester. This may warrant further analysis. The 4 “non-standard” courses in CLFS and CMPS are upper-level majors-only courses with relatively low enrollments: GEOL393 (Technical Writing in the Geosciences, 6 seats), BSCI426 (Membrane Biophysics, 15 seats), MATH340 (Multivariable Calculus, etc., Honors, 17 seats), and PHYS410 (Mechanics, 37 seats).
- Three colleges account for the majority of the seats with non-standard meeting times. Further analysis would be of interest to know how many of these courses have a final exam vs. how many have a final paper or other culminating project. All of the EDUC courses are at the 300+ level, for example.

It thus seems to be the case that these “non-standard” classes are not, for the most part, precluding students from knowing their exam schedule at the time of registration, particularly for

those students in the sciences, who expressed the highest levels of stress associated with too many exams in one day.

Based on these analyses and assumptions, the Senate Educational Affairs Committee makes the following recommendations:

- The Provost's office will remind Deans to insist that their faculty inform both the Registrar's office and their Chairs and Deans if they do not intend to hold a final exam. There is already a policy in the Undergraduate Catalog that the requirement to give a final exam can be waived by prior written approval of the Chair, Director, or Dean.
- Instructors with "non-standard" final exam times should be prepared to reschedule exams for students with more than two exams in one day. Department chairs and scheduling officers should take responsibility for informing instructors of this.
- Other than the "non-standard" classes, students should be advised check their final exam schedule at the time of registration. If they do not wish to have 3 exams in one day they should adjust their schedule accordingly. They will be informed that if they register with a schedule that would require three "standard time" exams in one day, their instructors will not be obligated to accommodate them.
- The committee recognizes that some students may not have enough choice in their schedules to avoid 3 exams in one day, and is working on a survey to collect information as to how many students actually consider the final exam schedule when selecting classes, how many could avoid the situation through alternate selection of courses, or how many choose to ignore the exam schedule when selection courses. After the survey is evaluated the committee will consider whether additional action is needed to minimize the number of students who have three or more exams in one day.
- The Registrar's office will add a statement to the checklist in the MyUM Portal to remind students to check their final exam schedule at the time of registration. The Registrar's office will include a statement in the registration invitation letter encouraging students to review the final exam schedule at time of registration.
- Although the Registrar's office could modify the registration tools so that a student's proposed schedule would be flagged with an "instant alert" if more than two exams are scheduled on the same day, because the drop/add course selection system and the final exam scheduling system are not presently linked, this would require some non-trivial programming to pull information from more than one system. In light of the fact that the new KUALI system is expected to solve this problem, we don't recommend that this additional programming be done for the current system but recommend that it be incorporated into the new registration system that will be released with KUALI.

**Report Appendices** – Survey Questions, Response from Executive Committee, Initial Report of Educational Affairs Committee, Original Charge from Senate Chair Elise Miller-Hooks

**Survey for students having 3 or more final exams scheduled for the same day during  
Finals Week Spring 2010:**

1. What is the college of your major? (drop down menu)
  - College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
  - School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation
  - College of Arts and Humanities
  - College of Behavioral and Social Sciences
  - Robert H. Smith School of Business
  - College of Chemical and Life Sciences
  - College of Computer, Mathematical and Physical Sciences
  - College of Education
  - A. James Clark School of Engineering
  - The Graduate School
  - Philip Merrill College of Journalism
  - College of Information Studies
  - School of Public Health
  - School of Public Policy
  - Office of Undergraduate Studies
  
2. What is your academic status?
  - Freshman
  - Sophomore
  - Junior
  - Senior
  - Graduate Student
  
3. What is the greatest number of exams you have scheduled on one day during this Spring 2010 finals period?
  - <2
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - >4
  
4. How many credits do you have in your course schedule this semester?
  - <12
  - 12-15
  - 16-20
  - >20
  
5. When did you become aware that your exam schedule included 3 or more exams scheduled for one day? (select as many as apply)
  - I looked at the schedule when I signed up for classes
  - I received an email from the Registrar's Office telling me that I have three or more exams scheduled on one day
  - I looked at the schedule of classes during the semester
  - My professors told me the exam times and dates before the drop/add deadline
  - My professors told me the exam times and dates after the drop/add deadline
  - I intentionally scheduled my exams this way

6. Which of the following best describes the reason that you have 3 or more exams on any one day?
- I had to select a course schedule that resulted in 3 exams on one day because of my major/minor requirements
  - I chose one or more electives that resulted in my having 3 exams on one day
  - One of my courses is scheduled at a non-standard time and I did not know when the exam would be when I registered
  - The date was changed because it conflicted with a religious observance
  - I got permission to change the date/time of my exam because of a personal conflict

7. Do you anticipate that having to take 3 or more exams in one day will affect you or, if you have already taken your exams, did it affect you? (select as many as apply)

- Yes, my ability to adequately prepare will be/was affected
- Yes, my ability to remain focused and perform to the best of my ability will be/was affected
- Yes, I will be/was affected, but taking 3 or more exams on one day is my choice
- No, it will have/had no effect

8. Did you ask to reschedule an exam in order to reduce the number of your exams on that day?

- Yes, I spoke to my professors about rearranging my exams
- Yes, I spoke to other administrators about rearranging my exams
- No, I plan to take the exams/I took the exams on the same day

8. b. If you responded 'yes' to Question 8, what was the result? (text field for comment)

9. The current practice at the University is that students who have 4 or more final exams on the same day may reschedule their exams so that they have no more than 3 on a given day. Would you take advantage of a change that allowed students to reschedule their exams if they have 3 or more on the same day?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

10. If you responded 'yes' to Question 9, would your answer stay the same if it meant that you might have to reschedule your exams during the conflict resolution period on the last day of exams?

- Yes
- No

11. If you responded 'yes' to Question 9, would your answer stay the same if it meant that Study Day would be eliminated in order to be used as an extra day of examination?

- Yes
- No

Please feel free to share any additional comments (text field)




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Date: January 21, 2010

To: Neil Blough  
Chair, Educational Affairs

From: Elise Miller-Hooks   
Chair, Senate Executive Committee

Subject: Review of the Final Exam Policy 09-10-07

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) reviewed your report, "Review of the Final Exam Policy 09-10-07," at its January 19, 2010 meeting. The SEC would like to thank the Educational Affairs Committee for its time and effort expended in responding to the charge.

In the course of reviewing the Committee's report, it was discovered that there is no existing final exam policy at the University. Thus, the recommendation for a change to an existing policy would, in effect, be a recommendation for a change merely to a practice. The SEC recommends that the Committee reconsider this issue. In its deliberations, it would be useful for the Committee to first evaluate whether or not an official final exam policy should be created. If the committee decides that a new policy is needed, it should then decide whether there should be a limit of no more than two or three final exams in one day.

The SEC requests that the Committee review past legislation and supporting documentation before reaching a decision on whether or not a new policy is needed and if any changes in practice would be warranted. Documents to consider include, but are not limited to: Review the Scheduling of Final Examinations (Senate Doc# 01-02-04), the Registrar's review from 2005, Exam Schedule Effectiveness from the Registrar's Office and any statistics available from the Registrar. Additionally, the SEC feels that the committee should meet with some of the university's administrators who are responsible for implementing the policy, including administrators from the Offices of the Registrar, Academic Affairs and Undergraduate Studies, in the course of your deliberations.

If creation of a new policy is recommended, the policy should be drafted and vetted with the University's Legal Office and those who would be responsible for its implementation mentioned above. Note that necessary changes to the Faculty Handbook, Undergraduate Catalog and Schedule of Classes follow new policy implementation and fall outside the purview of this committee.

We look forward to your revised report on this issue. If you have any questions, please contact Reka Montfort in the Senate Office ([reka@umd.edu](mailto:reka@umd.edu) or x55804).

Attachments

Cc: Chelsea Benincasa



Appendix Three - Initial Report of  
the Educational Affairs Committee

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.**



**University Senate  
CHARGE**

<b>Date:</b>	September 3, 2009
<b>To:</b>	Neil Blough Chair, Educational Affairs Committee
<b>From:</b>	Elise Miller-Hooks Chair, University Senate 
<b>Subject:</b>	Review of the Final Exam Policy
<b>Senate Document #:</b>	09-10-07
<b>Deadline:</b>	December 11, 2009

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) requests that the Educational Affairs Committee review the University's Final Exam Policy. The 2008-2009 Educational Affairs Committee has considered the impact of the current final exam policy on undergraduate students. Under the University's Examination and Course Assessment Guidelines, (found at <http://www.faculty.umd.edu/teach/examination.html>) "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." According to the Office of the Registrar, approximately 1,000 out of the 25,000 undergraduates at the University are confronted with this situation each semester. While this number does not represent the overwhelming majority of undergraduate students, it is significant and merits further attention.

The SEC requests that the committee investigate this issue to determine if the current exam policy should be revised to allow rescheduling of final examinations if a student has more than two on the same day.

We ask that you submit your report and recommendations to the Senate Office no later than **December 11, 2009**. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Reka Montfort in the Senate Office, extension 5-5804.