

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON CURRICULUM (UCOC)

MINUTES

December 2, 2015

2:00-3:30 pm

****HOH 706****

I. UCOC October 2015 Minutes

- Attachment: UCOC October 2015 Minutes (Note: no November meeting)

→APPROVED

II. NEW BUSINESS

A. Final Examination Policy

The following questions about the final exam policy have arisen in the past month:

1. “For (a) undergrads and (b) grads, can a final exam or final assignment be due on the 15th week of class? If yes, is the expectation that the class will still meet during exam week? And if so, are there any parameters on the types of activities that can take place in that class meeting during exam week?”
2. “... is it ok not to give a final examination at all? You cannot reschedule it, or substitute an exam given the last day of class, but do you need to have a final exam? This comes up when we orient our new faculty. We’ve been telling them that it is not ok to teach an undergraduate course and not have a final exam, and that they have to meet their students at the appointed final exam time. But this policy is silent about whether a final exam is even necessary. Can a final be skipped entirely?”

The Curriculum Coordination Office (CCO) has followed the unwritten rule that has been passed down over time: Undergraduate courses need to have a final (paper, exam, presentation, etc.) on the University-scheduled final exam day and time. Graduate courses may have the final on the scheduled final exam day and time, or week 15 (the last scheduled class). All courses must have some sort of final: exam, paper, presentation, project, etc.

This rule however is nowhere explicitly stated. It is only implied by the omission in Appendix N of the Curriculum Handbook: “Undergraduate courses have a final exam given or project due on the scheduled date of the final exam.”

The above unwritten rule came under the Registrar’s scrutiny when dealing with an exception to final exam time and date. Registrar Frank Chang said that graduate courses need to follow the same formula as undergraduates, otherwise contact hours are low.

Per Chang:

“Department of Education regulations say that all students (graduate students included) must have instructional contact through the end of the semester as defined on the Academic Calendar page (<http://academics.usc.edu>). If graduate students do not meet with the professor during finals week, the semester is cut one week short, which violates our academic calendar commitment.”

For UCOC’s consideration and discussion.

DISCUSSED, UCOC members agreed that in general professors know that there are to be fifteen weeks of instruction, with an exam, or final summative experience, due on the scheduled final exam date and time.

Kristine Moe mentioned that the issue was driven by Financial Aid concerns. Chair Tom Cummings said that the issue was important not because of Financial Aid concerns, but because professors do not want to short change students on contact time.

Questions arose: Should a mid-term then not considered “instruction time”? What about summer, half-semester, and online courses that do not have a university scheduled final exam? If the final is a paper, may it be handed in before the time of the scheduled final exam? If the final is a paper, must student and instructor meet during the scheduled final exam time? And—should a final or summative experience, be required of every class?

Robin Romans said that all that the Department of Education requires is that the University has, and follows, a consistent policy.

In regard to point 1, Chair Tom Cummings asked that language be drafted by Robert Morley to clarify the requirements of both undergraduate and graduate courses, in terms of instruction time and final exams, for review and vote by UCOC members in January.

In regard to point 2, UCOC members generally questioned why the University should dictate if an exam or summative experience is required of a course or not. Moe said that she would review the Curriculum Handbook and highlight the current language in regard to final examinations and/or summative experiences for UCOC Members review and consideration at the next UCOC meeting.

B. Tutorials FREN 012, FREN 015 and ITAL 012 (Brian Head, Arts and Humanities Subcommittee Chair)

Brian Head would like for UCOC members to consider the merit of tutorials. Is it okay to expect students to enroll in and pay for a tutorial course for no major or degree credit when they are struggling with the content of the main course?

DISCUSSED, UCOC members reviewed the French and Italian tutorials. Concern was expressed that students be forced into an additional two-unit course at significant cost, three weeks into the semester, when students realize they are falling behind. Members felt that the course content should be covered in such a way that this tutorial is not needed. Alternately, if support is needed, does the school not offering tutoring? And/or, wouldn’t an outside tutoring service be more cost-effective?

UCOC member requested that Kristine Moe research how many of these tutorials already exist at the University. Are students required to take the course from the beginning, or when they are deemed not to be progressing to the professor’s, liking? Or is this a student election? UCOC asked Moe to gather the details by the next UCOC meeting on January 13, 2016.

C. Review of Curriculum Deadlines (Kristine Moe, Curriculum Coordinator)

Kristine Moe would like UCOC members to consider the positive and negative consequences of later, and increasing flexible, curriculum revision deadlines over the past four years. Should deadlines be set (and upheld) earlier to ensure system integrity and that students are forewarned that program changes are planned?

DISCUSSED, Kristine Moe explained that although the new Curriculum and Catalogue Management system is very flexible and can be updated at a moment's notice, the systems they support are not as flexible. Revisions are now coming in well after courses have been scheduled and students registered. Programs for the upcoming fall are being revised potentially after students have been admitted. The later deadlines and increased flexibility were offered as a service to the schools, but are they, the students, being better served?

UCOC members suggested Moe present an alternate, earlier deadline proposal for their review.

IV. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. UCOC Outreach

Invitations were sent out to curriculum deans for members of their schools to meet with their respective UCOC subcommittee chair and Kristine Moe as part of the yearly UCOC outreach effort. Meetings are currently being set up for December.

B. Program Specialist Opening in the Curriculum Coordination Office (CCO)

Doug Bureson will join Dornsife College as the Graduate Programs Manager in the Department of Biological Sciences on January 16. The Office of Academic Records and Registrar will post the Curriculum Analyst (Program Specialist) position in the upcoming week. UCOC members are asked to forward recommendations of good, potential candidates to Kristine Moe.

C. Status of Curriculum and Catalogue Management System

D. GE Memos – New GE Designation to be Added to Existing and New Courses

- *Attachments:*

- o *UCOC GE Memo, October 27, 2015,*
- o *UCOC GE Memo, November 6, 2015,*
- o *UCOC GE Memo, November 10, 2015,*
- o *UCOC GE Memo, November 17, 2015*

Members present

Diane Badame
Steven Bucher
Thomas Cummings (Chair)
Brian Head
Susan Metros
Kristine Moe (Support Staff)
Robert Morley
Robin Romans
Geoffrey Shiflett

Members absent

Judy Garner

Guests