

DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

**PROPOSAL TO ALLOW “APPROPRIATE ASSOCIATE DEAN” AS SIGNATORY ON
SIGNIFICANT COURSE RECORD CHANGES AS APPROVED BY THE EDUCATIONAL POLICY
COMMITTEE**

On behalf of the Educational Policy Committee, Professor Randy Bomer (committee chair, educational administration) submitted the following proposal to allow “appropriate associate dean” as signatory on significant course record changes in the *General Information* catalog. On October 6, 2015, the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) approved the proposal. The secretary has classified this proposal as legislation of general interest. Final approval resides with the president with formal notification to UT System.

If no objection is filed with the Office of the General Faculty by the date specified below, the legislation will be held to have been approved by the Faculty Council. If an objection is filed within the prescribed period, the legislation will be presented to the Faculty Council at its next meeting. The objection, with reasons, must be signed by a member of the Faculty Council.

To be counted, a protest must be received in the Office of the General Faculty by November 13, 2015.



Hillary Hart, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council

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Background

A few years ago, UT changed the GIC in several places to require the in-person signature (also called a “wet signature”) of a college or school dean. These requirements all concerned instances in which a student’s record of coursework would be retroactively altered in ways that reflected exceptions to standard practice: a student added a class for a previous semester (e.g., the work was done, but the course did not appear on the record), retroactively withdrew for a term (usually students must withdraw during the semester), was allowed to drop a specific course after it was completed (a so-called “delete drop”), or the student’s final grade was changed after a traditional deadline (a single prior long-semester) had passed. The aim of requiring a dean’s signature in these events was to signal the significance of altering what is usually a finalized academic record, to ensure that those with the highest authority in the college had oversight over these events, and thereby to ensure some measure of consistency in permitting these exceptions. In one sense, these instances are, by definition, low-frequency (because they represent approved exceptions to standard practices); however, particularly in the largest colleges at UT, they are not necessarily rare. The Dean of Natural Sciences, for example, reported recently to the Policy Implementation Group (a Provost’s committee tasked with examining the GIC for effectiveness) that she routinely signs several of these forms weekly or monthly.

Rationale for current proposal

Although the above aims are still relevant and these exceptional events should have authoritative oversight within a college/school, an unfortunate fact of the current wet-signature requirement is that the dean of a school or college (particularly in larger-sized colleges) often has little first-hand knowledge of the events in question, meaning that the current lone allowable signatory frequently “approves” something about which, in fact, he or she knows little. In many instances, these appeals and exceptional cases have been handled and reviewed by the appropriate associate dean for the school or college (e.g., the associate dean for academic affairs, for student services, for undergraduate education, etc.). The proposed legislation is designed to permit the appropriate associate dean to provide the wet signature in these instances. The proposal specifies the “appropriate associate dean” as the sole alternative because a broader alternative (e.g., “a person designated by the dean”) would undermine the intent of the original legislation, which sought to concentrate power over exceptional changes to the academic record into very few hands. The exact change to the four sections of the GIC at issue is highlighted below.

Adding a Class

(see: <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/adding-and-dropping-classes/adding-a-class/>)

The addition of a class is governed by the following requirements: (1) the student must obtain all required approvals; (2) the student must be eligible to take the class; (3) there must be space available in the class; and (4) the student must remain in conformity with the Quantity of Work Rule.

Subject to these requirements, a registered student may add a class through the twelfth class day of a long-session semester or the fourth class day of a summer term. Through the fourth class day of the semester or the second class day of the summer term, the approval of the chair of the department offering the class may be required; after these dates, the approval of the chair is required for undergraduates; for graduate students, the approval of the instructor, the graduate advisor, and the graduate dean is required. In some colleges and schools, the approval of the student’s advisor and college dean is also required. The student must consult the regulations of his or her college or school before adding a class.

Although a college or school may permit the addition of classes through the twelfth class day of a long-session semester or the fourth class day of a summer term, the student is expected to be settled in his or her classes by the fourth class day of the long-session semester or the second class day of the summer term. After the twelfth

class day of a long-session semester or the fourth class day of a summer term, with the approval of the student's dean and the chair of the department offering the class, a student may add a current or past semester class (either with or without a grade) only¹:

1. If there was a rare or extenuating circumstance such that the student was unable to attempt to register for the class during the regular registration or add/drop access periods; or
2. When evidence exists that the student made an unsuccessful attempt to register for the class using normal registration procedures and that space was available in the class at that time.

The addition of a class for a semester prior to the previous long semester must be signed by the dean or the appropriate associate dean of the college/school. For graduate students, this is the graduate dean or the associate dean for student services.

Withdrawal

(see: <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/withdrawal/>)

Retroactive withdrawal. A student who wishes to leave the University for nonacademic reasons is expected to withdraw by the last class day of the current semester as described above. Requests to withdraw after the last class day are considered only if the student was somehow unable to withdraw by that day. For example, students who were hospitalized or incarcerated, called away at the end of the semester because of a family crisis, asked to perform military service, or seriously debilitated by mental illness may be unable to withdraw by the last class day of the semester in which they are enrolled.

In these cases, students may discuss the situation with the dean or an academic advisor in the dean's office. If there is sufficient and compelling documentation, and if the request for retroactive withdrawal is submitted to the dean's office before the end of the next long-session semester, the dean or the dean's staff will review the request and consider approval of a retroactive withdrawal. Appropriate documentation could include written recommendations from University Health Services and the Counseling and Mental Health Center.

A college or school may approve an appeal for retroactive withdrawal for a semester prior to the previous long semester, but only for the most compelling nonacademic reasons. If approved, the appeal must be signed by the dean or the appropriate associate dean of the college/school.

Dropping a Class: Rules for Undergraduate Students

(See: <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/adding-and-dropping-classes/dropping-a-class-rules-for-undergraduate-students/>)

In general, an undergraduate may drop a class through midsemester in a long-session semester and through the last class day in a summer term. However, the student must meet the conditions described below and must abide by the Quantity of Work Rule. The dates of the deadlines discussed below are given in the Academic Calendar. Students considering dropping a course are encouraged to speak with the course's instructor to determine if options exist for completing the course.

In addition to other required approvals, international students must have the written consent of the International Office to drop a class.

On the recommendation of the instructor and with the approval of the student's academic dean, a student may be required to drop a class at any time because of neglect or lack of preparation. Delete drops (which remove all indications of the course registration from a student's academic record) may be requested only in the cases of University error or in response to rare and extenuating circumstances. The form requesting the delete drop must be signed by the dean or the appropriate associate dean of the college or school in which the student is enrolled.

Grades

(See: <http://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/evaluation/grades/>)

Letter grades are used to record the instructor's evaluation of students' performance in a course. The following grades are used: A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, and F.

the Program of Work for a graduate degree, a graduate student must earn a grade of at least *C*. More information about the Program of Work is given in the *Graduate Catalog*. In addition to earning adequate grades in courses, undergraduates must have a cumulative University grade point average of at least 2.00 to maintain satisfactory progress toward a degree; graduate students must maintain a graduate grade point average of at least 3.00. Information about these requirements is given in the section Scholastic Probation and Dismissal. Computation of the grade point average is explained in Computation of the Grade Point Average.

Grades are given by semester; however, in a course extending through two or three semesters, credit is not counted toward the degree until all semesters have been completed.

Members of the faculty are not authorized, without the academic dean's approval, to withhold a final grade or to defer reporting a final grade at the end of the semester other than by the use of the symbol *X*, described in Symbols. If a grade is withheld without the dean's approval, the grade may not be added to the official records later without the written approval of the academic dean. Issues involving withholding or deferring grades for graduate students are handled by the deans of the colleges and schools.

After a grade has been reported to the registrar, it may not be changed unless an error was made by the instructor. A college or school may approve an appeal for change of final grade for a semester prior to the previous long semester, but only for the most compelling nonacademic reasons. If approved, the appeal must be signed by the dean or the appropriate associate dean of the college/school. For graduate students, this is the graduate dean or the associate dean for student services.