

Academic Affairs Committee—October 10, 2017

Present: Russ Johnson, Sandy Maisel, Dale Kocevski, Katie Donihue, Adrienne Carmack, Sam Scott, Beth Schiller, Barbara Moore, Jim Sloat, Loren McClenahan

I. Minutes from the October 3, 2017 meeting were approved.

II. Consent agenda: course approvals

This item was deferred until the next meeting (October 24) as the course proposal subcommittee is still gathering additional information

III. Proposed changes to the major in Mathematical Sciences

A revised version of this proposal, which clarifies the language about the exclusion of 484 classes and about the groupings of required courses from which students choose, was presented to the committee. After a short discussion, the proposal was approved. It will now be introduced at the December faculty meeting.

IV. Final exam schedule

The committee discussed the new-ish final exam schedule (introduced in 2011-12), which includes three 4.5 hour exam blocks per day. This current schedule allows faculty to use a 3-hr final exam, with extra time built in for students who require a 1.5x time accommodation. Before 2011-12, final exam blocks were only 3 hours long, and 3 final exam periods could be scheduled per day without going into the evening.

There is not a clear consensus among all students about what the optimal exam schedule would be, but there does seem to be a preference for not adding more days onto the length of exam week. Many final exams are not actually 3 hours long, and thus do not require the full 4.5 exam block that we currently have. Also, many faculty members use the designated final exam period as a due date for a final paper, project, or take-home exam – and for those purposes the length of the exam period is not important. The committee decided to further explore the possibility of changing back to 2 hr final exams (with 3 hr exam time blocks).

The next step will be to gather more specific information about how many professors are giving final exams during their designated times, and how many of those exams actually require a full 4.5 hour time block. Russ will work on developing a suitable way to poll faculty members about this.

The committee also discussed the length of the reading period, which is currently 4 days (SSMT). It may be worth considering a 3-day reading period instead. As a start, Adrienne will informally poll students about this. It may be wise to follow that up with a more systematic survey.