

Academic Affairs Committee—March 20, 2018

Present: Sandy Maisel, Steve Saunders, Loren McClenahan, Katie Donahue, Dale Kocevski, Beth Schiller, Sam Scott, Jacob Adner, Russ Johnson, David Freidenreich

I. The minutes from the March 13, 2018 meeting were approved.

II. Consent agenda: five course proposals were approved

- A. Art 4xx (Intimate Things)
- B. Computer Science 342 (Embedded Systems)
- C. Psychology 2xx (Psychoneuroimmunology)
- D. Psychology 1xx (W1: The Worlds of Childhood)
- E. Writing Program 3xx (Professional Writing)

III. Small amendment to the Grading Guidelines Motion (motion #1)

Clarifying wording was added to prevent any ambiguity about where the guidelines, and their accompanying notes, should be published. The guidelines should be published in the Catalog, the Student Handbook, and the Faculty Handbook, while the “Notes” should be published only in the Faculty Handbook.

IV. Requirements for the Science, Technology, and Society minor

The STS program has proposed a second track for completing an STS minor, which is meant to appeal to students majoring in one of the natural sciences. After some discussion, the committee decided to send the proposal back to STS with a few requests for clarifications and revisions:

1. The minor includes just two designated STS classes. Is that sufficient to give a coherent STS framework to the minor?
2. Should the "two courses from the list of STS-approved courses" need to be outside of the student's major department?
3. The minor requires "three upper-level courses in natural sciences or mathematics". The term "upper level course" needs to be more clearly defined. Would you allow these courses to count toward the STS minor if they are also being used toward the student's major (double-counting)?
4. The AAC felt that it would be a good idea to highlight the rule (catalog, p17) that "a minor must include at least four courses in addition to courses taken to satisfy requirements for any other major or minor". Students in the STS track 2 could easily run afoul of that rule if they did not know about it.

V. “Incomplete” grades

Considering that we do not currently have any guidelines describing what reasons are valid for requesting (or granting) an Incomplete, the committee (in a continuation of discussion from the March 6 meeting) considered some possible new policies and practices:

1. Incompletes should be granted in cases of significant illness or critical emergency, and in general for circumstances that were out of the student's ability to predict or control. The Incomplete is not generally appropriate for situations where a student becomes overwhelmed with the academic workload due to poor time management.
2. The decision (by a course instructor) about granting an Incomplete should be done in consultation with the student's academic advisor and class dean.
3. The process of "creating" an Incomplete should begin with the student making an "Incomplete Request" (possibly at a designated web page). This would send a notice to the instructor, advisor, and class dean for consideration. Approval of the Incomplete request by the instructor and class dean would lead to assignment of the Incomplete grade. To account for situations where a student is too ill to even make a request, the class dean would also be able to initiate the process. Such a system would prevent instructors from reporting an Incomplete at the grade reporting stage in the absence of a request from the student and would facilitate consultation in the decision-making process.

While the committee felt comfortable with these general ideas, further discussion will be required around the practicality of implementing some of these measures. Such discussion will need to include Dean of Studies Barbara Moore.

VI. Announcements

It was announced that there will be no AAC meeting on either March 27 (because of spring break) or April 10 (because of the DC campaign launch).