

March 5, 2020

Richard Hughey, Vice Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Education
Office of the Chancellor

Re: Missing Grades and the 85% Threshold

Dear Richard,

The Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) discussed your letter to us in which you asked how the still missing grades for Fall 2019 can be handled, and what are the obligations of departments and instructors this regard. Although the percentage of grades still missing from Fall 2019 is small, we must accept that some grading materials in some courses may never be recovered.

In our recent letter to all department chairs, copied to you, CEP articulated the twin principles of maintaining academic standards in our courses and curricula, and providing students the education to which they are entitled, a corollary of which is providing them with grades for the courses they have completed. These principles are found in the following excerpt from Regents' Policy 2301:

Students who enroll on the campuses of the University of California are parties to a moral and contractual relationship in which the University, on its side, is **obligated to provide quality education, to recognize student achievement with grades and degrees** which have an accepted meaning for transfer to other institutions, for graduate work, and for careers. The Regents are responsible to the people, to the faculty, and to the students to see that the University is faithful to this contract. **They have the responsibility to see that the value of the diploma is not diluted, that it maintains its meaning to graduates and to future employers.** They are responsible to ensure that public confidence in the University is justified. And they are responsible to see that the University remain aloof from politics and never function as an instrument for the advance of partisan interest. Misuse of the classroom by, for example, allowing it to be used for political indoctrination, for purposes other than those for which the course was constituted, **or for providing grades without commensurate and appropriate student achievement, constitutes misuse of the University as an institution.** (Emphasis added.)

Keeping these principles in mind, it is permissible for instructors to:

- Assign grades based on the material that is already available to them if
 - the missing material is a small component of the course, without which the instructor believes that they can assess the student accurately¹; and if
 - the student consents to being graded on this basis.

¹ This could be, for example, one missing homework from a weekly sequence, or a few percentage points assigned to participation.

It is not permissible to overlook a missing final examination or an end of term assignment (e.g. a term paper) that has a weighting similar to what a final examination usually does.

- Assign P/NP grades, or letter grades without +/- modifiers, if
 - the instructor believes that they have sufficient information to assign such grades; and if
 - the student consents to being graded on this basis.
- Ask students who do not fit in the two categories above to take a new final examination or submit a new term paper to replace the missing material. Instructors should keep in mind that,
 - students may need time to refresh themselves about the content of the course, and may still not be able to do as well as they did at the end of the fall term;
 - the last few weeks of the winter term may not be the best time to do this; early in the spring term may be more suitable²;
 - in case of a replacement final examination, it may be necessary to offer more than one examination due to the variation of schedules of students who are missing grades.
- Assign Incomplete grades to students who are offered a reasonable opportunity to replace missing material but decline to do so. These grades can be converted until the end of Spring 2020. We recognize that this is not in strict conformity with Santa Cruz Divisional Regulation SCR 9.1.6, but the regulations clearly do not anticipate the situation we are in; we are invoking Santa Cruz Divisional Bylaws SCB 13.18.4 and 13.18.5.

All these actions are also permissible for the faculty mentors of Graduate Student Instructors.

The chair of the course sponsoring unit may reassign the grading of a course if an instructor (or faculty mentor) is not willing to do so. This has been the customary practice when an instructor is unavailable to grade a course, e.g. due to incapacity or separation from the university. Extending this practice to our present situation is reasonable. If the grading is reassigned, the conditions listed above still apply.

Although you did not ask us this question, we state that it is not permissible to assign an arbitrary grade to missing work in a course. Such an action is incompatible with Regents' Policy 2301, and inconsistent with the very basis of the university.

Turning to the specific questions you asked us:

1. *What is the obligation of a course sponsoring agency, typically a department, to ensure that all of its courses are taught and graded?*

² Some students may have a pressing need for fall grades, and want to complete the required work before the end of the winter term, in which case they should have the opportunity to do so.

It is the collective responsibility of the University to ensure this, under Regents' Policy 2301. CEP does not wish to go into who this responsibility is assigned to, especially in the context of recent administrative action (see the last paragraph of this letter).

2. *Can it be appropriate for a course sponsor to take over the grading of a course, and how?*
This has been addressed above.

3. *Is it appropriate for a student to petition CCI to award a grade in an ungraded class, or to provide a W or remove the class from the transcript, following [Appendix C](#).*

We believe that the process outlined above will make this question unnecessary.

4. *Outside of the grading deadline listed in the Academic and Administrative calendar, does CEP see there being any date after a term at which grades must be in place?*

We defer this question to later.

5. *If missing grades are "a new normal," should that campus restrict enrollment in subsequent courses should there be a missing grade in a prerequisite?*

At present, enrollment in subsequent courses is not restricted because of a missing grade. As pointed out in our previous letter to you, this is not consistent with the intention of Senate regulations. Nevertheless, CEP is leaving this unchanged.

6. *What level of flexibility might an instructor or course sponsor have in using incomplete information with respect to a syllabus' grading criteria?*

This is answered in the first bullet point above.

7. *Some temporary Pass (P) grades may not be replaced with letter grades. Should there be a transcript statement regarding missing and/or temporary P grades for students with these?*

Following the steps outlined above, we hope that no temporary Pass (P) grades will remain.

8. *Can an instructor or department offer an optional replacement final, for example, outside of the term, for students who might want a full assessment of their learning, beyond a temporary P grade or a grade set based on partial information?*

Not only can an instructor offer a replacement final, but in some situations this may be the only option.

9. *What academic policies should be adjusted with continuing absence of grades?*

We expect that all missing fall grades should be resolved by the end of the spring term at the latest. If there are any policies that you see as creating problems before then, please let us know; CEP can be flexible where it considers flexibility appropriate.

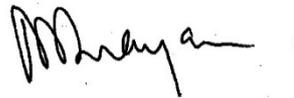
CEP requests the Chancellor and iCPEVC to provide resources — grading and proctoring support — to instructors who have to submit missing grades, instead of asking them to rely on departmental and divisional funds. This is clearly a situation that was not anticipated when departmental and divisional budgets were fixed. We consider the argument that instructors are responsible for submitting grades in their courses, and that they have to figure out how to do this without the usual support, to be facile and unrealistic.

CEP also unequivocally opposes the iCPEVC's decision to withhold Spring 2020 Academic Student Employee (ASE) appointments, at least temporarily, from academic units where more than 15% of Fall 2019 grades are still missing. We appreciate that the iCPEVC has modified an earlier more severe version of this decision, and that only a few academic units are now affected. However, this is precisely why the possible positive impact of this decision is very small, and far outweighed

by the uncertainty and distrust that it is causing among *all* academic units, even those that are not directly affected. We also find it strange to limit resources for the spring term, perhaps causing departments to reduce the availability of classes in the spring term, since this effectively penalizes undergraduates in the spring term for what they may have suffered in the fall.

As you know, departments and programs have worked hard to minimize the impact of the shortage of ASEs in the spring term; only a handful of units have a significant shortfall in seats available to undergraduate students. To announce this new decision after the recent non-reappointment of some ASEs for the spring term (leading to the natural conclusion that all other ASEs could be reappointed), after meetings with department chairs when this was not mentioned, and after course sponsoring units have set the capacity of their courses and enrollment has begun, can only be perceived as belatedly and unfairly changing the conditions under which departments are operating. It places CEP in a particularly false position because the positive way in which departments have handled spring enrollment may have come about, in part, because of our recent letter. We urge the central administration to reconsider and revoke its decision immediately — the longer it takes to do this, the greater will be the damage — so that we can all work together, mindful of the principles at the beginning of this letter, and aim for *all* Fall 2019 grades — not just 85% — to be submitted as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Onuttom Narayan, Chair
Committee on Educational Policy

cc: Cynthia Larive, Chancellor
Lori Kletzer, Interim Campus Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor
Kimberly Lau, Chair, Academic Senate
Lindsay Hinck, Chair, Committee on Courses of Instruction
Tchad Sanger, University Registrar
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