

## University Course Repeat Policy Proposal

Limit to three the number of times a student (degree-seeking or non-degree) may take any undergraduate course that is not repeatable for credit. Attempts beyond three require approval of the student's major academic advisor. Only graded attempts are counted; if students withdraw from a course, it is not counted as a graded attempt. Students who exhaust unit-level appeal processes may appeal to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education.

### Background and Context

The School of Business and the Volgenau School of Engineering have adopted course repeat policies that lead to termination from the major and/or school. Students are allowed three graded attempts. Beyond Business, Engineering, and the School of Music, there are no university-wide limits on how many times a student may retake a course (note: there are new restrictions on some Chemistry courses). This open policy means we have some students who repeat courses 6 or more times. The most recent grade in a repeated course is factored into the student's GPA. A goal of this policy is to prompt a conversation with an academic advisor before a third attempt of a course. Since repeated courses do not affect GPAs, this policy offers another point of intervention and support.

### Related Policies

(<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/registration-attendance/#text>)

**AP.1.3.4 Repeating a Course:** "A grade received in a repeated course will replace the grade in a prior takings [sic] of the same course in the calculation of the cumulative GPA, even if the more recent grade is lower."

**Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP):** "Effective July 1, 2011 Federal Regulations no longer allow federal student aid funds to apply to courses that a student has already taken twice with a passing grade."

**AP.1.5.1 Selective Withdrawal for Undergraduates:** "Undergraduates enrolled in bachelor's degree programs are eligible to withdraw from a limited number of classes without the dean's approval and at the student's own discretion."

### Assumptions

- 1) We would retain the practice of calculating the most recent grade for a course in the student's GPA.
- 2) Units will develop guidelines for considering an exception to this policy to promote consistency across the university.

### Anticipated Outcomes

Students who have attempted a course three times may need to find a different major. The restriction on the fourth graded attempt of a course would promote a conversation between an academic advisor

and the student. In rare cases, permission may be granted to allow a fourth attempt (units should develop guidelines to allow for consistency in granting this permission). A potential drawback is that students thwarted in their preferred major program may leave the University.

## Resources

We need technical adjustments to Banner to enable it to track course repeats and prevent students from enrolling for a fourth time. Academic units may see an increase in students seeking academic advising guidance. The policy change needs to be communicated to students, faculty, advisors, and other student support services (e.g., student financial aid, athletic coordinators, and university life staff).

## Challenges

We need to track and monitor the course repeat patterns of our students. The most recent grade needs to be calculated into the GPA and the original grade(s) excluded from the GPA calculation, something our systems currently accomplish. When a student is in his/her second and third attempt, we need to reach out with a message offering support and information about the policy. We need to consider whether this message is sent by the units or by the Registrar.

## Supporting Data

Going back to Fall 2010: 6,337 students repeated a course three times (1,681 earned Ws), 970 repeated a course four times (469 Ws), and 225 repeated a course five times (152 Ws). See **Repeated Course Analysis All Grades since 201070** and **Repeated Course Analysis W Grades Only since 201070** to learn more.

## Peer Institutions

Other Virginia schools have campus-wide course repeat policies, but they vary widely. For example, at ODU students may repeat up to five courses taken previously, but each course may be repeated just once. At Radford, students may repeat up to three times, but not if the student earned a grade of A or B. Grades in all attempts are averaged. At VCU, repeats are at the discretion of the department and grades are averaged. In Maryland (UMCP), only one repeat is allowed. Subsequent repeats require Dean's permission. Grades are averaged.

The range of approaches is broad from no limits on course repeats at James Madison University to repeats being allowed only with Dean's permission at UVA.