

Curriculum and Policies Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

January 28, 2025

Voting Members Present: John Leafgren, Karin Nolan, Ally Roof, Dereka Rushbrook, Christopher Sanderson, Caleb Simmons, Amanda Soka, Travis Spence, Jeremy Vetter

Non-voting Members Present: Sharon Aiken-Wisniewski, Cassidy Bartlett, Abbie Sorg, Alex Underwood

Guests Present: Liz Sandoval

Voting Members Absent: Joost Van Haren

Acting UGC Chair Ally Roof called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. A quorum was established with 8 voting members; one additional member joined after the meeting was called to order.

I. Approval of Curriculum & Policies Subcommittee meeting minutes, 11/19/2024

John Leafgren motioned to accept the meeting minutes from 11/19/2024. Amanda Soka seconded the motion. The motion passed with 7 votes in favor and 1 abstention.

II. Discussion Items

A. Repeating a Course & Grade Replacement

Presenters: Abbie Sorg, Alex Underwood

Requested student data was shared with the subcommittee. From students enrolled over the past four years, the following was determined:

- How often do students use GRO on grades of C, D, or E?
 - E grade - 63%
 - D grade – 28%
 - C grade – 9%
- How often do students improve their grade on a second attempt?
 - Students improved their grade on a second attempt when utilizing GRO in 68% of cases. The remaining 32% earned the same or a worse grade on their second attempt.
 - Of students who repeated a course without utilizing GRO, 25% of cases improved their grade and would have benefitted from GRO.
- How many students are reaching the 3-course limit on GRO?
 - ~1500 students; 12.5% of students who have used a GRO have reached the 3-course limit.
- How often do students repeat courses they've withdrawn from?
 - ~23,000 students have repeated a course they've withdrawn from; only 9% of these instances involved the student using GRO.

Discussion continued:

- Because it's currently possible for some students to repeat a course where the original grade earned was A or B, this may slightly affect the data as far as how often students can improve their grade on a subsequent attempt. This is a small, identifiable group of students; part of updating institutional practices to align with policy will involve preventing repeats of courses where A or B was earned.
- If the current concept of GRO was removed and it became an automatic, unlimited process, then 25% of students (those who had repeated without using GRO) would have an improved GPA.
- If the policy was amended to accept the highest attempt, rather than the last attempt, the 30% of students who didn't improve their grade on a subsequent attempt could maintain their original grade.
- When the GRO policy was updated in Spring 2023 to remove some restrictions (previously, only students who had completed fewer than 60 units at the university could utilize GRO), not all students were aware of the change, and some assumed they were still ineligible for GRO.
- Would an update to the policy improve a student's chances to graduate? Or would it cause them to accrue more debt, and still possibly not make it to graduation?
 - There would still be a limit on how many times the same course could be repeated.
 - Students who do poorly in a semester currently have very limited options for grade forgiveness. Only students who have been out of the University for 5+ years are eligible for grade forgiveness through second start. The easiest option for some students would therefore be to transfer to another institution (with their grades of C or higher) and start over. By increasing grade forgiveness allowances, it increases a student's ability to remain at the University.
 - Because there is no functional option to significantly improve GPA, students pursue retroactive withdrawal. Students cannot retroactively withdraw from individual courses, so they forfeit all grades earned (including any passing grades).
- The Academic Advising Council requested to remove the GRO limit for two main reasons: firstly, students struggling with their GPA often need to repeat coursework in addition to their 3 GROs. Because both grades received are averaged into the GPA, it takes the student a long time to raise their grade enough to graduate, especially when they have already accumulated a lot of credits. Additionally, advisors see students 'save' their GROs in case they do worse in a course later, and as a result they may end up never using all of their GROs. If students had a higher limit (or no limit), they wouldn't feel the need to conserve their GROs this way.
- One member was currently trying to help a student stuck in B-deficit by 30 units, with just as many units needed to graduate. The student had come out of some difficult life circumstances and was motivated to graduate, but wouldn't be able

to get out of academic ineligibility. It's difficult to tell a student that their only way to graduate is to wait five years and apply through BACK2UA. If grade replacement is not made more flexible, it may be necessary to consider some other mechanism for exceptions.

- An advising representative agreed they had also seen several cases like this.
- There was concern that removing the GRO limit entirely would create a system that favors students who can afford to keep repeating courses.
- The advising team from one member's department was hesitant to see unlimited GRO, even with checks and balances. However, they also felt that the current limit should be increased, as students currently feel the need to conserve their 3 attempts.
- Several members agreed the current policy of using the grade from the last attempt was unethical.
 - Under the current policy, several students are lowering their grade by repeating a course. Students may try a course a second time and encounter a life event, effectively lowering their GPA and using up a GRO.
- When students enroll in a course they have already taken, they get a notice that they are repeating a course. There is no trigger at the time of enrollment to GRO the course, but students may file it separately in their student account after the fact.
 - Previously, students could not file for GRO until after the term began, but this has since been updated. The current set-up still needs improvement.
- There had been some prior discussion about lowering the highest-allowed repeatable grade from C to D, especially if the GRO maximum was increased. One member requested to keep the ability to GRO a C, as some districts where students are placed for student teaching require a minimum 3.0 GPA.
 - Additionally, only 9% of GRO instances are for a C grade, so it does not seem to be overused.
- Another option would be unlimited GRO for courses where a grade of D or E was earned, and limited GRO for courses where a grade of C was earned.
 - This would work best if it could be measured automatically, rather than requiring advising or the Office of the Registrar to manually monitor when students have reached their limit.
- Though complex, another option would be that students could use GROs as long as they continue to improve their grade on the second attempt. Once a student receives the same or a lower grade, then their GROs would become limited.
- In the current policy, W grades count as a course attempt while WC grades do not. Classifying them differently means students may be incentivized to choose one over the other. A student who opts for complete withdrawal so that it

doesn't count as a course attempt will forfeit all of their other credit from the term as well.

- If W grades don't count as an attempt, students will be incentivized to withdraw when they aren't doing well in the course, which ultimately harms student progress.
- Withdrawal and Complete Withdrawal have different deadlines, but are otherwise not treated differently from one another in other policies as they currently are in the GRO policy.
- Whether or not W and WC grades count as attempts may also depend on the GRO limit. I.e., if GRO is unlimited, it could count as an attempt; If GRO is limited, it wouldn't count as an attempt.
- Should students be given unlimited GRO?
 - If left unchecked, unlimited GRO could be financially devastating to a student. They may not understand the implications of their decisions, and the data shows that students often aren't improving their grades on subsequent attempts.
 - Members agreed that students should have some safeguards against unlimited GRO, but still be given more opportunity for grade improvement than they currently are. The concern becomes either students increasing their debt to improve their GPA, or graduation being prevented due to low GPA.
- Could advisor approval be required past a certain amount of GROs? The advisor could decide whether GRO was in the student's best interest, or at least reiterate to the student the implications of GRO.
 - Alternatively, students could be required to complete a training session once they had taken a set amount of GROs. This would prevent the burden from falling solely on advising.
 - There could be an appeal process for students to pursue additional GRO attempts.
- When students cannot uphold the minimum GPA required for a major, they are transferred to the A Center for advising. It's difficult for these students to understand that they can still graduate from the University, but not from their original program. There could be push for advising sessions with these students to determine if they can reach or modify their goals at the University to be successful.
- One member who taught a prerequisite course only heard from ~3 students per year that were repeating the course. Were the other students reaching out to their advisor, or not seeking any support at all? What checks and balances could be done for these students? Could they be sent an automated message upon signing up to repeat a course that encouraged them to contact their advisor?
 - It would be possible for advising to perform targeted outreach where there are negative patterns.

- It could be complex to build into policy that a training is required. Instead, the policy could be modeled after Academic Eligibility, where the student is contacted when intervention is needed. It's best to write the policy in a way that meets most situations rather than building in an exception process.
 - Excessive course repeats could also be built into academic eligibility. For example, students who use GRO on a certain number of courses could be placed in Academic Review (even if they otherwise have a fine GPA) to receive support from their advisor/college.
- If approval is required, it may not be optimal to route it to the department head, as the request would likely be overlooked or approved without appropriate consideration. A meaningful conversation or training for the student would be best.
- The current disconnect between practice and policy would be fixed according to how the policy was updated. The current system set-up was meant to be a temporary, trial solution ~15 years ago. Exceptions would still be possible to make when needed.
- Members wondered if select courses were being repeated more often than others; a quick review showed that students used grade replacement for MATH 112 almost twice as much as any other course.
- In a series of polls to gauge how members were leaning toward policy updates, members favored an unlimited approach to GRO with safeguards in place for students. The majority agreed that W and WC grades should both be treated as course attempts.
- The concern was again raised about how removing the GRO limit could disproportionately favor students who can afford to keep repeating courses. How are advisors meant to direct students without knowledge of the student's financial aid situation?
 - Students who have the financial means can already repeat courses if they want to. If students can't graduate because of the current GRO limit, it becomes less of an issue of financial resources and more of an issue with the institutional policy getting in the way. Increasing GRO could ultimately help students who had faced academic difficulty reach graduation, regardless of their financial resources.

Members will share the student data with their departments for feedback, and advising directors and frontline advisors will also be consulted on how unlimited GRO with safeguards could be modeled. Discussion will resume at the February subcommittee meeting.

The meeting was officially adjourned at 4:49 PM. The next subcommittee meeting will be held on February 25, 2025.

Respectfully submitted by Cassidy Salazar, 2/12/2025