

**The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**  
**Academic Policy Committee**  
**Minutes of the Special Meeting**  
**March 18, 2020**

**Call to order:** A special meeting of the Academic Policy Committee was held via online software on March 18, 2020. The meeting was called to order once quorum was determined to be met at 2:00 p.m. by Joanne Devlin, Chair.

**Members present:** Joanne Devlin (Chair), Natalie Campbell, Jamie Coble, Sarah Colby, Ozlem Kilic, Charlie Parker, Phillip Stokes, Margie Russell, Janet Schmitt, and Karen Sullivan-Vance

**Others present:** Kathy Abbott, Ryan Carter, Chuck Collins, Alison Connor, George Drinnon, Susan Forman, Travis Holsapple, Jennifer Hardy, Heather Hartman, R.J. Hinde, Cheryl Kojima, Brent Lamons, Peggy Love, Lane Morris, Missy Parker, Jana Spitzer, Molly Sullivan, Anthony Welch, and Stephanie Workman

**Proposals:**

Because of the unusual circumstances created by the spread of COVID-19, the Committee held a special meeting to consider the following proposals.

- A proposal to enact the previously approved policy of allowing a total of six (6) drops/withdrawals (Ws) beginning with the current term (Spring 2020) rather than waiting until the beginning of the next academic year
- A proposal to change the deadline for late drops for the current term (both full term and second term Spring 2020)
- A proposal to suspend academic dismissals for Spring and Summer 2020
- A proposal to extend the deadline for students to opt to change the grade mode for a particular class

All proposals were approved without opposition as shown in the attachment to these minutes.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

**Approval of Minutes:** These minutes were certified correct via email on March xx, 2020.

**Minutes submitted by:** Molly Sullivan

**Proposal to extend the already-approved lifetime limit of 6 W grades to currently-enrolled undergraduate students.**

UTK will make a transition to fully online teaching and learning from March 23 to the end of Spring term 2020 to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Some students will experience personal and academic disruptions associated with this transition to online education. In cases where the transition to online education will represent an obstacle to students' academic success, students may be better served by dropping a class and retaking it (if necessary) in a future semester.

On December 4, 2019, the Academic Policy Committee approved a policy increasing students' lifetime limit of four late drops (W grades) to six late drops. This policy was approved by Undergraduate Council on January 28, 2020, and by Faculty Senate on March 2, 2020, although the minutes of the Faculty Senate meeting on March 2, 2020, have not yet been published or approved.

The change is scheduled to take effect with the publication of the 2020-2021 Undergraduate Catalog, meaning that any student enrolled in classes in Fall 2020 or later will be allowed a total of six late drops.

The current proposal is to make this change take effect immediately, so that students enrolled in Spring 2020 or Summer 2020 will also be allowed a total of six late drops.

**Proposal to change the deadline for late drops for Spring 2020 classes only.**

UTK will make a transition to fully online teaching and learning from March 23 to the end of Spring term 2020 to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Some students will experience personal and academic disruptions associated with this transition to online education. In cases where the transition to online education will represent an obstacle to students' academic success, students may be better served by dropping a class and retaking it (if necessary) in a future semester.

The current deadline for dropping Spring 2020 classes is March 31, 2020, for full-semester classes and April 6, 2020, for second-session classes. The last day of classes for Spring 2020 is April 24, 2020.

Because of the additional work required to quickly transition to online teaching, some instructors may experience a temporary delay in returning graded work to students. As a consequence, some students may not know their standing in a class when the drop deadline arrives.

The current proposal is to extend the drop deadline for full-semester and second-session Spring 2020 classes to April 22, 2020, or — in the event that the last day of classes for Spring 2020 is adjusted — to the third from the last day of classes.

**Proposal to suspend academic dismissals for Spring 2020 or Summer 2020.**

UTK will make a transition to fully online teaching and learning from March 23 to the end of Spring term 2020 to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Some students will experience personal and academic disruptions associated with this transition to online education. These disruptions may make it difficult for students to exhibit their best work, leading to lower term GPAs.

To prevent these disruptions from unduly affecting students' progress towards their degrees, we are temporarily waiving academic dismissal penalties.

The formal proposal is to suspend any academic dismissals that would take place during Spring 2020 or Summer 2020; students who would be subject to academic dismissal at the conclusion of spring 2020 or Summer 2020 will remain on academic probation during the following semester.

### **Proposal to extend of the deadline to choose S/NC grading for Spring 2020 classes only**

The deadline for students to choose S/NC grading is the 10th day of the semester for full-semester classes. For Spring 2020, this deadline was January 17, 2020. Given the substantial academic disruption that the transition to fully online teaching and learning might present to students, we are extending the deadline for students to switch to S/NC grading to coincide with the late drop deadline as described in the second proposal above. This will apply to 100-400 level Spring 2020 courses (both full term and second term) taken for undergraduate credit that currently allow S/NC grading. Courses that currently only allow letter grades are not included but departments may opt in by notifying the Office of the University Registrar of their intention to allow students to choose S/NC grading for the Spring 2020 term only.

For the Spring 2020 term only, all General Education courses and courses that are part of major or minor requirements would allow S/NC grading for students who make that choice.

Students who received VA benefits and opt to take S/NC grading will be directed to speak with the Veteran's Resource Center prior to selecting this option due to the fact that they may have to repay benefits. (See attached document from VRC).

### **Other Discussions**

#### **The rule about not giving assignments during the last five days that would count more than 10% of the total grade**

The idea of allowing late-term assignments that count more than 10% of the grade was discussed. Both committee members and guests agreed that the group supports keeping the 10% rule.

#### **Can students remove a W if they take the course again later?**

The grade will remain on the transcript even if the student takes the course at a later date, and normal repeat policies would apply.

#### **What about student in good standing at first of term, will they go on probation due to poor grades this term?**

No way to change this policy because it is based on the cumulative GPA of individual students; however, a student could appeal a specific grade. Going on probation would mean that the student would be encouraged to take advantage of university resources to help the student regain good standing.

#### **What about being off track?**

Colleges and departments already have the ability to minimize the negative impact on a student who is off-track at the end of Spring 2020, and language used to describe off-track status can be edited to recognize the unusual circumstances of this term.