

The University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal Defeated by the Senate

PROPOSAL 21-06
(Voting Units: Academic)

POLICY GOVERNING REPEATING A COURSE

Background:

Students, through the USG, have requested that the Senate revisit the current restrictions on retaking courses. This request was based on concerns that students with a C in a subject in which they intended to major might consider themselves ill-prepared and would prefer to repeat the course in order to achieve a better understanding of the material. The current regulations concerning repeating a course as shown in the Student Handbook state:

"Students may not repeat courses in which they have earned a grade of C or better. When a course is repeated, the most recent grade will be used to calculate the GPA, credits earned toward graduation, and determination of class standings. When a course is repeated, any credit previously earned under the course number is forfeited and the transcript will indicate NR (No grade - repeated) for the earlier attempt. Students must have the permission of the dean of students and their academic advisor for the third attempt at any one course. Courses exempt from the repeat rule are those that may be repeated for credit as indicated in the course description."

There are three factors which suggest that this restriction could be relaxed.

Graduate courses require a B or better and educational degree regulations require a BC average or better in at least some courses. It would seem reasonable that if students can repeat failing grades in some courses, they should be able to repeat such grades in all courses.

Part of the unspoken argument that led to the restriction on retaking classes to improve overall GPA was associated with the old billing procedure where most students were charged a flat rate for up to 12 credits so that repeating a course had no financial disincentive. In view of the current billing by credit system, this argument is no longer valid.

Some faculty believe that allowing repeating subjects would lead to increased grade inflation. If the student achieves an improved grade after repeating the subject, it would seem that that should reflect an improvement in the student's understanding of the material and hence should be acceptable.

Other suggestions that have been considered include using all grades in the calculation of GPA. This, however, has serious drawbacks especially for students retaking a course in which they received an F grade which may have been awarded as a result of non-academic reasons such as a late illness. A student would need to score substantially better than a C to raise the GPA to a satisfactory level.

Discussions with administrative officers reveal another aspect to this discussion. In the 2004-5 State audit of the University, the subject of the lax regulations concerning repeating failing grades was discussed. The Auditors considered that allowing grades to be raised through retaking was a part of grade inflation and that, as the fee that students paid did not cover 100% of the cost of their education, allowing students to repeat a course was effectively a misuse of State funds. This criticism was associated with a lack of follow-up on the outcome of the repeated course and with a lack of counseling, especially for students who had repeatedly failed the same course.

This proposal seeks to address the student appeal for greater freedom to retake courses and the State Auditor's misgivings about misuse of such a privilege.

POLICY PROPOSAL

It is proposed that the regulation be changed to read:

"Students may repeat courses in which they have earned a grade lower than C in most courses or a BC or C in courses that are required courses (including cognate courses) for their major (or teaching minor). No financial aid will normally be allowed to cover any or part of the tuition cost for any course in which the student has a C or higher grade. When a course is repeated, any credit previously earned under the course number is forfeited, and the transcript will indicate NR (No grade - repeated) for the earlier attempt. When a course is repeated, the most recent grade will be used to calculate the GPA, credits earned toward graduation, and determination of class standings. In any semester in which a student repeats a course, they will become ineligible to go onto the Dean's list.

Students with a C or better grade may only repeat a course once, and students who initially failed the course and subsequently repeated the course and achieved a C or better may not repeat the course again. Students who have failed a course twice are strongly recommended not to attempt to repeat the course again. Under exceptional circumstances a student may apply in writing to the instructor, the dean of students, and their academic advisor describing why a third attempt should be allowed. Students must have the permission of the dean of students and their academic advisor for the third attempt at any one course.

Courses exempt from the repeat rule are those that may be repeated for credit as indicated in the course description."

Introduced in Senate: 15 February 2006

Defeated by the Senate: 5 April 2006