

# KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

## CERTIFICATION OF CURRICULUM PROPOSAL

Preparation Date **16-Sep-14** Curriculum Bulletin \_\_\_\_\_Effective Date **Fall 2015** Approved by EPC \_\_\_\_\_Department **EPC Ad Hoc Committee for Academic Policies**College **PR - Provost**Proposal **Revise Policy**Proposal Name **Revision of Course Repeat Policies****Description of proposal:**

**The ECP Ad Hoc Committee recommends revision to the course repeat policies to (1) allow all repeated undergraduate courses (00000-40000 levels), instead of only lower-division courses, to be eligible for students' GPA recalculation; and (2) limit the number, to three, of overall attempts to a course before a student can no longer register for that course without college/campus intervention.**

Describe impact on other programs, policies or procedures (e.g., duplication issues; enrollment and staffing considerations; need, audience)

**The proposed revisions will be automated in the Banner registration and student record system. Academic units will need to determine the criteria to be used when reviewing student requests for exceptions to the three attempts restriction.**

**Units consulted (other departments, programs or campuses affected by this proposal):**

**Members of the EPC Ad Hoc Committee represent the following areas and were encouraged to consult with and request input from their colleagues: College Advising; Computer Science; Curriculum Services; Enrollment Management and Student Services; Faculty Senate; Fashion Design and Merchandising; Foundations, Leadership and Administration; Graduation Planning System; History; Mathematical Sciences; Modern and Classical Language Studies; Music; Philosophy; Podiatric Medicine; Provost; Regional College; Student Financial Aid; Teaching, Learning and Curriculum Studies; The Arts; Undergraduate Student (Regional Campus); Undergraduate Student Government; Undergraduate Studies; University Registrar**

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### REQUIRED ENDORSEMENTS

 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Department Chair / School Director

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 Campus Dean (for Regional Campuses proposals)

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 College Dean (or designee)

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 Dean of Graduate Studies (for graduate proposals)

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 Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs (or designee)

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## Proposal Summary

### Revision of Course Repeat Policies

#### SUBJECT SPECIFICATION

The EPC Ad Hoc Committee for Academic Policies proposes revising the course repeat policy for undergraduate students to (1) allow all repeated undergraduate courses (00000-40000 levels), instead of only lower-division courses, to be eligible for recalculation of the GPA; and (2) limit the number, to three, of overall attempts to a course before a student can no longer register for that course without college/campus intervention.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The EPC Ad Hoc Committee, formed in spring 2013, is charged with reviewing academic policies that promote student success. For more than a year, the committee discussed Kent State's current repeat policy, read literature and research on the matter and reviewed course repeat policies at more than 35 universities (see Appendix A). During those conversations, the committee remained mindful of two self-imposed instructions: (1) the policy must be geared more toward student success rather than punitive in nature, and (2) the policy must be able to be implementable in Banner.

#### **Item 1: Allow all repeated undergraduate courses (00000-40000 levels), rather than only lower-division courses, to be eligible for recalculation of the GPA.**

The current course repeat policy allows undergraduate students to repeat any lower-division (00000-20000) course and have only the highest grade earned applied toward their GPA. With repeated upper-division (30000-40000) courses, all grades earned apply toward students' GPA. This policy was enacted in spring 2008 with the implementation of Banner. Previously, the policy (referred to as "freshman forgiveness") allowed for undergraduate students to repeat any course in which a C- or lower grade was earned in the first attempt, and that first-attempt grade was removed from the GPA calculation with the following stipulations: (1) the first attempt had to occur during the first 30 attempted hours at any college or university, (2) the repeated course had to occur no later than the term in which the student reached 60 attempted hours, (3) any subsequent attempts of the course counted in the GPA, and (4) the student must have applied and been approved for freshman forgiveness after completing the second attempt.

Attached in Appendix B is a report on the effects of adopting a revised grade recalculation that explains the decision behind revising the policy and examines student behavior prior to and post 2008.

The philosophy behind the for freshman forgiveness policy was to not penalize first-year students who may still be adjusting to college and did not do well in the first attempt, but succeeded in the next attempt of a course. The 2008 policy moved the policy from student status to course level, typically (but not always) taken by freshmen and sophomore students. The EPC Ad Hoc Committee felt the same philosophy of not penalizing students who succeed in a subsequent attempt should be applied to any undergraduate student in any undergraduate course.

While this policy shift may cause an uptick in course repeats at the upper-division level, the committee believes that it will also result in a more timely graduation of students.

This policy change to include upper-division courses in the GPA recalculation for graduation will not affect institutional honors and class standing, which calculates all grade attempts of a course. In addition, all grades may be counted also for admission to or progression in specific programs, for admission to graduate programs or for admission to other institutions. Credit for a repeated course will apply only once toward meeting degree requirements. The university is not obligated to offer courses so that students can repeat them.

**Item 2: Limit the number, to three, of overall attempts to a course before a student can no longer register for that course without departmental/college intervention.**

The current course repeat policy allows undergraduate students to repeat, as many times as desired, any course. In addition, students may withdraw from a course as many times as they choose. The proposed policy will allow students to attempt the same course<sup>1</sup> up to three times. After the third attempt, the student will not be able to register for the course and will need to meet with an advisor to decide next steps. It will be the responsibility of the college/campus to determine the criteria to be used when reviewing student requests for exceptions to this policy.

For the purposes of this policy, a course drop (done within the first two week of the semester for a semester-long course) *is not* considered an attempt. A course withdrawal (done after the drop deadline) *is* considered an attempt.

Much research has been published correlating student progress with excessive course repeats and withdrawals. Clifford Adelman, who served nearly 30 years as a senior research analyst at the U.S. Department of Education, released in 2006 a follow-up to “The Toolbox” (1999). The report, “The Toolbox Revisited,” stated that students who accumulated excessive withdrawals and repeats cut in half their chances of earning a degree. According to Adelman<sup>2</sup>:

*Both the original Tool Box and The Toolbox Revisited revealed that one of the most degree-crippling features of undergraduate histories is an excessive volume of courses from which the student withdrew without penalty and those the student repeated. ... The withdrawals counted here are not “drop” grades that apply during standard drop-and-add periods at the beginning of terms. They are the result of institutional policies that allow withdrawals without penalty after the drop-and-add period. No-credit repeats are standard fare in remedial courses, but when they reach destructive levels the question arises as to how many times an institution allows a student to repeat a course. Think of it this way: Every non-penalty withdrawal and no-credit repeat means that a seat in a course is not available to someone else. Add those seats up, and admission to an institution may not be available to someone else. Excessively lax withdrawal and repeat policy, then, ultimately blocks general access. And in terms of degree completion, such policies do students no favors.*

A data profile from the Florida Department of Education revealed that its students who were “college-ready” (non-remedial) and did not receive any grades of W had a completion rate that was approximately 10 percentage points above that of the entire group of college-ready students. Florida college-ready students who earned three or fewer W grades had a completion rate 13 points above the rate of students receiving four or more W grades; those with three or fewer F grades had a completion rate that was almost twice that of those with four or more F grades.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These course are referring to the ones that are not designated as “repeatable for credit” in the catalog.

<sup>2</sup> Adelman, C. *The Toolbox Revisited: Paths to Degree Completion From High School Through College*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Florida Department of Education. (2005). *The impact of withdrawals and failures on graduation rates*. Retrieved from [www.fldoe.org/fcs/OSAS/FastFacts/FF81.pdf](http://www.fldoe.org/fcs/OSAS/FastFacts/FF81.pdf).

Another data analysis, from Alberto Cabrera (professor, University of Maryland), Kurt Burkum (director of policy research, ACT Inc.), Steven LaNasa (former president, Donnelly College) and Erin Bibo (director of post-secondary readiness, District of Columbia), indicated that “Those who dropped, withdrew from, or failed to complete between 10 to 20 percent of their college coursework were 13 percent less likely to secure a four-year degree.”<sup>4</sup>

Complete College America, using data provided by 33 participating states, found that withdrawals and repeats were the largest drivers of excess credit hours, totaling nearly 10 percent of grades earned overall by undergraduates.

*On average, bachelor's degree students graduate with 13 credit hours coded as withdrawals or non-credit repeats, and associate degree holders graduate with nearly 7 of these types of credits, costing an estimated \$6.5 billion annually—that doesn't include those who drop out. Withdrawals and non-credit repeats also reduce course availability for other students, lengthening their time to degree as well.”<sup>5</sup>*

Repeated coursework affects students' financial aid. Per Federal regulations, students who repeat a course for which they have earned a passing grade can only receive financial aid for that class one more time. On the flip side, however, students who continually fail or withdraw from a course are still covered by student financial aid. Therefore, excess repeats of the same course will either hurt students financially or will allow them to stay covered by aid, thereby, passing the financial burden to taxpayers.

In addition, with no restriction on the number of attempts, a student could spend countless semesters attempting to achieve something that is unachievable for them, with no registration mechanism to prevent it and help lead them to an intervention. Knowing there is a limit on the number of attempt may encourage students to do better in the next attempt, as there is no fourth chance. A limit may also demonstrate more clearly a student's fit in a specific program if the student has reached maximum attempts with no success in courses required to progress and graduate.

Kent State data on course repeats from fall 2009 to spring 2013 demonstrate that students who repeated a course two or more times (3+ attempts) before earning a passing grade were 9 percentage points below students who repeated a course once in enrollment and graduation rates<sup>6</sup>.

	<b>Student Count</b>	<b>Currently Enrolled or Graduated</b>
Student failed 1 <sup>st</sup> attempt; passed 2 <sup>nd</sup> attempt	9,908	58%
Student attempted course 3+ times before passing	2,828	49%
Student attempted course 3+ times and never passed	1,237	19%

<sup>4</sup> Cabrera, A.F., Burkum, K.R., La Nasa, S.M., & Bibo, E. W. (2012). Pathways to a four-year degree: Determinants of degree completion. In A. Seidman (Ed.), *College Student Retention: Formula for Student Success*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers. Retrieved from

[www.education.umd.edu/Academics/Faculty/Bios/facData/CHSE/cabrera/Pathwaystoafouryeardegree2012.pdf](http://www.education.umd.edu/Academics/Faculty/Bios/facData/CHSE/cabrera/Pathwaystoafouryeardegree2012.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Complete College America (Winter 2012). *Guided Pathways to Success: Boosting College Completion*. Retrieved from [http://completecollege.org/docs/GPS\\_Summary\\_FINAL.pdf](http://completecollege.org/docs/GPS_Summary_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Data source: Division of Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness (RPIE).

## AFFECT ON CURRENT STUDENTS

If the policy is approved to be implemented with the fall 2015 semester, the GPA and student transcript of any current student will remain unchanged, unless the current student attempts to repeat a course in fall 2015 or later.

- Scenario 1: Student has repeated once an upper-division course prior to fall 2015. Current GPA reflects the grades of both attempts. If the student repeats the same upper-division course in fall 2015 or later, the GPA will be recalculated to reflect only the highest grade in the three attempts.
- Scenario 2: Student has attempted a course three or more times prior to fall 2015. The student will not be able to register for the course again in fall 2015 or later.

## ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES

Academic policies that involve course credits pose true dilemmas for university faculty and administrators. On the one hand, they want students to succeed and to have the initiative to be ambitious and aspiring in their course-taking. Therefore, if students do overextend themselves, the consequences are fairly gentle—the penalty for a bad grade is another attempt at the course for a better grade that demonstrates student success in mastering the required outcomes, and allows for the bad grade to be forgiven from the student’s GPA. The penalty for a withdrawal is no course credit awarded, a statement of “no harm done.”

On the other hand, Kent State has to be a good steward of faculty time and university facilities. When faculty teaching a course see the same faces reappear term after term, year after year, with students repeating to the point that they are no longer on track for graduation, these professors are increasing their workload and circumscribing their freedom to teach other classes. In addition, a student who sits in a course for several weeks before withdrawing effectively prevents another student from sitting in that same seat for the entire term and earning credit. The EPC Ad Hoc Committee considered this balance between “no harm done” and the stress on faculty and physical resources when deciding the policy.

## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION

It is recommended that effective for fall 2015, the changes to the Course Repeat Policies as outlined on the following pages be approved to continue the goal of removing obstacles and providing guidance to promote student success.

## TIMETABLE AND ACTIONS REQUIRED

EPC Ad Hoc Committee for Academic Policies .....	14 February 2014
Testing of policy in Banner (Registrar’s Office).....	Spring - Summer 2014
Educational Policies Council.....	20 October 2014 <i>anticipated approval</i>
Faculty Senate.....	10 November 2014 <i>anticipated approval</i>
Implementation in Banner.....	Prior to fall 2015 registration
Implementation in the University Catalog.....	Fall 2015

## PROPOSED CATALOG COPY – COURSE REPEAT POLICIES

Students may repeat courses taken at Kent State University subject to the following provisions:

1. Students may repeat for credit any course they have failed.
2. Students may repeat a course already passed for additional credit if it is identified as repeatable in the course description. Some academic units place a limit on the total number of credits that may be earned in a given repeatable course. For credit limits on specific courses, students should read the course descriptions or consult their advisor.
3. Students may repeat graduate (50000-80000 levels) courses with approval of the academic dean to meet specific graduation requirements; however, the hours earned the second time do not, under any circumstances, count toward graduation. All grades earned (passed or failed) for graduate courses are counted in the cumulative grade point average (GPA) for graduate students.
4. Students may repeat undergraduate (00000-40000 levels) courses, and the university will use only the highest grade in the calculation of the undergraduate cumulative GPA, the grade requirements for the student's program and cumulative credit totals.
5. Undergraduate course repeat with GPA recalculation is subject to the following restrictions :
  - a. Students may repeat the same undergraduate course no more than two times (a maximum of three attempts per course). If students plan to repeat a course, they are encouraged to work with their advisor to identify resources for academic support.
  - b. After the second repeat (third attempt), students will be restricted from registering for the course again.
  - c. Withdrawal from a course is counted as an attempt.
  - d. The course must be repeated at Kent State University.
  - e. The course may not be repeated for a pass/fail grade.
  - f. All grades will appear on the official transcript.
  - g. Recalculation of the students' cumulative GPA will occur automatically at the end of the semester in which students complete the repeated course.
  - h. All eligible courses will be included in the recalculation.
  - i. Courses taken as part of a completed associate degree may be repeated under this policy.
  - j. All course repeats for recalculation must be completed before conferral of the student's first bachelor's degree from any college or university.
  - k. All grades for attempts of a course will be used in GPA calculation for determining institutional honors and class standing. All grades may be counted also for admission to or progression in specific programs, for admission to graduate programs or for admission to other institutions. These computations are independent of the cumulative GPA as it appears on the student transcript.
  - l. Credit for a repeated course will apply only once toward meeting degree requirements.
  - m. The university is not obligated to offer courses so that students can repeat them.
  - n. In some instances, repeating courses could affect financial aid, scholarships or other assistance. Students should consult the appropriate office prior to registration.
  - o. This policy does not apply to variable content courses that are designated in the course description as repeatable for credit, such as a special topics , individual investigation, practicum, internship, etc.
  - p. This policy was effective with the fall 2015 semester.

**MARKED-UP CATALOG COPY – COURSE REPEAT POLICIES**

Students may repeat courses taken at Kent State University subject to the following provisions:

1. Students may repeat for credit any course they have failed.
- ~~2.~~ 4. Students may repeat a course already passed for additional credit if it is identified as repeatable in the course description. Some academic units place a limit on the total number of credits that may be earned in a given repeatable course. For credit limits on specific courses, students should read the course descriptions or consult their advisor.
- ~~3.~~ 2. Students may repeat graduate (50000-80000 levels) courses with approval of the academic dean to meet specific graduation requirements; however, the hours earned the second time do not, under any circumstances, count toward graduation. All grades earned (passed or failed) for graduate courses are counted in the cumulative grade point average (GPA) for graduate students.
- ~~3.~~ ~~Students may repeat for credit any undergraduate upper-division (30000 and 40000 levels) courses they have failed. All grades earned are counted in the undergraduate cumulative GPA.~~
- ~~4.~~ ~~Students may repeat undergraduate upper-division (30000 and 40000 levels) courses already passed with approval of the academic dean in order to meet specific graduation requirements; however, hours earned the second time do not, under any circumstances, count toward graduation. All grades earned are counted in the cumulative undergraduate GPA.~~
- ~~4.~~ 5. Students may repeat undergraduate ~~lower-division~~ (00000-40000, ~~10000 and 20000~~ levels) courses, and the university will use only the highest grade in the calculation of the undergraduate cumulative GPA, the grade requirements for the student's program and cumulative credit totals.
5. Undergraduate ~~Lower-division~~ course repeat with GPA recalculation is subject to the following ~~restrictions~~ provisions:
  - a. Students may repeat the same undergraduate course no more than two times (a maximum of three attempts per course). If students plan to repeat a course, they are encouraged to work with their advisor to identify resources for academic support.
  - b. After the second repeat (third attempt), students will be restricted from registering for the course again.
  - c. Withdrawal from a course is counted as an attempt.
  - ~~d.~~ a. The course must be repeated at Kent State University.
  - ~~e.~~ b. The course ~~must be repeated for a letter grade, including satisfactory/unsatisfactory (S/U), but not~~ may not be repeated for a pass/fail grade.
  - ~~f.~~ e. All grades will appear on the official transcript.
  - ~~d.~~ ~~Only the highest grade received for the course will be used in the calculation of the cumulative GPA.~~
  - ~~g.~~ e. Recalculation of the students' cumulative GPA will occur automatically at the end of the semester in which students complete the repeated course.
  - ~~h.~~ f. All eligible courses will be included in the recalculation.

**MARKED-UP CATALOG COPY *continued***

- i. ~~g.~~ Courses taken as part of a completed associate degree may be repeated under this policy.
- j. ~~h.~~ All course repeats for recalculation must be completed before conferral of the student's first bachelor's degree from any college or university.
- k. ~~i.~~ All grades for attempts of a course will be ~~counted in determining~~ used in GPA calculation for determining ~~for graduation with~~ institutional honors and class standing. All grades may ~~also~~ be counted also for admission to or progression in specific programs, for admission to graduate programs or for admission to other institutions. These computations are independent of the cumulative ~~grade point average~~ GPA as it appears on the student transcript ~~or student grade report~~.
- l. ~~j.~~ Credit for a repeated course will apply only once toward meeting degree requirements.
- m. ~~k.~~ The university is not obligated to offer courses so that students can repeat them.
- n. In some instances, repeating courses could affect financial aid, scholarships or other assistance. Students should consult the appropriate office prior to registration
- o. ~~l.~~ This policy does not apply to variable content courses that are designated in the course description as repeatable for credit, such as a special topics ~~course~~, individual investigation, practicum, internship, etc.
- p. ~~m.~~ This policy was effective with the fall 2015 ~~spring 2008~~ semester.