AMHERST COLLEGE

2018-19
Academic Policies and Procedures

The Office of Institutional Research and Registrar Services
Academic Policies and Procedures

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his document includes an overview of academic policies and procedures for faculty and staff at Amherst College. More detailed information related to policies in this document are found in the College Catalog and Faculty Handbook. Academic calendar dates are available on the College website, including important dates and deadlines.

Important Links:
- Amherst College Catalog - https://www.amherst.edu/mm/473635
- Faculty Handbook - https://www.amherst.edu/mm/82602
- Academic Calendar - https://www.amherst.edu/mm/74852
- List of Faculty Committees - https://www.amherst.edu/mm/80811
- Registrar’s Faculty Information - https://www.amherst.edu/mm/84231

Grading deadlines are set by faculty policy. Midterm and final grading policies are found in the faculty handbook and College Catalog. Directions on how to submit online grades as well as current academic year grading deadlines are available on the Registrar’s Office website.

Midterm Grades
At the midterm of each semester, faculty should plan on entering midterm grades for students on track to receive D or F letter grades in their courses. This information is used by the Office of Student Affairs in order to send warning letters and to support students throughout the rest of the semester. Faculty are not required to enter midterm grades for students on track to earn higher than a D letter grade, but they may choose to communicate concern for the academic success of the student to the student and their class dean. Faculty may also submit comments to the class dean via the online grading process.

Final Grades
Fall semester final grades are due by noon on the first business day following the New Year’s Day holiday in January. Spring semester final grades are due no later than 9am the Monday after the last day of exams for graduating seniors and all E class students participating in commencement. All other final grades for students not graduating are due the Wednesday after the last day of exams.

Completion of Work and Policy on Extensions
Examinations are held at the end of each semester and at intervals throughout the semester in many courses. After final grades are reported, the record for the semester is closed. In conformity with the practice established by the faculty, no extension of deadline is allowed for papers, examinations, laboratory or other course work beyond the date of the last scheduled class period of the semester, unless an extension is granted in writing by both the instructor and the class dean. Students will not be allowed to register or participate in add/drop for the subsequent term until all grades from their previous semester are recorded by the Registrar.
A student who cannot attend a final examination may be granted the privilege of a makeup examination by the instructor in consultation with the class dean, who will arrange the date of the examination with the instructor. For students needing accommodations for their exams, faculty may contact the Office of Student Affairs to make arrangements for an exam proctor. A final examination may be postponed only with the approval of the instructor and class dean.

Extensions may be granted beyond the final examination period with approval of the instructor and the class dean. In such cases the instructor must submit a request for extension to the Office of Student Affairs by the end-of-semester grading deadline. The request shall indicate the extension deadline and default grade, which the registrar records only if the instructor does not submit a final grade by the extension deadline. The registrar shall record the incomplete notation “I” during the extension. (The instructor should also record the incomplete and default grade information via ACdata.)

Faculty should work with class deans on any extension that goes beyond the last day of final examination period. This will assist class deans and the Registrar when following up with missing grades and students experiencing medical or personal issues.

**Change-of-Grade Process**

The change-of-grade process begins with the instructor of the course. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome determined by the instructor, the student may appeal to the dean of the faculty. (See Student Code of Conduct-The Resolution of Student Grievances with a Member of the Faculty). If the instructor agrees to make a grade change, the following steps should be followed:

- The instructor logs into ACdata and selects “Change of Grade Request” from the menu.
- The instructor selects from a drop-down list of rosters (the list includes only courses taught within one academic year).
- From the roster, the instructor selects the student and enters the new requested grade.
- The reason for the change is entered in a comment field.
- Once the instructor clicks on “Submit,” a series of emails are sent to the chief student affairs officer, the registrar, the associate registrar, and two administrators in the offices of the chief student affairs officer and dean of the faculty.
- Once the chief student affairs officer approves, an email is sent to the dean of the faculty for approval.
- Once the dean approves, the grade is changed by the Registrar’s Office and all parties above will be notified.
If the chief student affairs officer or dean have additional questions, they may request more information from the instructor via the ACdata form. If either party denies the request, the grade is not changed by the registrar and all parties are notified of the outcome.

**Managing Course Enrollment**
Instructors who wish to manage their own course enrollments without guaranteeing enrollment at the end of the second-round registration period must convert their courses to “Instructor Permission” prior to Advising Week by updating the course description through the Committee on Educational Policy, specifying how enrollments will be prioritized. New courses will be handled in a similar fashion. Such conversions are recommended for reserving spaces for first-year students in the fall semester, as well as for courses that require additional evaluation by the instructor prior to enrollment. In addition, a new option has been made available to reserve a certain number of seats for first-year students in the Fall semester. This feature can also be accessed by updating the course description through the Committee on Educational Policy.

**Course Rosters in ACdata and Moodle**
ACdata is the system of record for the College and is the source for official course rosters. If a student is not on the ACdata official roster, that student is not registered for the course and will not show up on a grade roster nor will the course be recorded on the student transcript.

Moodle is the learning management system for the College. Until the second month of a semester, Moodle rosters may include: students officially registered for the course, Five College students attempting to register for the course, and Amherst students who have placed a course on their preferred course list but have not officially registered for the course. Students not officially registered in the course will have a petition/petitioner notation following their name in Moodle. Petition/petitioner status allows the student temporary access to course information posted on Moodle.

By the second month of a semester, all petitioners and other individuals who have not been officially registered will be removed from Moodle rosters. The process of removing Moodle access for students not officially registered occurs after add/drop to allow Five College students have access to course materials while the registration process is underway between consortium institutions. In addition, the College allows time for students with various types of holds on their accounts (financial, health, etc.) to view course information while they are being advised and assisted through a hold clearance process. The petitioner status on Moodle allows students access to course work while they resolve holds.

Those seeking to audit a course at Amherst must obtain the permission of the faculty member teaching the course. The decision to accept an auditor rests
solely with the faculty member, who will define and communicate the ways in which the auditor may participate in the course. All auditors must adhere to the standards of the College. Those interested in auditing may request access to Moodle pages via a Course Audit Request Form available on the Registrar’s Office website.

Amherst College students register for courses at two points in the semester, pre-registration and add/drop. The current registration schedule is a product of a three year pilot program which began Spring Semester 2016.

The complete four week registration timeline is as follows, specific dates for this timeline are available on the Registrar’s Office website:

- **Advising Week:** Students should meet with advisors to discuss academic goals and schedule preparation for upcoming terms during this week. Advisors approve course selections with students during this time.

- **Pre-Registration Week One:** Students submit their advisor approved course selections in ACdata.

- **Roster Management Week:** Instructors with an over-enrolled capped course following pre-registration will be asked to cut their class rosters to a number greater than or equal to their approved cap by the fifth business day following pre-registration. While faculty are not required to reduce class rosters, students remaining on the roster at the end of the second registration period will be guaranteed enrollment (subject to meeting prerequisites and attendance during the first day of class).

- **Second Round Registration Week:** Advisor course approvals will remain in place from pre-registration, but advisors may need to approve additional substitute courses so that students can complete the registration process if they have changed course selections, or been removed from courses after roster management week.
  - Capped courses at or below their cap following pre-registration will have their caps enforced automatically by the registration system in the second round. Nevertheless, an instructor can always add students beyond the cap or by utilizing the “Convert course to Instructor Permission” in ACdata. (This tool will only be available if the course has reached the cap).
  - A student remaining on a roster at the end of the second registration period will be guaranteed enrollment in the course (barring unforeseen circumstances such as lack of available classroom space or equipment), provided the student attends the first class during add/drop (or submits an excuse from a Dean) and has satisfied any pre-requisites or grade requirements for the course.

- **Add/Drop Period:** At the start of each semester, students can make further changes to their course registration as necessary. Faculty may
also add students to courses during this time (room capacity permitting). All students must be registered for a full course load of four or four and one half courses by the end of the add/drop period.

- **Five College Registration:** Five College students will participate in the pre-registration process based on their home institutions registration dates. Following the second round of registration, Five College students remaining on the roster will not be guaranteed enrollment.

**Registration Requirements for Students**
All special permission forms must be submitted to the Office of Student Affairs by the end of the business day on the last day of add/drop.

All students (with the exception of Independent Scholars and those on a reduced course load) are required to register for four full courses each semester. Students may elect an additional half course in addition to the normal program and do not require special permission.

**Half Courses**
A student may only elect more than one half course in any semester with the consent of a class dean and academic advisor. If permission is granted by the class dean and advisor, the student may then register for three full courses and two half courses. Students may take a semester with three full courses and two half courses so long as they have a preceding semester with four full courses and one half-course which matches one of the half-courses in the semester with two halves or the two courses are a patching pair, such as two THDA half courses or two five college language courses.

In order for half courses to count towards the total courses required for graduation, students must match half courses to use as one full course. Music lessons, for example, must be taken for the same instrument. For students matriculated in the Fall of 2016 or later, the matching half courses can be taken in the same semester or in different semesters. Only two sets of matching half courses (two full courses) may count towards the total thirty-two courses required for graduation.

**Pass/Fail Registration**
Students may register for a maximum of two of the thirty-two courses required for graduation as pass/fail with written permission of the instructor. Only one course per semester may be taken as pass/fail and the signed permission form must be submitted by the last day of add/drop. Courses taken on this basis will receive either a “P” or an “F” final grade from the instructor. Instructors may however choose to assign usual grades for work submitted by students in the regular evaluation of work done during the semester. No grade point equivalent will be assigned to a “P” final grade.
Course Overload

Students who wish to take more than four and one half courses in a semester must have a strong academic record and obtain written permission of the advisor and class dean in order to register for this course overload. First semester students do not have an Amherst record and therefore cannot take an overload. If a first year student wishes to pursue more than four and one half courses, the dean of new students must submit written permission for this exception. Generally, first year students are not advised to register for a course overload in the first term.

Other students who need to make up a deficiency and who do not have a strong academic record should discuss other options with their class dean.

Reduced Course Load

In consultation with the Office of Accessibility Services and their class dean, some students are able to register for a reduced course load. Generally students will take three courses in a semester. For more information please see Office of Accessibility Services.

Five College Courses

Amherst College students may not register for Five College courses during their first semester at the College. Upon the start of the second semester, students may take up to two Five College courses per semester. Exceptions are made for students who are pursuing a Five College major and must take particular courses which would not be available in another term upon receiving written permission from the major advisor and class dean. First year and transfer students should be advised to wait until their second semester or later to take Five College courses.

Five College Registration

Students register for Five College courses via the following process:

- Enter a Five College placeholder on ACdata so the advisor and Registrar know that the student is planning to take a Five College course. Placeholders are one of the following:
  - UM_COURSE_REG (University of Massachusetts Course)
  - SC_COURSE_REG (Smith College Course)
  - MC_COURSE_REG (Mt. Holyoke College Course)
  - HC_COURSE_REG (Hampshire College Course)
- Enter information on the online Five College Course Request Form. This allows the registrar to send documentation to the other Five College Registrars.
- Submit a paper copy of the Five College permission form to the registrar with instructor and advisor signatures. This shows permissions are granted for a particular course. Only liberal arts courses are accepted for Five College Registration.
The Bachelor of Arts degree is awarded to students who:

- Complete thirty-two full semester courses or the equivalent and four years (eight semesters) of residence.
  - Transfer students must complete thirty-two full courses or the equivalent, at least sixteen of which are at Amherst, and must be in residence at Amherst for at least two years (four semesters).
  - All students who have withdrawn from or failed a course during any semester except their last two (final year) shall be allowed to graduate with thirty-one full courses or the equivalent, provided that they have met the residence requirement. Transfer students must also have completed at least fifteen full courses or the equivalent in-residence at Amherst.

- Complete the requirements for a major in a department or a group of departments, including a satisfactory performance in the comprehensive evaluation.

- Attain a general average of C- in the courses completed at Amherst and earn a grade of at least C in every course completed at another institution for transfer credit to Amherst.

**Course Withdrawal**

Students are generally expected to complete 32 courses and eight semesters in residence in order to be awarded the Bachelor of Arts degree. Students who have matriculated as first years may fail or drop a course (withdrawal) without penalty (“W”) during the first three years and may graduate with 31 courses. The student must follow guidelines exhibiting attempts at progress as determined by the class dean and should be advised to meet with the class dean before the sixth week of the semester. In most cases withdrawal will be allowed only if the student is failing the course despite following the plan worked out in consultation with the class dean.

Transfer students must complete 32 full semester courses or their equivalent, at least 16 of them at Amherst, and at least four semesters of residence at Amherst. However, a transfer student may withdraw from a course without penalty once and graduate with 31 courses, as long as that withdrawal is not during their senior year at the College.

Any student withdrawing or failing a course in the final year will have to make up this deficiency at another institution. Courses must be taken at an accredited higher education institution in the United States and taught in-person. No online or hybrid courses will be accepted for transfer credit. International students may be able to take courses outside of the United States in consultation with their class dean. Students should contact the Registrar’s Office for pre-approval of transfer credit before registering for any transfer course.
Major Declaration
Liberal arts education seeks to develop the student’s awareness and understanding of the individual and of the world’s physical and social environments. If one essential object in the design of education at Amherst is breadth of understanding, another purpose, equally important, is mastery of one or more areas of knowledge in depth. Juniors and seniors are required to concentrate their studies by pursuing a major. Majors allow students to gain specific knowledge of a field and its special concerns, and to master and appreciate the skills needed in that disciplined effort.

Major Requirements
A major normally consists of at least eight courses pursued under the direction of a department or special group. Students may change their majors at any time, provided that they will be able to complete the new program before graduation. Students must declare their major by the last day of classes of their second semester sophomore year.

Students may complete the requirement of at least eight courses within one department. They must complete at least six courses within one department and the remaining two courses in related fields approved by the department.

Some students may wish to declare a major in more than one department or program. This curricular option is available, although it entails special responsibilities. At Amherst, departments are solely responsible for defining the content and structure of an acceptable program of study for majors. Students who elect a double or triple major must present the signatures of all academic advisors when registering for each semester’s courses and they must, of course, fulfill the graduation requirements and comprehensive examinations established by each of the academic programs. In addition, double or multiple majors may not credit courses approved for either major toward the other without the explicit consent of an announced departmental policy or the signature of a departmental chairperson. In their senior year, students with a double or multiple major must verify their approved courses with both academic advisors before registering for their last semester at the College.

Interdisciplinary Majors
Students who desire to construct an interdisciplinary major will submit a proposed program, endorsed by one or more professors from each of the departments concerned, to the Committee on Academic Standing and Special Majors. Under ordinary circumstances, the proposal will be submitted during the first semester of the junior year and not under any circumstances later than the eighth week of the second junior semester.

An interdisciplinary major includes a minimum of six upper-level courses and a thesis plan. Upon approval of the program by the Committee on Academic Standing and Special Majors, an ad hoc advisory committee of three professors
appointed by the Committee will have all further responsibility for approving any possible modifications in the program, administering an appropriate comprehensive examination, reviewing the thesis and making recommendations for the degree with or without honors. Information on preparation, form, and submission of proposed interdisciplinary programs is available in the Office of Student Affairs.

**Comprehensive Exams**
A part of the major requirement in every department is an evaluation of the student’s comprehension in the major field of study. This evaluation may be based on a special written examination or upon any other performance deemed appropriate by each department. The mode of the evaluation need not be the same for all the majors within a department, and, indeed, may be designed individually to test the skills each student has developed.

The comprehensive exam or project should be completed by the seventh week of the second semester of the senior year. Any student whose comprehension is judged to be inadequate will have two opportunities for reevaluation: one not later than the last day of classes of the second semester of the senior year, and the other during the next college year. Notification of completion of comprehensive exams must be sent to the Registrar’s Office for inclusion on a student’s transcript.

**Degree with Honors**
Latin honors are awarded to students completing a thesis within their major department or program, depending on the major department’s recommendation and the student’s graduating cumulative average. English honors are awarded to students solely on the basis of performance in course work. The awarding of both Latin and English honors will be made by the Faculty of the College, and will appear on the diploma.

The following guidelines have been voted on by the faculty regarding awarding degrees with honors:

**Latin Honors**
- Candidates eligible for the degree *summa cum laude* must have a minimum overall grade point average in the top 25% of their class and have received a recommendation of *summa* based on a thesis or comparable work from a department or program in which they have majored. In addition, the theses of candidates for the degree *summa cum laude* will be reviewed by the Committee of Six, who will transmit its recommendation to the Faculty. Candidates will also have their entire records reviewed by the dean of the faculty and the Committee of Six, who will transmit their recommendations to the Faculty.
- Candidates eligible for the degree *magna cum laude* must have a minimum overall grade point average in the top 25% of their class and...
have received a recommendation of *magna* based on a thesis or comparable work from a department or program in which they have majored. Although each department or program may define additional criteria upon which it will base its recommendation, the candidate must submit a thesis or comparable work that is judged by the department or program to be of *magna* quality. Candidates will also qualify for the degree *magna cum laude* if they have been recommended for *summa cum laude* and are in the top 40% but not the top 25% of their class and have otherwise met the requirements for the degree *summa cum laude*.

- Candidates eligible for the degree *cum laude* must have received a recommendation of *cum* based on a thesis or comparable work from a department or program in which they have majored. Although each department or program may define additional criteria upon which it will base its recommendation, the candidate must submit a thesis or comparable work that is judged by the department or program to be of *cum* quality. Students recommended for *summa sum laude* who are not in the top 40% of their class will graduate *cum laude*. Student recommended for magna cum laude who are not in the top 25% of their class will graduate *cum laude*.

*English Honors - Graduation with Distinction*

Candidates eligible for a degree with Distinction must have an overall grade point average in the top 25% of their class.

The Registrar must have all senior grades by the senior grade deadline in order to calculate honors. Grades for students in the “E” graduating class are also required by the senior grading deadline so that the Registrar may clear students for Early Participation in Commencement.