Academic Policies and Procedures

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Deadlines Policies and Practices

Academic calendar dates are available on the college website.
https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/academic_calendar. It is important to review
deadlines with your students; some forms must be submitted before the end of add/drop.

Policies pertaining to topics in this document may be found in the Student Handbook,
College Catalog and the Faculty Handbook and on college website.

- Amherst College Catalog:
  https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/registrar/AC_Course_Info_tools/ac_catalog

- Faculty Handbook:
  https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/dean_faculty/fph.

- Student Handbook:
  https://www.amherst.edu/offices/student-affairs/handbook

Add/Drop

Add/Drop begins the first day of classes each term and ends on the eighth business day of the term. Students are expected to be fully registered in classes by this date. Full load is 4 or 4 ½ courses. A student may enroll in 3 ½ courses IF they have taken 4 ½ in a preceding semester. The two half courses do not have to be in consecutive semesters but they must match. (Music Lesson Piano and Music Lesson: Piano, is a match; Contemporary Dance: Hip hop and Contemporary Dance: Ballet would also be a match.)

Pre-registration Pilot Process Following pre-registration each semester, a second registration period will be held after which students remaining on course rosters will be guaranteed enrollment (barring unforeseen circumstances, such as lack of available classroom space or equipment), provided they attend the first class during add/drop and have satisfied all pre-requisites or grade requirements for the courses.
Managing Course Enrollments during Pre-registration through Add/Drop:

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 their course description through the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), specifying in particular 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.

I. The complete registration timeline and features of the proposal are as follows:

1. **Advising week**: Students should meet with advisors to discuss academic goals and schedule preparation for upcoming terms.

2. **Pre-registration**: Students submit their advisor approved course selections in ACDATA.

3. **Roster management**: 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 reducing the class roster is not mandatory, students remaining on the roster at the end of the second registration period will be guaranteed enrollment (subject to the conditions specified above).

4. **2nd round registration**: 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

   a. 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).

   b. 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.

5. **Add/Drop**

   a. Students can make further changes as necessary.
b. Faculty can add students (room capacity permitting).

6. **Five College considerations:**
   a. Five College students will participate in the pre-registration process.
   b. Following the second round of registration, Five College students remaining on the roster will not be guaranteed enrollment.

II. The proposed pilot will be in place for three academic years, beginning with pre-registration for fall 2016, after which the CEP will report back to the faculty for vote on continuation or modification of the registration process.

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**Five College Course Registration**

Information about 5-college registration is available on the Registrar webpage: [https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/registrar/fivecolleges](https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/registrar/fivecolleges).

**Three Step Registration Process for Students:**

1. Enter a 5-college placeholder on ACDATA so advisor and Registrar know that the student is planning to take a 5-college course
   a. UM_COURSE_REG (University of Massachusetts Course)
   b. SC_COURSE_REG (Smith College Course)
   c. MC_COURSE_REG (Mt. Holyoke College Course)
   d. HC_COURSE_REG (Hampshire College Course)

2. Enter information on the online 5-college Course Request Form. This allows Registrar to send documentation to the other 5-college registrars.

3. Submit paper 5-college registration form to the Registrar with instructor and advisor signatures. *This shows permissions are granted for a particular course. Only liberal arts courses will be processed by Registrar.*

Students may take 2 5-college courses per term beginning the second semester at Amherst. *(First semester students- first years and transfers) should be advised to wait to take 5-college courses.)*

Courses must be liberal arts. If there is a question about the eligibility of a course, contact the registrar’s office. The registrar will review the syllabus for a course in question. If there is still uncertainty following the review by the Registrar, the Associate Dean of Faculty will review the
syllabus and when necessary the most closely associated department will be asked to review the syllabus.

### Course Requirements

All students except Independent Scholars are required to elect four full courses each semester and may elect an additional half course. The election of a half course in addition to the normal program is at the discretion of the student and does not require special permission. A student may not elect more than one half course in any semester except by consent of his or her class dean and academic advisor. In such cases the student’s program will be three full courses and two half courses.

### Pass/Fail

**Deadline:** Signed forms must be submitted to the Registrar by the last day of add/drop.

*College Catalog, section IV General Regulations/Pass/Fail.*

Amherst College students may choose, with the permission of the instructor, a pass/fail arrangement in two of the 32 courses required for the degree, but not in more than one course in any one semester. The choice of a pass/fail alternative must be submitted by the last day of add/drop and must have the approval of all the student’s advisors. No grade-point equivalent will be assigned to a “Pass,” but courses taken on this basis will receive either a “P” or an “F” from the instructor, although in the regular evaluation of work done during the semester the instructor may choose to assign the usual grades for work submitted by students exercising this option.

### Special Permissions

**Deadline:** Permission forms must be submitted to the Registrar by the last day of add/drop.

*College Catalog, Section IV, General Regulations and Degree Requirements/ Course Requirements*

**Two Half Courses:** Students must match half courses to use as one full course. (Music lessons: Violin would need to be matched with another music lesson: Piano). Students may take a semester with 3 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. The two halves could match in one semester.
**Overload:** Students may enroll in 4 and 1/2 half courses without special permission. Students who wish to take more than 4 1/2 courses must have a strong academic record and obtain permission of the advisor and class dean.

First semester students do not have an Amherst record and therefore cannot take an overload. If a first year wishes to pursue more than 4 and 1/2 course, she/he should speak with the Dean of New Students about an exception. We have found that students acclimating to Amherst do not fare well academically when taking an overload in the first term.

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

**More than 2- 5-college Courses in a term:** Students may take up to two courses at the other 5-colleges per semester after the first term.

Students are normally only allowed to take 2 5-college courses per term. Exceptions are made for students who are pursuing a 5-college major and must take particular courses which would not be available in another term.

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**Rosters**

Class rosters are available in Moodle and in ACDATA. ACDATA is the system of record for the college. If the student is not on the ACDATA roster, the student is NOT officially registered for the course and will not show up on your grade roster nor will the course be recorded on the student transcript.

1) **ACDATA:** Rosters in ACDATA include ONLY students officially enrolled in your course. Students on this roster will show up on your grade rosters for the term. Only students on this roster will have the course posted to their record.

2) **MOODLE:** Rosters in Moodle include:

   a. students registered for the course
   
   b. 5-college students attempting to register for the course and
   
   c. Amherst students who have placed your course on their preferred course list but have not officially registered for the course.

   i. Students NOT officially registered will have a petition/petitioner notation following her/his name in Moodle. Petition/petitioner allows the student temporary access to your course. The Registrar will end this access and
wipe petitioners from your roster 1-2 weeks following add/drop.

ii. AUDITORS: Auditors may access your course via a Course Audit Request Form. https://lms.ats.amherst.edu/login.php

Why does it take so long to have my roster cleared of petitioners?

The petitioner status gives students access to your course while the registration process is underway.

- 5-College students have access to course materials while the registration process is underway. Forms from the other colleges in the consortium take time to be received and processed by the registrar which usually goes beyond the last day of add/drop.

- Amherst students with holds are being advised and assisted through a hold clearance process. The petitioner status allows students access to course work while they resolve holds.

Grading

Grading deadlines are set by faculty policy. Midterm grading policy may be found in the Amherst College Catalog section IV under Records and Reports. Final grading deadlines are listed in the faculty handbook section IV.

- **Midterm Grades:** Midterm warning letters are sent from the Office of Student Affairs to students who receive grades of “D” or “F” after the end of the seventh week of classes each semester. Midterm grades are also available online in ACDATA.

  Check the academic calendar for specific deadline for submission of midterm grades in ACDATA. https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/academic_calendar.

- **Final grading deadlines** are posted on the academic calendar based on policy. (See Faculty Handbook, Section IV, Faculty Responsibilities, Academic Regulations, Meetings and Committees H: Grade Deadlines)

  - Fall semester: **Final grades are due the noon of the first Monday in January.**

  - Spring semester: by 9:00 am of the Monday after the last day of examinations for senior grades and by noon of the Wednesday after the last day of examinations for all other grades.
Beginning spring 2016 we will also need grades for students in the “E” graduating class so the Registrar may clear students for “Early Participation in Commencement”. [https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/registrar/policy-on-walking-in-commencement](https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/registrar/policy-on-walking-in-commencement).

**Completion of Work and Policy on Extensions**

*Faculty Handbook, Faculty Responsibilities: Completion of Work and Policy on Extensions.*

In conformity with the practice established for the first semester of 1971-72, and as a general practice of this and subsequent semesters, the Faculty rules that all course work in a given semester must be submitted by the last day of classes at 5:00 p.m.

Extensions beyond this time will be given only for extraordinary reasons, and only when the student has obtained the signatures of the instructor in the course and the Class Dean. Work not submitted by the date set in the extension will not be accepted for credit.

Only for medical reasons or those of grave personal emergency will extensions be granted beyond the second day after the examination period.

*When should I report an extension?*

*Faculty should be working with class deans on any extension which goes beyond the second day after the examination period. This will assist class deans and the registrar when following up with missing grades and students experiencing medical or personal issues.*

**Degree Requirements**

*Degree requirements are listed in the college catalog Section IV, under general regulations and degree requirements. In addition to the list below, first-time first year students are also required to register for a First Year Seminar during their first semester at Amherst.*

Each student is responsible for meeting all degree requirements and for ensuring that the Registrar’s Office has received all credentials. The Bachelor of Arts degree is awarded to students who:

1. Complete 32 full semester courses *and* four years (eight semesters) of residence, except that a student who has dropped a course without penalty during the first year, or who has failed a course during the first or second
year, shall be allowed to graduate, provided he or she has been four years in residence at the College and has satisfactorily completed 31 full courses.

Transfer students must complete 32 full semester courses or their equivalent, at least 16 of them at Amherst, and at least two years of residence at Amherst, except that a transfer student who has dropped a course without penalty during his or her first semester at Amherst shall be allowed to graduate with one less full course.

2. Complete the requirements for a major in a department or a group of departments, including a satisfactory performance in the comprehensive evaluation. Standard full courses are equal to four semester credits each. Half courses are equal to two semester credits. Our course system considers all standard full courses to have equal weight toward completing the degree requirements. Courses typically meet for at least three hours a week, with the expectation that additional time may be spent in lab, discussion, studio, film viewing, or preparatory work.

3. Attain a general average of 6 in the courses completed at Amherst and a grade of at least C in every course completed at another institution for transfer credit to Amherst.

### First Year Rule

Students are expected to complete 32 courses and eight semesters to earn the Bachelor of Arts degree. A student, who has failed or dropped a course (withdrawal) without penalty ("W") during the first year, shall be allowed to graduate with 31 courses. (College Catalog, Section IV, Degree Requirements)

The student must show she/he is using a tutor (if appropriate), and following other guidelines as determined by the dean of new students. The student must continue to attend and do all work during the process of working with the dean of new students. 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 dean of new students.

Students should be advised to speak with their class dean as soon as possible and **before the sixth week of the semester**.
First Year, Sophomore and Transfer Rules may not be used in later years. If a student has not used the first year rule, sophomore rule or transfer rule, it may not be retroactively applied.

**Sophomore Rule**

A student, who has not used the first year rule and fails a course in their second year, may graduate with 31 courses. However, a student in the sophomore, junior or senior year who withdraws from a course must make up that course in the summer following that academic year and prior to return in the fall semester of the following academic year.

**Transfer Rule**

Transfer students must complete 32 full semester courses or their equivalent, at least 16 of them at Amherst, and at least two years of residence at Amherst, except that a transfer student who has withdrawn from a course without penalty during his or her first semester at Amherst shall be allowed to graduate with one less full course.

**Change of Grade Process**

The change of grade process starts with the instructor of the course. The student must seek a change with the instructor first. If the student is not satisfied with the answer, the student may appeal to the Dean of Faculty, see Student Handbook: The Resolution of Student Grievances with a Member of the Faculty.

1) Instructor of Course may log into ACDATA and select Change of Grade Request from the menu.

2) The instructor selects from a drop down list of rosters (list includes only their courses taught within one academic year).

3) From the roster, the instructor selects the student and enters the new requested grade.

4) A reason for the change is entered in a comment field.

5) Once the instructor clicks on submit, a series of emails are sent to the Chief Student Affairs Officer, the Registrar, Associate Registrar, and two administrators in the offices of the Chief SAO and Dean of Faculty’s offices.

6) Once the Chief approves, an email is sent to the Dean of Faculty for approval.
7) Once the Dean approves an email is sent to the other parties in the list above and the grade is changed.

8) If the CSAO or Dean has additional questions, they may request more information from the instructor of the course via the ACADATA form. If either party denies the request, the grade is not changed by the Registrar and all parties are notified of the outcome.

Major Declaration
Liberal 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. Upperclassmen are required to concentrate their studies—to select and pursue a major—in order to deepen their understanding; to gain specific knowledge of a field and its special concerns, and to master and appreciate the skills needed in that disciplined effort.

A major normally consists of at least eight courses pursued under the direction of a department or special group. A major may begin in either the first or second year and must be declared by the end of the second year. Students may change their majors at any time, provided that they will be able to complete the new program before graduation.

Students are expected to declare their major by the last day of classes their second semester sophomore year.

Departmental Majors
The major program can be devised in accordance with either of two plans:

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 Amherst 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 major must present the signatures of both academic advisors when registering for each semester’s courses and they must, of course, fulfill the graduation requirements and comprehensive examinations established by two academic programs. In addition, double 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 major must verify their approved courses with both academic advisors before registering for their last semester at the College.

### Interdisciplinary Majors

Students with special needs 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. The program will include 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.

A part of the major requirement in every department is an evaluation of the student’s comprehension in his or her 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 evaluation 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.

### Degree with Honors

The requirements for graduation with a degree with honors are as follows:

The degree Bachelor of Arts with Honors is awarded at graduation to students whose academic records give evidence of particular merit. Latin Honors are awarded to students completing a thesis within their major department or program. 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. In making such awards, the Faculty will observe the following guidelines:

**Latin Honors**

1. 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.

2. 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*.

3. 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.

**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 in on time to calculate honors. Beginning spring 2016 we will also need grades for students in the “E” graduating class so the Registrar may clear students for “Early Participation in Commencement”.

[https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/registrar/policy-on-walking-in-commencement](https://www.amherst.edu/academiclife/registrar/policy-on-walking-in-commencement).