UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK SENATES

ACADEMIC POLICY AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

MINUTES

The Academic Policy and Procedures Committee met at 11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, November 14, 2007 via video-conference. In Fredericton the meeting was held in Room 126 of Marshall D’Avray Hall. On the Saint John campus the meeting was held in the McMurray Room.


Also Present: S. DeVarenne, Associate University Secretary, B. LeBlanc, Assistant to the Senate Secretary (Saint John)

Regrets: D. Fleming, M. Kamel, J. Potter

1. Approval of Agenda of 14 November 2007 and Minutes of 19 March 2007 (circulated with agenda)

K. Hamer welcomed the Committee Members to the first meeting of the Academic Policy & Procedures Committee for 2007-08 and asked members of the Committee to introduce themselves.

MOTION 1, 1 Davies/Farrell “That the Committee approve the agenda, as circulated and the Minutes of 19 March 2007, as circulated.”

CARRIED

2. Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising.

3. Proposal from Faculty of Arts (Fredericton) on Honours Designations (circulated with agenda)

J. Fritz referred the Committee to the information circulated with the agenda which provides the motion from the Faculty of Arts (Fredericton) recommending that Honours designations for graduates in Arts be changed from “First Class Honours” and “Second Class Honours” to “High Honours” and “Honours.” The Faculty of Arts is hoping to avoid the suggestion that students completing an Honours program are “Second Class”.
3. **Proposal from Faculty of Arts (Fredericton) on Honours Designations** (cont’d)

   It was noted that the Faculty of Business Administration on the Fredericton campus uses “First Class Honours” and “Honours”.

   The Committee discussed concerns regarding the use of the designation “High Honours”, noting that the use of “high” is not consistent with language used at other institutions and its meaning may be unclear.

   Members of the Committee also expressed concern about the use of different terminology for honours designations from the Faculties of Arts on the Fredericton and Saint John campuses.

   The Committee noted that the criteria for Honours programs is set out in individual degree program regulations.

   Following further discussion, the Committee asked the Secretary to write to each Dean on behalf of the Committee, asking them to take to their respective Faculty Councils for consideration, a proposal to move to common nomenclature that would see honours degrees designated as “First Class Honours” and “Honours”. It was suggested that Faculties be asked to reply before January 1, 2008.

   As an indication of its support for the proposed common nomenclature, the Committee approved the following motion:

   **MOTION 3, 1** Buckley/Maier “That the Committee propose common nomenclature be used for honours designations such that students graduating from any honours degree program at UNB would be listed either as “First Class Honours” or as “Honours”, and request feedback from all Faculties on their proposal prior to making a recommendation to the Senates.”

   The Committee noted that there are other areas where inconsistent nomenclature is used. This matter may be considered further in future.

   **CARRIED**
4. **Request to Consider Alternatives to Requirement for Inclusion of Plagiarism Regulation in Every Course Outline** (circulated with agenda)

The Committee received a request from a faculty member to consider alternatives to the requirement for inclusion of the plagiarism regulation in every course outline. He expressed concern that this results in students receiving the same material a number of times. S. Strople explained that the inclusion of information on plagiarism in course outlines is pursuant to a motion passed at the 29 March 2005 meeting of the Fredericton Senate. At a minimum, this motion calls for the inclusion of the definition of plagiarism and the associated penalties.

N. Ouellette and L. Skinner noted that the students on the Fredericton Senate brought this motion forward to Senate in an attempt to increase awareness among students about plagiarism. S. Strope reminded the Committee that, this is a practice on the Fredericton campus resulting from a specific motion at a Fredericton Senate meeting. As it was not brought forward as a University-wide matter, the regulations do not indicate a requirement for inclusion of information on plagiarism and consequently this practice is directed to the Fredericton campus only and is enforced by the Deans. It was suggested that some addition to the University regulation on course outlines could be a way to address the concern. The Committee also noted that the existing regulation allows for course outlines to be circulated electronically.

The request suggested that there be a process at the time a student registers for a course which requires students to acknowledge their awareness of the plagiarism regulation. Student members of the Committee noted that most students register for courses in the spring of the previous year and expressed concern that this information delivery model may be limited in its effectiveness because of the length of time between registration and actual class participation.

The Committee considered the possibility of moving to a University-wide policy that could be included in the general regulations on Course Syllabus, Examination and Evaluation of Course Work that would incorporate reference to the appropriate Regulations on plagiarism. Members discussed whether reference to additional Academic Offences should be included, but noted that it is more common for students to commit plagiarism through genuine misunderstanding. One member of the Committee expressed concern about the use of partial information taken from the calendar or the possibility of paraphrasing in a way that could be seen as inconsistent with the University Regulations. It was suggested that the committee consider draft wording for revision of the general regulations at its next meeting. This wording could include more detailed information on plagiarism and a more general reference to other academic offenses.
4. **Request to Consider Alternatives to Requirement for Inclusion of Plagiarism Regulation in Every Course Outline (cont’d)**

The Committee asked the Secretary to work with the two Registrars and N. Ouellette, a student member of the Committee, to prepare the draft wording for consideration at the next meeting.

5. **Transfer Credit Assessment** (circulated by e-mail)
   - **Inter-UNB Transfers eg. between campuses**
   - **Inter-institutional Transfers from other Universities and Colleges**

J. Fritz drew the Committee’s attention to the one page discussion document which was circulated by e-mail in advance of the meeting. She noted that both campuses have some extreme examples of transfer credit issues, areas of inconsistency, and problems in areas where credit transfer should be straightforward. There is a need for increased student focus in the transfer credit process. In addition, there is a growing interest in providing increased transferability between programs within New Brunswick and facilitating student mobility.

During discussion it was noted that there is a pan-Canadian protocol on Transfer Credits under which Canadian universities, including UNB, have agreed to accept transfer credits from other Canadian universities.

The proposed recommendations represent high level principles that could provide guidance to other committees to take action, working toward more effective transfer credit assessment processes and protocols.

During further discussion, K. Hamer explained that the Registrar’s Offices normally oversee the transfer credit assessment process. However, depending on the course, the request may be forwarded through Faculties and Departments to individual faculty members for assessment, which can make the overall process time consuming and introduce inconsistencies in interpretation.

**MOTION 5.1** Maier/Buckley “That the Committee recommend to Senate approval of the following guiding principles on transfer credits:

1. UNB endorses the guiding principle that transfer credits for UNB courses between programs at UNB, both within and between campuses, are as seamless, transparent, and timely as possible, with the ease of access for our students the primary consideration in decision making in the identification of transfer credits.
5. Transfer Credit Assessment (cont’d)

Motion 5, 1 (cont’d)

2. UNB endorses the guiding principle that transfer credits from other Canadian universities be made as seamless, transparent, and timely as possible, with ease of access of transfer students being the primary consideration in decision making in the identification of transfer credits.

3. UNB makes it a priority to develop improved mechanisms for transparent and timely identification of transfer credits for students seeking to transfer from a Community College or similar program to a UNB degree program.”

G. Davies noted that these principles would apply to both graduate and undergraduate programs.

D. Hinton noted that the first two objectives are in keeping with the pan-Canadian protocol and suggested that they be amended to indicate that the credit will be given to the extent that it applies to the degree program. He noted that the Transfer credit should be consistent with the degree program requirements. In addition, in reference to the second principle, he noted that UNB receives a number of requests for transfers from institutions outside of Canada. He suggested that “other Canadian universities” be replaced by “other recognized universities (Canadian and international)”. The mover and seconder accepted these suggestions as friendly amendments to the motion.

J. Fritz noted that the intent of these guiding principles is to express the University’s commitment to transfer credit policies and practices that are student centred and student focussed and to guide the campuses as they work to facilitate student mobility.

MOTION 5, 1 was CARRIED, as amended such that each guiding principle should read as follows (shown in bold italics): “UNB endorses the guiding principle that, consistent with the degree program requirements, transfer credits for UNB courses ...” and in guiding principle 2., “other Canadian universities” should be replaced by “other recognized universities (Canadian and international)”.

6. Proposed Draft Calendar of Academic Dates for 2008-09 (circulated with agenda)

D. Hinton guided the Committee through the proposed draft Calendar of Academic Dates for 2008-09. Referring to the current guidelines for development of the Calendar of Academic Dates, he drew the Committee’s attention to two key issues: the possibility of moving the winter term break from the first full week of March to the third full week of February and the start date for the Winter Term 2009.
6. **Proposed Draft Calendar of Academic Dates for 2008-09** (cont’d)

The Committee considered the proposed start date for the Winter Term 2009, Monday, January 5. It was noted that the University would be open on Friday, January 2. However, members of the Committee expressed concern regarding access to advising for students on that day and the need to allow time for both new and returning students to have reasonable access to University services. Another member of the Committee noted that a Monday start date would require Residence Staff to be in place and ready to work on Friday, January 2, which could be difficult for Residence Staff who also are students. The Committee suggested that the start of classes for the Winter Term 2009 be Tuesday, January 6.

Student members of the Committee noted that there have been concerns among student leaders regarding the start of Orientation on the Fredericton campus. There is strong sentiment that the first day of Orientation should be moved back to Friday, August 29. It has been suggested that the current structure makes it difficult for student leaders to focus on their own academic careers while planning and overseeing orientation events. It was noted that there is particular difficulty with respect to the Shinerama event held on Saturday at the end of the Orientation week. It was noted that Shinerama is held on Wednesday in Saint John.

J. Fritz reminded the Committee that the start of Orientation was moved from the Friday before to the Tuesday after Labour day out of consideration for the families of students moving into residence. Families often like to travel with the student and have an opportunity to help them settle into residence and look around the campus. She suggested that it would be a step backward to return to a Friday start for Orientation.

The Committee discussed the proposal to move the Winter Term Break to the third full week of February (February 16 - 20, 2009). It was noted that the Registrar has spoken to representatives from St. Thomas University and that they are waiting to hear from UNB on its decision with respect to this issue. It was noted that the date was initially moved to match the public school system break in order to accommodate mature students and young faculty with children. At that time, the school system break was the last week of February, rather than the first week of March, so there was only a one-week difference. Members of the Committee noted the difficulty in motivating students for the three weeks of class time that remain after the break.

The Committee considered the possibility of putting a reading day in place in February or implementing a full holiday such as “Charter Day”. The Committee concurred that pedagogically it made more sense to move the Winter Term Break to the third full week of February.
6. **Proposed Draft Calendar of Academic Dates for 2008-09** (cont’d)

   **MOTION 6, 1** Maier/Renner “That the Committee recommend moving the Winter Term Break from the first full week of March to the third full week of February effective for the Winter Term Break in 2009, and ask the Fredericton campus Registrar to discuss this recommendation with St. Thomas and to report back to the Committee at its next meeting.”

   **CARRIED**

7. **Revised Policy on Privacy and Access to On-line Student Information** (circulated by e-mail)

   J. Fritz noted that a number of concerns have been brought to her attention regarding student privacy and the amount of information available to instructors during the time when students are registered in their classes. A group of representatives from both campuses discussed these concerns and have proposed a number of recommendations for limiting access to student information as outlined in the document circulated to Committee members by e-mail in advance of the meeting. The group began by looking at the information available through links from the on-line class list and sorted this information into six areas: 1. student contact information, 2. student high school marks, 3. student transcripts, 4. class schedule, 5. examination schedule, 6. student picture. Various levels of access were recommended for each of these areas, depending on the needs of those who have access to student information. For example, instructors would not normally need access to information such as student addresses, phone numbers, gender or to high school marks.

   **MOTION 7, 1** Fritz/Maier “That the Committee recommend to Senate approval of the following changes to the Regulation on Confidentiality, Security and Release of Student Academic Records:

   • Addresses, phone numbers, and gender should not be available on-line to instructors or academic advisors. If there is an argument for emergency use, it should reside with one designated person in an administrative office, available through someone designated for Dean access.

   • The link to student high school marks should be available for academic advisors and deans, but not instructors.
7. **Revised Policy on Privacy and Access to On-line Student Information** (cont’d)

Motion 7, 1 (cont’d)

- The link to student transcripts should be available for academic advisors and deans, but not instructors.
- The link to student class schedules should be available for academic advisors and deans, but not instructors.
- The link to student exam schedules should be available for academic advisors and deans, but not instructors.
- Students will be asked to opt-in for allowing their picture to be available to advisors and deans, rather than the current opt-out. Communication to students on how the opt-in works will be increased.”

During further discussion it was noted that University security personnel would continue to have on-line access to the digitized image of the student identification photograph.

One member of the Committee asked if it would be possible to have advisors’ access to a student’s high school marks removed after second or third year. J. Fritz indicated that she would take this suggestion under advisement, but was concerned that it would not be possible to implement such a recommendation at this time.

Motion 7, 1 was **CARRIED**.

J. Fritz noted that the group working on this issue will be considering a number of additional points as follows:

1. The lack of access to on-line transcripts for instructors will have an impact on how the manage on-line prerequisite reports for their courses. Guidelines will be developed for handling these situations. These guidelines will be communicated to deans, advisors and faculty members.

2. Faculties will be reminded that there is a class cancellation facility available on their e-services portal, as well as the ability to e-mail their entire class with a message.

3. Faculties will be reminded to delete all faculty and staff who should no longer have access to “advisor” status. We will be diligent about keeping the access restricted to those who have current need.

7. **Revised Policy on Privacy and Access to On-line Student Information** (cont’d)
4. UNB Phone Book student data (e-mail, program, year in program) will be available only through a secure UNB-only site rather than fully public through the on-line Phone Book. Faculty and staff Phone Book information will remain public.

5. Instructors will not be able to have a class composite picture produced from their ID photos, as has been requested from time to time.

6. All requests for special student and employee data/reports should go through the Registrar’s Office, the School of Graduate Studies, or HR.

7. Faculties will be made aware of our legal obligations to treat student and personnel information with privacy. Guidance will be given in requesting consent when collecting personal information for constructive purposes. It is the law that people can opt out and must be given the option. People need to know what information is being kept on them and how it is being used.

8. **Other Business**

8.1. **Course Replacements and the Calculation of Grade Point Averages**

At the 19 March 2007 meeting of the Academic Policy & Procedures Committee, the Committee heard from M. Bradley regarding his suggestion that the University return to a regulation that would allow a student to replace past courses attempts with a more successful subsequent course result. The Committee requested additional information on the current practices at other institutions.

T. Buckley reported that he contacted registrars at universities and community colleges across Canada using the Registrar’s List Serve. In response to his inquiry on their practices, an overwhelming majority indicated that they do not allow replacement of courses. He also asked about practices regarding calculation of the cumulative grade point average (cgpa). He noted that there were a few exceptions from within the college system where repeat attempts were not included in the cgpa, but that the majority of institutions include all attempts. Based on this feedback it was felt that the current regulation represents best practice among Canadian universities.

The meeting adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

Stephen Strople
Secretary