

Regulation Related to Fostering Undergraduate Student Success

I. Required Semester Credit Hours for Baccalaureate Degree Programs. Baccalaureate degree programs shall require no more than 120 semester credit hours. An institution with compelling reasons as to why a program's requirements must exceed 120 semester credit hours may petition to have an exception approved by its board of trustees. Compelling reasons include, but are not limited to: programmatic accreditation standards; licensure requirements; and other state, federal, or professional regulations.

An institution must report any exceptions granted by its board of trustees, and the reasons for those exceptions, to the Board of Governors and the president by the end of calendar year 2018 and annually thereafter.

Any program authorized by the Board of Governors to require 135 semester credit hours or more shall be officially designated as a five-year baccalaureate program.

A. Constituent institutions shall observe these regulations in all proposals for new degree programs.

B. This section applies to individual baccalaureate degree programs, not to credit hour requirements for students who earn more than one major.

C. Constituent institutions must publicize the required number of semester credit hours and projected length of full-time enrollment required to obtain each baccalaureate degree in both printed and online catalogs. During new student orientation sessions and in publications for students and parents, constituent institutions must provide a description of factors that may prolong the length of time to complete a degree.

D. The UNC System Office will maintain a catalog of all active baccalaureate degree programs and their required hours, and the Board of Governors will periodically review compliance with this 120-credit limitation, including approved exceptions to that limitation.

This section is effective as of the beginning of the fall 2019 semester, and shall not affect the credit hour requirements in place at the time of registration for students who registered at a constituent institution prior to the fall 2019 semester. Students who registered at a constituent institution prior to the fall 2019 semester will have the option to elect into the fall 2019 catalog.

II. Student Success Policies. Constituent institutions must have policies addressing student success, including Satisfactory Academic Progress and Good Academic Standing.

A. Satisfactory Academic Progress and Good Academic Standing. Satisfactory Academic Progress and Good Academic Standing are determined by:

1. Cumulative Grade Point Average; and
 2. Ratio of attempted to completed semester credit hours.
- B. The implementation of these criteria shall include the following:
1. Upon initial admission to a UNC constituent institution, a student is in Good Academic Standing.
 2. All undergraduates in the University of North Carolina System must earn and maintain a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 to be considered in Good Academic Standing. Constituent institutions may choose to utilize term GPA in determining Good Academic Standing.
 3. All constituent institutions must develop an academic progress policy that defines the ratio of attempted to earned semester credit hours required for continued enrollment. Federal Title IV regulations for Satisfactory Academic Progress shall be the minimum allowable standard.
 4. If a student meets the criteria in each of the standards above, then the student is considered to be making Satisfactory Academic Progress, remains in Good Academic Standing, and is eligible to continue enrollment at that UNC constituent institution.
 5. Constituent institutions may develop policies that allow students falling below one or more of the standards to be placed on academic warning and/or academic probation¹ as opposed to being academically dismissed or academically suspended. These policies must, at a minimum, be in accord with federal Title IV regulations and should include the use of academic success contracts where appropriate.
 6. Constituent institution policies related to this section must be published in all campus academic and financial aid materials, both printed and online. Students should be informed of these policies at new student orientation.
- C. The Course Adjustment Period (i.e., “Drop/Add”). The Course Adjustment Period will be established as the time during which students may drop or add courses without academic penalty (i.e., no impact on the Grade Point Average (GPA) or attempted hours). Constituent institutions may choose to make the period for adding courses and the period for dropping courses the same or different; however, both the drop and add periods must be concluded by the census date.² The implementation of this section shall include the following:
1. Constituent institutions may set policies that allow faculty to drop students administratively if they do not attend the course by the end of the Course Adjustment Period.³ These policies must be publicized to students. Faculty using this option must have a limited window to take such action in order to complete the drop without causing the student to incur financial penalties other than those normally applied during the course adjustment period. Constituent institutions may allow faculty to add students into those seats in a timely fashion under guidelines set by the constituent institution.
 2. Constituent institution business practices⁴ determine if adjustments made during Course Adjustment Period result in any refund or additional charges to the student. Any financial repercussions to students must be publicized in the constituent institution’s academic and financial aid policies describing the Course Adjustment Period.
 3. Federal Title IV regulations shall be the minimum standard for all policies related to student refunds during the course adjustment period.

D. Course Withdrawal.⁵ Students are expected to complete all the courses for which they are registered at the close of the Course Adjustment Period. These courses must be recorded on a student's official transcript and receive a grade that is used in the calculation of a GPA, count as attempted hours, and conform to all financial aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress rules *unless* withdrawal is permitted under conditions described below:

1. Course withdrawal with extenuating circumstances.

a. Constituent institutions will develop policies that permit a student to withdraw from a course or courses at any time and without academic penalty for serious extenuating circumstances, including military deployment. These policies must describe a clear process that defines the documentation required, the nature of the review by a designated institutional body or official, and an opportunity for one level of appeal at the institution level. Students who must withdraw from a course or courses due to military service should also consult the UNC Policy Manual on Military Student Success, Section 700.7.1. Course withdrawals taken during the 2020 spring semester, 2020 fall semester, or 2021 spring semester due to the COVID-19 pandemic shall be considered taken due to serious extenuating circumstances.

b. Any constituent institution policy developed for course withdrawal for extenuating circumstances must require that:

- (1) A W be recorded on the transcript;
- (2) The course(s) count as attempted hours;
- (3) The course(s) not count in GPA calculation; and
- (4) The course(s) are subject to all financial aid and SAP rules and calculations.

2. Course withdrawals without extenuating circumstances.

a. After the initial Course Adjustment Period, constituent institutions may develop policies that allow students to withdraw from one or more courses without meeting the standards for withdrawals for extenuating circumstances. These policies must specify up to four courses or up to 16 semester credit hours as the maximum number of such withdrawals permitted over the course of a student's degree or degrees.

b. Any policy developed for course withdrawal without extenuating circumstances must require that:

- (1) A W be recorded on the transcript;
- (2) The course(s) count as attempted hours;
- (3) The course(s) are subject to all financial aid and SAP rules and calculations.

c. Constituent institution policies must include a deadline for such withdrawal at a date no later than the completion of 60 percent of the term.⁶

E. Course Repeats. Constituent institution policies on course repeats must conform, at the minimum, to federal Title IV Financial Aid standards with regard to course repeats. Students

receiving federal financial aid cannot be treated differently from students not on such aid. In addition, all constituent institution policies on course repeats must, at the minimum:

1. Include on the student transcript all attempts to complete a course;
2. Count all attempts to complete a course in calculations of satisfactory academic progress;
3. Use all grades earned in a course in the calculation of the GPA, unless the grade can be excluded through an institution-based grade exclusion or replacement policy.

F. **Forgiveness Policies.** Constituent institutions may establish policies that permit a student who is academically dismissed or academically suspended to be readmitted after a specified period of time, have a modified or new GPA calculation, and to be under other specific steps for re-admittance to the campus.

G. **Grade Exclusion or Grade Replacement**

1. Constituent institutions must develop policies on grade exclusion and/or grade replacement.⁷ These policies must specify up to four courses or up to 16 semester hours as a maximum number of allowable exclusions/replacements. Courses taken during the 2020 spring semester, 2020 fall semester, or 2021 spring semester shall not count against the maximum number of allowable exclusions/replacements due to the impacts of COVID-19.

2. Institutional policies that permit either grade exclusion and/or grade replacement must provide for:

- a. The inclusion on the transcript of both the initial grade earned for the course and a notation of its exclusion from or replacement in the calculation of the GPA; and
- b. The inclusion of the course(s) in the calculation of satisfactory academic progress.

H. **Minimum, Maximum, and Average Semester Course Load.** A minimum “full-time” undergraduate course load is defined as 12 credit hours per semester. In advising and other communications, constituent institutions shall encourage full-time students to consider an average semester load of 15 credit hours, when possible, to stay on track for a timely graduation. Constituent institutions may allow students in good academic standing to enroll in up to 18 semester hours in a fall or spring semester without any special permission. No student shall exceed 18 semester hours in a fall or spring semester without special permission as designated by institutional policy. Constituent institutions shall develop appropriate policies for a maximum load in summer terms.

III. **Student Success Review and Reporting.** Constituent institutions will establish a student success support structure of one or more committees comprised of the appropriate officials from areas such as admissions, registrar’s office, financial aid, advising, the counseling center, the cashier’s office, faculty governance, and student government to review and issue regular reports on:

A. Retention and Graduation

1. Each constituent institution shall, in consultation with the UNC System Office, establish goals for retention⁸ and graduation⁹ for first-time, full-time students. Constituent institutions shall also work with the UNC System to develop a tracking model for the retention and graduation rates of full-time students, transfer students, and part-time students.

2. The UNC System Office will report annually to the Board of Governors on the success of these various categories at both the institutional and system level.

B. Additional Student Success Measures. Constituent institutions shall work with the UNC System Office to develop common output measures of student success and achievement as a means to assess the academic progress goals set by each institution.

C. Review of Course Scheduling and Offerings. Constituent institutions shall develop mechanisms to monitor whether all courses necessary for graduation are offered on a timely basis and with an adequate number of sections for a student to graduate in four years. As a part of this review, institutions shall determine:

1. If general education requirements (e.g., themes, designators, etc.) allow appropriate student progress;

2. If excessive or unnecessary specification or augmentation of general education courses for certain majors places an undue burden on students changing majors; and

3. If excessive GPA or course grade requirements for admission to or completion of a major are delaying student progress toward graduation.

These evaluations will be prepared on a three-year cycle beginning in fall 2014 and will examine data from the previous three academic years. The UNC System Office will consult with institutions to develop the reporting format and required data.

D. Advising. Constituent institutions shall develop policies to monitor the availability of appropriate and timely academic advising, particularly for first-time undergraduates and first-semester transfer students to:

1. Assist students in making effective academic and career decisions;

2. Increase the potential for students selecting appropriate courses and schedules;

3. Provide students with assistance in selecting a major in a timely fashion;

4. Prevent excessive changes of major; and

5. Increase students' awareness of an appropriate course load and academic assistance available to them.

This review should take place on a three-year cycle beginning in fall 2014 and examine data from the previous three academic years. The UNC System Office will consult with institutions to develop the reporting format and required data.

E. Early Warning System Plan

1. Effective with the start of the fall 2014 semester, each constituent institution will have an early warning system (EWS) to alert relevant campus personnel to signs of poor academic performance by a student or of behavior likely to lead to a student not making

Satisfactory Academic Progress. Each constituent institution will submit a comprehensive intervention plan to the UNC System Office that describes how students are identified by the EWS, what campus staff or faculty are notified when a student is identified by the EWS, and how the staff or faculty member is to respond. Interventions may include written communication with students, phone calls or text messages, face-to-face meetings with campus personnel, and/or formal programs involving extended student participation.

2. The EWS should specify what interventions will be used, who will be responsible for them, how warnings will be communicated to responsible personnel, and how interventions will be tracked and reported.

3. Each constituent institution will identify strategies to assess the effectiveness of its EWS and use the results for ongoing improvement.

IV. Regulations on Student Financial Aid and Title IV

A. All constituent institutions will develop financial aid disclosure practices that will, at the minimum, include entrance and exit counseling for students receiving financial aid.¹⁰

B. All institutional policies will be compliant with federal Title IV regulations, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Common definition of the federal Title IV regulation that defines a student as eligible for federal financial aid for up to 150 percent of normal time to graduation.

2. Four-year-degree requirements in the University of North Carolina System range from 120-128 semester credit hours. The system will use 120 hours as the common definition for defining federal financial aid eligibility, making 180 hours the limit for 150 percent of normal time to graduation.

3. Constituent institutions will define procedures whereby a student completing 180 or more attempted hours will undergo an automatic review to determine continued federal financial aid eligibility. If the student is enrolled in a program requiring more than 120 hours, the appropriate allowance will be calculated on campus based on the exact number of credits required for that degree.

These policies must be widely distributed in all institutional academic and financial aid materials.

C. Guidelines to monitor first undergraduate degree completion. Federal Title IV regulations require that institutions monitor first undergraduate degree completion and offer no additional federal grant aid (e.g., Pell, SEOG) after a student earns the initial undergraduate degree. Under federal rules, a student can take out federal loans for a second degree, if eligible. To ensure compliance, institutions must develop protocols for:

1. Monitoring student degree completion each term (fall, spring, summer); and

2. For advising students of their status and eligibility for federal financial aid.

These policies must be widely distributed in all institutional academic and financial aid materials.

V. Compliance with the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) with the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) and Transfer within the UNC System

A. Constituent institutions will be fully compliant with the Comprehensive Articulation Agreement with the NCCCS.

B. Any student completing the Associates in Arts (AA) or Associates in Science (AS) degrees according to the CAA will be considered to have completed general education requirements at all UNC institutions in which they matriculate.

C. Any change by a constituent institution in its General Education requirements must be consistent with the CAA.

VI. Information Distribution

A. To ensure that students receive policy information that is both comprehensive and timely, institutions must develop broad-based communications plans that inform students about:

1. Recommended course loads, required numbers of earned hours, and the projected length of full-time enrollment needed to obtain the baccalaureate degrees;
2. Factors that may extend the length of time to complete a degree;
3. Requirements for Good Academic Standing and Satisfactory Academic Progress;
4. The course adjustment period; and
5. Other policies on course withdrawal, course repeat, and grade replacement or exclusion and their potential financial consequences.

B. All policies and procedures listed in this regulation will be effective no later than the fall 2014 semester.

VII. Relation to Federal and State Laws and Policies. The foregoing regulation is meant to supplement, and does not purport to supplant or modify, those statutory enactments, regulations, and policies which may govern or relate to the subject matter of this regulation.

VIII. Effective Date. The requirements of this regulation shall be effective on the date of adoption of this regulation by the president.

¹Constituent institutions are not obligated to enact policies for either academic probation or academic warning below the allowable standards.

²For regular term instruction, the census date is the conclusion of the 10th class day of the fall and spring semesters. For summer sessions, degree credit extension courses, and any other degree-credit courses taught on an irregular calendar, the census date is the end of the class day representing the passage of 10 percent of the instructional period. UNC Policy Manual, Section 400.1.8[R].

³If the course is offered online, the instructor may administratively drop the student from the course if the student has not signed in by the end of the course adjustment period.

⁴All constituent institution business practices must conform to UNC FIT Student Account Standards.

⁵All institutional policies on withdrawal must include policies about refunds and conform to UNC FIT Financial Aid and Student Account Standards.

⁶The calculation of this date should begin with the first day of classes and conclude on the last day of regular class meetings. It should exclude the reading day and exam period.

⁷The development of a policy does not imply that a constituent institution must allow grade replacement and/or exclusion. A policy may simply state that the institution does not allow such.

⁸For purposes of reporting on first-time, full-time students, retention rate shall be defined as “the percentage of first-time degree-seeking undergraduates from the previous fall who are again enrolled in the current fall.”

(<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/>)

⁹For purposes of reporting, graduation rate data shall be collected as defined by “the number of students entering the institution as full-time, first-time undergraduate students in a particular year (cohort), completing their program within 150 percent of normal time to completion. It shall be calculated by race/ethnicity and gender.”

(<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/glossary/>)

¹⁰All institutional policies on disclosure practices must conform to UNC FIT Financial Aid and Student Account standards.