

Academic Quality Subcommittee (AQS) SEC Report

November 6, 2017 Agenda

The AQS met twice since delivering a report to the SEC, therefore, this report will include coverage of both meetings.

September 21, 2017: This meeting was held just prior to the full Senate meeting at the Faculty House. The primary objectives were to introduce ourselves to each other and determine which topics we might address. The Senate Chair approached us with one issue which we chose to opt out of addressing as it seemed better suited for a different subcommittee. We did discuss the idea of academic forgiveness periods for students dismissed for academic performance reasons; the current policy states two-years (2). There was considerable debate as to whether the current waiting period for readmission with a “clean slate” was too lengthy, the proper amount of time, or too short. The chair (Atkinson) tasked Jim Berger to identify the list of benchmark institutions, select the first two on the list, extract their policies on this topic, and develop a template for use in collecting the balance of the needed information. We also discussed a derivative topic that revolved around forgiveness of a single semester to assist a student that either changed majors or simply had one particularly bad term.

The infamous internal communication within the subcommittee that resulted in a Herald article containing inaccurate facts was a byproduct of this meeting and follow-up. A student representative inadvertently discussed what they would like to see with a Herald reporter, who in turn published an article that was completely inaccurate. As chair of the Subcommittee, I took it upon myself to write an email to the Herald Editor stating my displeasure. No apology was issued directly but a partial retraction was placed within the original article.

October 23, 2017: The AQS met in WAB 208, minutes attached. Additional non-voting members were in attendance per the Senate Charter. We discussed that policy proposal (attached) already in the pipeline from University College. Subsequent telephone calls were placed by the chair (Atkinson) to both Janet Applin, Chair of UCC, as well as the proposer, Merrall Price. It is our understanding that the proposal may proceed but that AQS may ask the Senate to pull the proposal from the action agenda and refer to committee depending the outcome of our policy work. Jim Berger delivered the work assigned that included two benchmarked institutions along with a template for others to use in GoogleDocs. After discussion, we decided to eliminate North Carolina schools because of the state-mandated policy system in place and add other state institutions as our true competitors. All voting members were to take two schools on the list and obtain the policy information for later discussion. It was speculated that the idea of the 2-year waiting period in the current policy was implemented because academic dismissal is already a year, the extra year was added for reasons unknown.

The committee also spent considerable time discussing the forgiveness semester concept. There were stated concerns, like the fact that students can already re-take up to 6 courses for grade replacement. This issue will come up again for discussion.

We also briefly discussed the fact WKU has the earliest drop with a W date of any state school. We may or may not discuss this topic at future meetings. The next meeting is not yet determined but is being tentatively scheduled using a Doodle poll.

**Academic Quality Committee
WAB 208**

Minutes: October 23, 2017
3:01 PM-Meeting called to order
4:12 PM-Meeting adjourned

Present: Kirk Atkinson (Chair), Christy Spurlock, Emily Houston, Dale Kirby, Francesca Sunkin, Julia Shadoan, Sharon Mutter, Heather Strode, Jim Berger, Jim Fulkerson, Doug McElroy*, Chris Jensen*.

* Denotes non-voting member.

Committee chair Kirk Atkinson provided a recap of where we were as a committee. He reminded the committee the original tasking for the committee was not for us to implement a policy, but for Jim Berger to do research and report back to the committee. The [Herald article](#) was briefly discussed as being uninformative and less than accurate.

Kirk reiterated that there was not an actionable item for the committee at this point. He referred to the University College (M. Price) Proposal to Revise an Academic Policy (see attached) as an example of the type of policy the committee was considering.

Item #3 in the UC proposal was discussed. Discussion continued of this as a proposed policy that is currently “floating” around the university. Committee members discussed the unclear wording of the policy as well as various pathways for policy suggestions for the university. The rationale in item #4 in the UC proposal was discussed. Committee members questioned the punitive language and wondered at the rationale for its inclusion.

The committee discussed the differences in an academic policy of “freezing” a semester as opposed to a forgiveness policy such as the UC example. Chris Jensen asked how this was different for the current policy allowing students to retake up to six classes.

Jim Berger reported policies from two of WKU’s benchmark institutions: Appalachian State and Ball State. Neither institution has a freeze policy, but they both have forgiveness pathways (see both policies attached).

Committee members asked Chris Jensen for statistical information concerning WKU students on academic warning (approximately 1200) as well as students facing academic dismissal (approximately 500). The data was not readily available for the inquiry of how many students eventually returned and graduated after a two year wait period and academic renewal.

Doug McElroy provided statistics of year by year (freshmen, sophomore, etc.) of WKU student attrition. Jim Berger referenced a WKU 2011 survey in which approximately 1/6 of students left due to academics. The comment was made that there are perhaps many students leaving that are on the bubble academically.

After much discussion, Kirk addressed what he saw as the committee’s original question—the two-year waiting policy. Emily Houston brought up that the students currently have three ways

to deal with a bad semester, but she believed students might not know they can apply for academic renewal.

The committee seemed to be in consensus that in going forward with potential policy recommendations, that it would be desirable that a student could do an academic freeze or the six repeated courses but not both. It was suggested that the committee was talking about two separate things and there needed to be clarity.

One attendee suggested that in the future the committee might wish to look at the last day a student could drop with a W. WKU's date is one of the earliest ones in the state. For example, UK's drop with a W date is November 9th and they begin their semester a week prior to WKU.

Kirk brought the meeting to a conclusion after Jim Berger agreed to create a Google Doc. Each committee member will sign up for two benchmarks, first-come, first-serve, to look at their academic forgiveness policies and report at the next meeting. Kirk was going to work to whittle the list down and replace some benchmarks with in-state schools. Kirk planned to talk to Janet Applin, Chair UCC about the present status of the UC policy proposal. He also plans to contact the Registrar to inquire about the history of the current policy that includes a 2-year waiting period.

A Doodle poll will be used for next meeting time for committee.

**University College
Dean's Office
Proposal to Revise an Academic Policy
(Action Item)**

Contact Person: Merrall Price, merrall.price@wku.edu, x54200

1. **Identification of proposed policy revision:** Revision of course renewal policy to 1. accommodate students needing fewer than 12 hours to graduate, and 2. remove the requirement that students sit out two years for students with 60 hours of college credit.
2. **Catalog statement of existing policy:** An academic renewal program is available to qualified undergraduate students. Academic renewal prevents the voided coursework from counting toward graduation and the computation of the grade point average; however, the voided coursework will remain a part of the transcript. Qualified undergraduate students must not have attended any accredited college or university for at least two previous years and must have a cumulative grade point average, since readmission, of at least 2.0 (with no grade below "D"), computed at the end of the term in which the student completes a minimum of 12 semester hours of courses numbered 100 or above.

WKU accepts transfer credit retained through academic renewal at other institutions but will use grades from those courses for the computation of the higher education grade point average.

Students requesting academic renewal are required to complete and submit the "Petition for Academic Renewal" form to the Office of the Registrar, indicating whether one semester or all previous coursework is to be voided. No student may declare academic renewal more than once.

Non-catalog statement on application form: Academic renewal is available only to currently enrolled students seeking a degree from Western Kentucky University.

3. **Catalog statement of proposed policy:** An academic renewal program is available to qualified undergraduate students. Academic renewal prevents the voided coursework from counting toward graduation and the computation of the grade point average; however, the voided coursework will remain a part of the transcript. **Qualified undergraduate students must have either at least 60 credit hours (counting hours before and after readmission) or not attended any accredited college or university for at least two previous years. If further courses are required to graduate, students must have a cumulative grade point average, since readmission, of at least 2.0 (with no grade below "D"), computed at the end of the term in which the student completes the lesser of 12 semester hours of courses numbered 100 or above or the number of such hours required to fulfill all other graduation requirements with the exception of GPA. Applications must be approved by an advisor and by the student's department head.**

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- 4. Rationale for proposed policy revision:** Academic renewal is an excellent option for many students who have had a poor start, but take a lengthy break from academics and then come back with a more mature perspective. However, it is hard to expect them to pay for and take 12 credits to prove a point when they are closer than that to completion. 12 credits is a full-time one-semester or part-time two-year commitment with a minimum current cost of over \$4200: these students are adults, often with full-time jobs and little chance of financial aid. This policy change allows such students to take advantage of academic renewal and graduate without incurring a significant financial impact to take courses that are not part of their degree program.

The removal of the requirement that students sit out two years if they have junior standing allows those who have been working to recover from a poor semester at an earlier stage of their academic career to restore their GPAs without a two-year delay in graduation. Removing the two-year requirement across the board, as an earlier proposal considered, would mean that students who are not serious about a college career could extend their stay well beyond the time they would normally be dismissed by declaring academic renewal, an unintended consequence we would be wise to avoid. Removal of the current enrollment rule (on the form but not in the catalog) allows students who would have completed a degree but for a single semester to apply for renewal and receive a degree without taking additional classes.

- 5. Impact of proposed policy revision on existing academic or non-academic policies:**
5.1 Impact on policies: None
5.2 Impact on populations that may be affected: Will allow some students to graduate in a shorter time. Will allow other students who have left WKU to be re-recruited in order to finish.
- 6. Proposed term for implementation: First available.**
- 7. Dates of prior committee approvals:**

Department/ Unit _____	<u>N/A</u>
_____ College Curriculum Committee (if applicable)	<u>3/2/17</u>
UCC Academic Policy Subcommittee (if applicable)	<u>10/11/17</u>
Undergraduate Curriculum Committee	_____
University Senate	_____