

University Academic Affairs Committee  
Agenda

April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019  
3 pm, HCC 307

**Committee:** Rachel Graefe-Anderson (acting chair), Karen Anewalt, Gonzalo Campos Dintrans, Jane Huffman

**Ex officio:** Kimberly Williams, Rita Dunston, Tim O'Donnell, John Morello, Wes Hillyard

**Student representatives:** Alexander Lee

1. Approval of previous minutes
  - a. This was done electronically before the meeting.
2. Old business
  - a. Revision to the catalog requirements for attendance.

The committee discussed the feedback received from UFC and attempted to address concerns with an updated policy statement. The highlighted area is the text that has been modified in response to the suggestions at the last UFC meeting.

## Attendance and Class Absences

A primary responsibility of students is class attendance. Learning is an experience which requires active participation, and the University expects participation of students in all their scheduled classes be they lectures, online collaborations, laboratories, seminars, studios, field trips or other types of activities. It is understood that occasional absences are unavoidable, but the student is responsible for his or her decision to miss a particular class meeting. In deciding to miss a class, a student must be aware that he or she is accountable, nonetheless, for any test or quiz and all assignments, material covered, and announcements made in that class.

Because of the wide variety of courses and teaching methods employed, requirements for attendance in class and laboratory/studio sessions is not prescribed on a university-wide basis. Faculty are entirely at their discretion about whether or not to allow a student to make up missed assignments. Furthermore, class participation itself is an appropriate criterion for grading and a student's failure to participate can be expected to affect his or her grade in the course. The expectations for class participation, the manner in which it is to be

evaluated, and the impact of student absences on a class participation score should be clearly stated on the course syllabus.

While faculty have discretion about whether or not to allow a student to make up missed assignments, the following guidelines should be taken into consideration regarding student absences in a course. ~~Failure to drop or withdraw from a course that the student is not attending may result in a final grade of F.~~

**Disability-Related Absences.** A student who has a disability-related need for flexibility with regard to attendance expectations may register with the Office of Disability Resources (ODR). This accommodation would be listed as “Disability-Related Absences” on their accommodation letter, and it is the student’s responsibility to provide their accommodation letter to each faculty member for whom they wish to receive accommodations. Accommodations are not retroactive. Please see Disability-Related Absences Guidelines and contact the Office of Disability Resources for questions.

**Religious observances.** Requests by students whose religious observance precludes class participation on specific days to reschedule graded work will be honored. Graded work includes final examinations, scheduled tests, graded written assignments, graded laboratory projects, and graded oral assignments. Alternative dates will be set by consulting with the instructor or instructors and, if necessary, through consultation with the Office of Academic Services. It is the student’s responsibility to make alternative arrangements as early as possible.

**Jury duty.** UMW students may be summoned to serve as trial jurors. Jury duty is a legal obligation and those who fail to respond to a summons are subject to criminal prosecution. The University supports jury service as an important civic duty and community responsibility. Students who will need to miss class in order to fulfill their jury service obligation should promptly notify all instructors, provide a copy of the summons as documentation of the absence (if requested by the instructor), and make arrangements to complete any missed work. Absences from class because of jury duty service will not be penalized. Students should contact the Office of Academic Services if they have any questions or if they need assistance in making arrangements for missed class time due to jury duty service.

**Military Service.** UMW recognizes and appreciates the important contributions made in service to our country by Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard members. Requests to reschedule graded work due to short term military absence will be honored. Short term military absence will be recognized either as a result of regularly scheduled drill/training, unexpected training/drill or short term activation/deployment (e.g., National Guard activation in response to a natural disaster or civil unrest). Details on the procedure for Military Service absence can be found in the *Directory of Academic Procedures*. (Note: military obligation requiring withdrawal from the University for the remainder of a term is covered elsewhere.)

**Scheduled Absences.** Certain absences are often considered legitimate. In such cases, students must make arrangements, when possible, to prevent such

absences from affecting their performance in a course. Examples of such conflicts include participation in intercollegiate athletic competitions and academically-related performance activities. Students must provide written notification of potential scheduled absences to the faculty by the first class meeting. Once notification is made, faculty determine whether acceptable alternatives exist for completing any missed assignments due to the scheduled absences. If it is determined that missed academic activities cannot be rescheduled the student is advised to either drop the course or alter the planned scheduled absences.

**Unscheduled Absences.** Events or activities initially scheduled for one time, then changed or unforeseeable absences may sometimes interfere with the student's ability to attend class or submit required work on schedule. In these cases, faculty are encouraged to work with students to reschedule missed assignments or to develop alternative procedures for completing course requirements. Students must notify instructors of each unexpected absence within one week of becoming aware of the projected absence.

Students who face an emergency and/or who expect to be absent for more than a full week of classes may should contact the Office of Academic Services to report the absence and request assistance (if necessary) in working with faculty members to reschedule work or to develop acceptable alternatives for completing course requirements. If contacted by a student, the Office of Academic Services will contact the course instructors as a courtesy. While there are no excused absences at the University of Mary Washington, the Office of Academic Services will provide assistance to students and faculty members in developing mutually acceptable alternative methods for completing or demonstrating mastery of missed learning activities. ~~There are no excused absences at the University of Mary Washington. Decisions about~~ make up work are entirely at the discretion of made by each instructor and may require documentation when deemed necessary by the instructor.

The committee unanimously voted to the proposed changes. Davis will put the motion forward to the UFC.

3. New business – Internships in academic departments
  - a. Modification of graduate commencement

The committee discussed having a single joint graduation ceremony to confer both undergraduate and graduate degrees.

One motive for a single ceremony is the additional staff effort to hold two separate ceremonies, particularly since the graduate ceremony happens the

evening before undergraduate ceremony. The committee discussed the potential to hold the ceremonies in different weeks to allow staff to spread duties out over a longer time period, however this solution also poses challenges.

Anecdotal stories from COE suggest that faculty and graduates prefer having a separate ceremony that better reflects their connection to the university.

Including a separate hooding ceremony for the various graduate programs (in addition to a single commencement ceremony) was discussed. This might address graduate student concerns about feeling connected to the ceremony. If the individual colleges held individual hooding ceremonies in addition to commencement, it's unclear who would coordinate those logistics and whether it would be a reduction in effort. It's unclear what spaces would be appropriate for such hooding ceremonies. Competition for spaces large enough to accommodate the graduates and guests and appropriate for such a ceremony would likely be intense.

One concern raised is that the graduate ceremony is perceived to have low participation among graduates. No one had data about the actual participation rate at either the undergraduate or graduate ceremony.

Ultimately, the committee felt that they didn't have enough data or information to make a recommendation to change the commencement format.

The committee unanimously approved the following statement.

University Academic Affairs understand that there are some logistical challenges with holding two commencement ceremonies. However, the committee does not have adequate evidence to recommend a change to the current commencement format. The committee recommends that UMW

continue to host separate graduate and undergraduate commencement ceremonies.

b. Test optional policy changes

The committee discussed the proposal to modify the policy about required items for undergraduate admission to allow students to apply without submitting ACT or SAT scores.

Admissions considers student applications holistically and would like to make the test-optional application an option for more applicants. Test scores are just one item considered in student packages and are thought not to be primary factors when extending admission to many applicants. The admissions office finds other items more compelling when determining the potential for student success.

The committee discussed potential confusion for applicants if the wording implies that some students might be asked for test scores later. This is problematic if students do not take the test in the fall but then are asked for scores after their initial application review in the spring. The committee discussed not stipulating that test scores might be required in the future.

The following wording allows applicants to submit test scores if desired as an item in their application packet but does not require scores from any student. If an applicant is waitlisted and contacts admissions, staff can advise students of additional items that might strengthen their application including recommendation letters, updated transcripts, test scores, etc. This can be done on a case-by-case basis based on the applicant's package and situation.

The proposed new policy language is:

Students may opt to not provide a standardized test score as part of the packet of material required for consideration for admission ~~if their GPA is a 3.50 or higher.~~

- Home-schooled applicants and candidates applying from schools that provide written evaluations rather than grades ~~are required to~~ **must** submit ACT test results or SAT test results.

The committee unanimously approved the updated policy.

The meeting adjourned at 4:15.