

Proposal to the Senate Educational Policy Committee and the Council on Student Conduct Expectations and Accountability

PROPOSAL TITLE: Revise Section 3-201 of the *Student Code*

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION: Proposed to revise the final examination policy (3-201) to include alternative final assessments.

JUSTIFICATION: In Spring, 2022, with increasing numbers of courses moving fully or partially online, incompatibilities between *Student Code* language on exams and practice were brought to light. These incompatibilities caused issues for students, instructors, and/or college and departmental office staff trying to navigate the policies. Revisions were made to the *Student Code* to define synchronous and asynchronous exams and to incorporate asynchronous exams into the existing policy.

Beginning in Fall, 2023, a sub-group of the Council of Undergraduate Deans was formed to again review section 3-201 of the *Student Code* due to the growing use of alternative final assessments such as individual or group projects/presentations, papers, studio assignments, and take-home exams. The number of synchronous, in-person exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar declined from 2,543 in Fall, 2018 to 1,769 in Fall, 2023 and from 2,176 in Spring, 2019 to 1,726 in Spring, 2023. A review of undergraduate syllabi by the Grainger College of Engineering found 93 courses require cumulative final examinations with 39 (41.94%) of those exams being offered in-person while the remaining assessments were collaborative papers/projects, individual papers/projects, labs, take-home exams, or exams offered at the Computer-Based Testing Facility. Data from the Gies College of Business also indicates a strong trend towards the use of alternative final assessments with one department reporting 10% of course sections using traditional, synchronous exams while 34% use alternative final assessments and 22% use non-cumulative exams. The remaining two departments in Gies represent the majority of undergraduate course sections and in Spring, 2024, just 23% of total course sections are using traditional, synchronous final exams. Additionally, the sub-group learned instructors were unsure of their options for setting due dates for these alternative final assessments and were using the last day of final examinations or the last class meeting as due dates. Current language in the *Student Code* does not mention the use of alternative final assessments and that gap in the policy is beginning to cause issues for students, instructors, and/or college and departmental staff.

In Spring, 2024, the sub-group began drafting revisions to the *Student Code* to address the growing use of alternative final assessments. These revisions seek to include alternative final assessments, clarify the types of assessments that may be offered during the final two weeks of instruction, update the policy regarding the maximum number of exams a student may be required to complete within a 24-hour period of time, and suggest options for resolving conflicts that may arise if a student is scheduled for simultaneous final assessments involving group work. The proposed revisions were shared at the March 20, 2024 meeting of the Council of Undergraduate Deans and feedback from that meeting was incorporated into the final draft.

In late Fall, 2024, the sub-group received suggestions for additional edits to 3-201 from a faculty member and the sub-group incorporated those suggestions to improve the clarity of the policy.

Please see the attached proposed changes for specifics.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE TERM: Fall, 2025

§ 3-201 Final Examinations

- a. All Students: The following regulations will be applied with the understanding that the university must reasonably accommodate a student's religious beliefs, observances, and practices in accordance with § 1-107 and § 1-501 in regard to the scheduling of examinations if the student informs their instructor of the conflict within one week after being informed of the examination schedule. Appeal of an instructor's decision of such accommodation may be made to the executive officer of the department in which the course is offered.
 1. Synchronous courses are defined as courses in which at least one component of the course meets in-person or remotely at a day and time published in the Class Schedule.
 2. Asynchronous courses are defined as courses in which no component of the course occurs at a day and time published in the Class Schedule.
 3. Synchronous final exams are defined as final exams where all students enrolled in the section or course are scheduled to begin the exam simultaneously at a scheduled day and time, either in the same location or remotely. Synchronous final exams may be required only in synchronous courses.
 4. Asynchronous final exams are defined as final exams that may be scheduled and completed in any period within a longer window of time. Asynchronous exams may be offered in synchronous or asynchronous courses.
 5. Requirement for final examinations: End of the semester synchronous final examinations that carry significant weight in calculating the final course grade may be given only during the scheduled final examination period for the term. Alternative assessments such as papers, projects, studio assignments, or take-home/asynchronous exams, including those assigned in teams, may be due during the last two weeks of instruction provided they are assigned with a clear due date in the class syllabus or other information distributed to students no later than the end of the first week of instruction. Synchronous final examinations will be given during the scheduled final examination period for each course, except in a course that has a character that renders a final examination unnecessary or impracticable, as determined by the instructor.

6. Change in final examination schedule: The beginning and ending dates for final examinations are defined within each term's Academic Calendar. The Schedule of Final Examinations for all colleges (except Law, Veterinary Medicine, and the Carle Illinois College of Medicine) is prepared and published by the Office of the Registrar.

Instructors who give synchronous final examinations, regardless of course modality, must do so at the time specified in the Schedule of Final Examinations unless a change is approved in advance by the Office of the Provost. Requests for change should be submitted to the executive officer of the department in which the course is offered. Permission may not be granted to those instructors wishing to change final examinations to a time outside the final examination week. Reading Day should be left entirely free of any mandatory course obligations so that students may use this opportunity to prepare for their upcoming final exams.

7. The window in which asynchronous exams are to be started must be at least 24 hours. In the case of an untimed take-home exam, this means students must be allowed a minimum of 24 hours to complete the exam.
8. ~~A student shall be said to have an exam conflict if that student has two synchronous exams scheduled during overlapping time periods. A conflict also exists if the student would be required to take three or more final exams with starting times all within a 24-hour window. A student shall be said to have an exam conflict if that student has two instructor-scheduled, synchronous exams during the same exam window. If a student is permitted to select an exam time, the student shall be said to have an exam conflict only if there are no available alternative times that do not conflict with an instructor-scheduled, synchronous exam.~~
9. ~~Alternative final assessments shall be treated as if they are exams. They should be handled as synchronous exams if individual rescheduling is impractical, e.g. assessments involving group work. No student is required to take more than two consecutive final examinations. This means that a student taking a final examination beginning at 8:00 a.m. and another beginning at 1:30 p.m. on the same day cannot be required to take a final examination that same evening. However, the student could be required to take a final examination beginning at 8:00 a.m. the next day. Similarly, a student having a final examination beginning at 7:00 p.m. one day and another beginning at 8:00 a.m. the next day cannot be~~

required to take a final examination beginning at 1:30 p.m. that second day. Any student with an exam conflict meeting these criteria is entitled to rescheduling as follows if action is taken no later than the last day of classes:

A.—The student must determine whether a conflict exam or asynchronous scheduling option for a final examination is being held at another time for any of the examinations involved.

B.—If a conflict final examination has been scheduled for any of the courses, the student must take one or more of these conflict final examinations. If conflict final examinations are offered for more than one course, the student must take the conflict for the course that has the largest number of students.

10. When a conflict exists, the student must first attempt to resolve the conflict with scheduled conflict exams and/or by choosing an alternate time for any asynchronous or self-scheduled exams that may be involved in the conflict. If conflict exams are offered for more than one course, the student must take the conflict for the course that has the largest number of students. If no conflict final examinations have been scheduled, the student must contact the instructor of the course having the largest number of students. The contact must be made no later than the last day of classes, and that instructor must provide a makeup final examination. Normally in a semester several combined-sections, conflict, arranged, and noncombined final examinations are given at the same time. As a guide to resolving conflicts, an order of priority has been established within each final examination period, and a student should resolve a conflict using the published final examination schedules and the following priority guidelines.

A.—National and state professional examinations (e.g., CPA, actuarial science, Architecture Registration Examination) take priority over campus final examinations. An instructor must offer a conflict final examination to a student scheduled to take a national or state professional examination and a campus final examination at the same time:

B. In resolving conflicts, priority will be given in the following order:

- i. Noncombined, synchronous exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar
- ii. Combined-sections, synchronous exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar

- iii. ~~Asynchronous or arranged exams scheduled by the instructor~~
- iv. ~~Conflict final examinations~~

~~C. A department offering a combined-sections, asynchronous, or arranged final examination must provide a conflict examination if required to accommodate student conflicts.~~

~~D. In the event of a conflict not clearly resolved by the provisions of this section or which cannot otherwise be resolved, students should consult with the dean or appropriate designee in their home academic unit.~~

11. If the conflict cannot be resolved using the methods described in 3-201(a)(10), the student must contact the instructors whose courses are involved in the conflict no later than the last day of class. The instructors and the student will collaborate to resolve the conflict.

12. The following priority order should be used to determine how to resolve conflicts. That is, setting up any required special conflict exams is the responsibility of the course with the lowest priority.

A. National and state professional examinations (e.g. CPA, actuarial science, Architecture Registration Examination)

B. Synchronous noncombined exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar

C. Synchronous combined-sections and arranged-time exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar

D. Synchronous exams scheduled by the instructor

E. Synchronous conflict exams

F. Asynchronous exams

When two conflicting exams involve courses of the same priority, the course with the largest number of students has the responsibility for offering a special conflict exam.

13. A department offering a combined-sections, asynchronous, or arranged final examination must provide a conflict exam if required to accommodate student conflicts.

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14. In the event of a conflict not clearly resolved by the provisions of this section or which cannot otherwise be resolved, students should consult with the dean or appropriate designee in the home academic unit.

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b. Undergraduate Students

1. Undergraduate students must obtain the approval of the dean of their college to defer a final examination. Undergraduate students who must miss a scheduled final examination should report this fact to the dean of their college as soon as possible and before the final examination period.
2. For satisfactory reasons, students may be "excused" by the dean of their college and examined later by their instructor. Absence from a final examination for any other cause is reported as a final grade of "absent" (ABS) in the course and counts as a failure. (See § 3-103.)

c. Graduate Students

1. Graduate students who are unable to take a final examination at the scheduled time or to complete other requirements of a course must make individual arrangements with the instructor. (See § 3-104.)
2. Approval of this deferment by the dean of the Graduate College is not required.