

MEMORANDUM

TO: CAP

FROM: Steering Committee

RE: Special Topics Courses

DATE: April 17, 2019

Background

On March 26, 2019, Steering received a [memo from the Senate Executive Board](#) asking Steering to consider formulating a policy on Special Topics Courses at the undergraduate level. Steering notes that special topics courses are also offered at the graduate level. The Faculty Senate Executive Board points out that there seem to be unofficial rules around how many times a special topics class may be offered, by whom, and on which topics.

Charge

In keeping with the timeline below, Steering requests that CAP formulate a policy on both undergraduate and graduate special topics courses. In doing so, CAP should consider whether one policy can apply to both the undergraduate level classes and to the graduate level course. CAP should begin work on this charge by asking GSC for its input on special topics courses. CAP should then weigh that information in its decision about formulating one policy for both undergraduate and graduate level classes or two policies, one for each degree level.

Both GSC and CAP should consider: a) whether to cap the number of times a special topics course may be offered before it needs to go through curricular approval or be discontinued and why b) how high the caps should be and why.

If CAP determines that a policy on special topics classes is needed, it should develop a policy statement and either a) recommend where in the Course Approval Policy this statement should be inserted or b) write a separate policy on Special Topics Classes.

Steering suggests CAP seek testimony on its preliminary recommendation from GSC, department chairs and graduate coordinators in departments with graduate programs, Deans and Assistant Deans, as well as any other stakeholders deemed appropriate by CAP.

Timeline: CAP should begin work immediately on the charges with the goal of making a final recommendations to Steering by the end of the Fall 2019 term.

Testimony Tier: Tier II from Faculty

The issue requires moderate testimony from the campus community. The assigned council or committee should consult with relevant individuals and groups in developing a preliminary recommendation. The completed preliminary recommendation should then be made available to the relevant stakeholder groups, and testimony should be solicited in the form of written feedback (through a survey and or e-mail).

TCNJ Governance Processes

Step 1–Steering issues a charge

Step 2–Governance prepares a Preliminary Recommendation

Once the appropriate standing committee or council has received the charge, it should start by collecting data needed to make a preliminary recommendation. It should receive input from affected individuals and all relevant stakeholder groups prior to making a preliminary recommendation. For issues that have broad implications or that affect a large number of individuals, initial testimony should be solicited from the campus community at large. For some issues, sufficient initial testimony may come from input through committee membership or solicitation from targeted constituent groups. When, in the best judgment of the committee, adequate clarity of the principles contributing to the problem are known, a preliminary recommendation should be drafted and disseminated to the campus community.

Step 3–The Relevant Stakeholders provide Testimony

Once a preliminary recommendation has been completed, the standing committee or council should seek testimony from the campus community. The testimony should be gathered in accordance with the Testimony Tier (see below) assigned to the issue by Steering. For issues that require public testimony from the campus community, the chair of the standing committee or council should approach the president of the appropriate representative bodies to schedule the next available time slot at a meeting of that body. Testimony should be gathered in a way that allows stakeholders to weigh in fully on the issue. Members of the standing committee or council that wrote the preliminary recommendation should be present to hear and record the testimony.

Step 4–Governance prepares a Final Recommendation

Once the standing committee or council has received appropriate testimony, it should revise the preliminary recommendation into a final recommendation. Once the final recommendation is complete, the standing committee or council should use sound judgment to determine whether or not more public testimony is required. If, in its feedback to the original preliminary recommendation, a stakeholder representative body requests to review an issue again, the committee or council is bound to bring it back to that body. If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must re-submit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community. When the committee or council has completed the final recommendation, it should forward it to the Steering Committee. The final recommendation should be accompanied by a cover memo that summarizes the initial charge, how testimony was gathered and the nature of that testimony, and how the committee responded to that testimony, including a description of how the preliminary recommendation evolved as a result of testimony.

Step 5–Steering considers the Final Recommendation

Step 6–The Provost and/or President and Board consider the Final Recommendation

Step 7–Steering notifies the Campus Community Testimony

For a complete description of all steps and of the testimony tiers, see Governance Structures and Processes, 2017 Revision, pages 21–24.