

MEMORANDUM

TO: TCNJ Deans, Chairs, Faculty, Staff, and Students
FROM: Committee on Academic Programs (CAP)
RE: Final Exam and Reading Days Policy
DATE: May 11, 2020

Background and Charge: In Fall 2018, the Committee on Academic Programs (CAP) was asked by Steering to revise the policy on final exams and reading days in light of the five-year review for campus policy documents. CAP was to write a college-wide policy comprising sections covering undergraduate, graduate, and simultaneously offered courses regardless of the course format or delivery mode. Consideration should be given to the differences in courses that are offered in Fall and Spring terms relative to those that are offered in Winter or Summer sessions.

Preliminary Recommendation: The CAP Subcommittee received a policy written by GSC on graduate courses and final exams/reading days. Their input has been incorporated into the new policy. The preliminary recommendation from the Committee for receiving testimony is to modify the current policy to encompass all courses at TCNJ, regardless of delivery mode, and provide separate sections on final assessments for graduate courses and courses offered outside of the regular semester. The following modifications have also been made to the policy:

- 1) Structural changes made to the policy to provide rationale before the definition.
- 2) Addition of the definition of “Final Assessment”.
- 3) Replaced “exam” with “assessment” throughout the policy as not every department or program gives an exam for a final assignment
- 4) Created a heading for
 - a) COURSES OFFERED OUTSIDE THE REGULAR SEMESTER: provided text to set policy for final assessments for courses taught outside of traditional semesters; added text about the due date for the final assessments which mirrors the graduate school courses.
 - b) POLICY FOR GRADUATE COURSES: added text provided by the graduate school council feedback with minor edits from CAP.
- 5) In item B: adjusted the statement to make mention that the grade on a final assessment should not compromise a student’s performance in a course; to accommodate this statement the maximum percentage for a final assessment was adjusted to 35% of the final grade.
- 6) In item D: emphasis was placed to ensure that for final assessments that are not in-class exams or activities to be completed by the date of the regularly scheduled exam and not just some time during the final exam window. This is out of fairness to both students and faculty, as some faculty would have jurisdiction on when to have the finals while those who have an in-class exam have none.
- 7) In item F: this item was changed to define exam conflicts. The policy was clarified to provide scenarios for when in-class final assessments would be considered a conflict. We kept the language about which in-class assessment should be moved, but clearly outlined the process for addressing conflicts. In instances of conflicts where three final assessments that are in-class and out of class are due in a day (24 hour period), it is recommended to move the out of class

final assessments. This was done to provide a more equitable and inclusive process for students and faculty.

8) Added "online and blended courses" at the beginning of the (IV) POLICY FOR UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

Rationale: The current final exam policy does not reflect the campus' mission, to be an exemplar for inclusive excellence in the classroom. This means that final assessments should be equitable across campus as far as a) when they are administered; b) how they are administered; c) how they contribute towards a student's final grade. Final assessments for students, as the policy states, should allow for a reflective tool to look at a course holistically, rather than as a means to compromise a student's grade for an entire semester of work. Preliminary testimony from students, faculty and other stakeholders shows that final exam week is a stressful time for students. Thus, high stakes exams and an overload of exams on a particular day were issues that the committee saw as highly problematic. The current policy does not adequately address these issues and that is why CAP is recommending a significant change that protects students in the spirit of the purpose of a final assessment. The conflicts for final assessments are not well defined by the current policy. For instance, what is inferred in the policy is a calendar day rather than a 24-hour period. To better elucidate this point, we have provided relevant scenarios and a mechanism for students to deal with exam conflicts. In addition, the current policy does not clearly define the deadline for out of class final assessments, as faculty put a due date on the final assessment that may not coincide with a final exam time. This new policy requires that out of class final assessments be due on the due date assigned by the College for the final. In this light, CAP is recommending several changes to the policy to include inclusive, equitable language for students and faculty.

Additional Recommendations: CAP is working with Records and Registration to create a survey that would allow faculty to sign up for a final exam period time for each course offered on campus, regardless of the activity for the final assessment. This will provide a mechanism for faculty to sign up for a final exam slot and not a room, thus introducing a mechanism by which each course would be assigned a date for the final assessment. This mechanism will align with the new policy, as described above.

In addition, the academic calendar will be updated with a timeline for students to notify faculty of a final assessment conflict. Records and Registration should set up a mechanism to notify the campus community of this timeline as well, similarly to when it notifies the campus when it is time to withdraw from a course.