

Michael McKibben, CNAS Divisional Dean of Student Academic Affairs

REPORT TO THE RIVERSIDE DIVISION
April 2, 2018

To Be Adopted

Proposed Changes to Regulation R1.6.1

PRESENT

1.6.1 A student may repeat only those courses in which a grade of ~~D, F, or NC~~ was received.

PROPOSED

1.6.1. A student may repeat only those courses in which a grade of C-, D+, D, D-, F, or NC was received. Course prerequisites cannot require grade minima that exceed a C because they would strand subsets of otherwise passing students who could neither satisfy the elevated prerequisites nor repeat the prerequisite course.

Statement of Purpose and Effect: [\(See attached document\)](#)

Submitted by Michael McKibben

April 2, 2018

Approvals

Approved by the Committee on _____:

(Insert date of committee approval)

The Committee on Rules and Jurisdiction finds the wording to be consistent with the code of the Academic Senate:

(leave blank)

Received by Executive Council:

(leave blank)

Resolving conflicts between R1.6.1 and course prerequisite grade minima set higher than a C-

Issue

Courses that require minimum grades in prerequisites higher than a C- produce a conflict with Senate Regulation 1.6.1, placing a subset of students who earn passing grades in the prerequisites in an arbitrary and inconsistent “no man’s land” that uniquely prevents them from repeating the course and moving forward in the curriculum.

Background

Senate Regulation 1.6.1 states the following:

R1.6.1 A student may repeat only those courses in which a grade of D, F, or NC was received.

This Senate regulation specifies that students who earn an S or a C- or higher cannot repeat the course, presumably because they have demonstrated adequate proficiency in the course material and can now move on to subsequent courses that build upon that proficiency.

A related Senate Regulation, 1.6.2, gives the Dean (or designate) of the student’s college a means to override R1.6.1 in specific cases:

R1.6.2 Repetition of a course more than once requires approval by the appropriate Dean in all instances.

In most cases, the Deans have delegated “the appropriate Dean” to be the Associate Dean of Student Academic Affairs in their college. Presumably it was not the intent of the Senate to encourage situations where R1.6.2 needed to be exercised *carte blanche*, but instead to allow the appropriate Dean to consider very limited situations where unusual extenuating circumstances warranted giving an individual student an opportunity to retake a passed course. Prudent use of campus instructional resources would require that such exceptions be made infrequently, because otherwise many students would gladly jump at a chance to replace a lower passing grade via a second attempt to earn a higher passing grade.

As campus-wide Senate regulations approved by the entire faculty, R1.6.1 and R1.6.2 would seem to have precedence in any conflict with constraints set by individual colleges or degree programs.

Conflicting situations

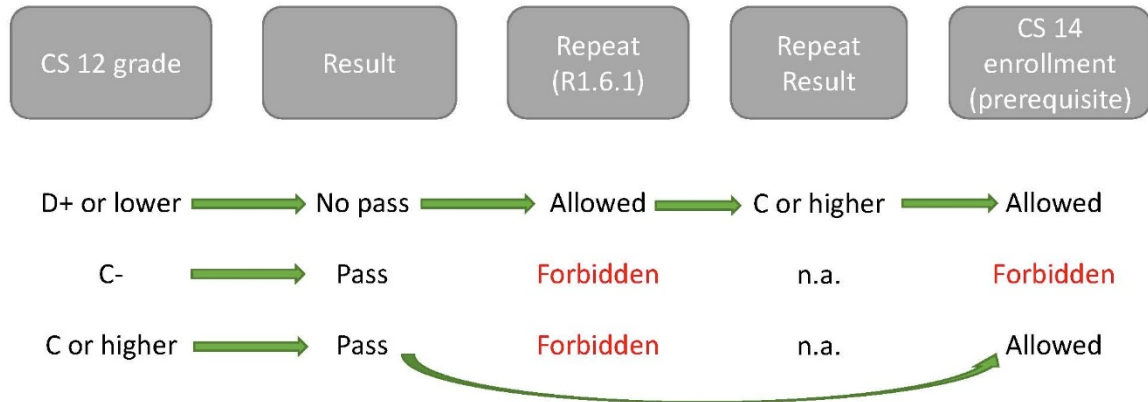
A number of courses at UCR specify prerequisites with a minimum grade higher than a C- to allow enrollment. Research by the Registrar produced an Excel file (attached) listing these courses and their prerequisite grade minima.

In most cases it appears that the prerequisite minima greater than C- are intended as a filter to insure that students moving on in a curricular sequence have demonstrated a proficiency higher than that implied by R1.6.1, but in fact it can be shown that the outcome actually rewards less proficient students and discriminates against the stronger of those who may eventually move on.

The following flowchart shows an example using CS 12 and CS 14. Enrollment in CS 14 requires a grade of “C or higher” in the prerequisite course CS 12. However, any student who earns a C- is prevented from either retaking CS 12 (under R1.6.1) or enrolling in CS 14 (under the prerequisite minima), leaving then caught in a “no man’s land” with no means of moving forward. Less proficient students who

earned grades of D+ or lower in their first attempt at CS 12, in contrast, can repeat the course under R1.6.1 and enroll in CS 14 if they pass the second attempt with a C or higher.

In essence, the more proficient grade band of C- students in the first CS 12 attempt are bring frozen out, while the less proficient grade band of F to D+ students can repeat the course and attempt to move on to CS 14. It seems unlikely that this selective discrimination is the actual outcome sought by the faculty.



I cite this particular example because I have been asked repeatedly as Associate Dean in CNAS to make exceptions under R1.6.2 for CNAS students who are attempting to change majors to Computer Science in BCOE – completion of both CS 12 and 14 are required by BCOE for such major changes. Given the popularity of CS and other majors, I don't think that granting carte blanche exception requests for R1.6.1 to resolve conflicts with arbitrary prerequisite "filters" is the right solution. Instead it seems that we either need a change to R1.6.1, or a more consistent policy on setting prerequisite grade minima.

In the view of students, it likely makes the university seem disingenuous or inconsistent when we have a campus-wide Senate regulation that is routinely in conflict with prerequisite policies set by majors and colleges.

Potential Solutions

Based on the attached table, if a C- is increasingly seen by the faculty as an inadequate means of insuring prerequisite course content proficiency, then the regulation could be changed to:

R1.6.1 A student may repeat only those courses in which a grade of NC or C- or lower was received.

This would remove the conflicts seen for course sequences such as CS 12 and 14, in which a "C or higher" prerequisite grade is required. It would also solve a common dilemma for UCR students seeking entrance to health professional schools, which often set "C or higher" grade requirements for core undergraduate courses (Charles Scruggs, Director, UCR Health Professions Advising Center).

However, some of the courses identified in the attached spreadsheet by the Registrar list even *higher* prerequisite grade minima, such as a "B or higher" and so the change in the Senate regulation wording suggested above would not remove those conflicts.

Thus the various prerequisite grade “filters” approved for different courses seem highly arbitrary and inconsistent in their nature, with some placing only “C- earners” in a no man’s land and others placing “C- to B- earners” in a no man’s land. The resulting inconsistency of the “no man’s land” adds salt to the wound.

Recommendation

Instead, if a C or higher is viewed by a majority of campus Senate members as an adequate and consistent filter for prerequisite course content proficiency, a more useful type of regulation change would be the following:

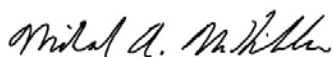
R1.6.1 A student may repeat only those courses in which a grade of C-, D, F, or NC was received. Course prerequisites cannot require grade minima that exceed a C because they would strand subsets of otherwise passing students who could neither satisfy the prerequisites nor repeat the prerequisite course.

In seeking to prevent less proficient students from attempting to enter impacted or popular majors, a better filter for Departments or Programs to implement would be to establish *mileposts* in the curriculum rather than arbitrary prerequisite grade minima. In other words, policies could be adopted requiring that a specific core course be passed by a specific point in the curricula (e.g., “passed no later than the Xth quarter following matriculation). This would maintain the integrity and consistency of R1.6.1 while at the same time prevent less proficient students who end up repeating a lot of core courses from moving on in a major curriculum for which they are ill-suited.

I have attached the Senate form on Division Regulation Change with the recommended modification.

I hope that the pertinent Senate committees (Ed Pol, Rules & Jurisdiction) can consider these grade conflict issues and come up with solutions that allow students to move forward in a consistent and non-arbitrary fashion, while at the same time maintaining proficiency standards and minimizing the burden on instructional resources caused by frequent course repeats.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael A. McKibben

Divisional Dean of Student Academic Affairs, CNAS

April 2, 2018