

# HVERFORD

## COLLEGE

TO: New and Visiting Faculty  
FROM: Phil Bean, Dean of Academic Affairs  
IN RE: Key Faculty Academic Policies

I am writing, principally for the benefit of new and visiting faculty, to advance the goal of CSSP, the Registrar's Office, and the deans to ensure there is maximal clarity regarding certain academic rules, practices, and procedures the faculty have established for the maintenance of equity of treatment among students and the maximization of the success of our students in the pursuit of their degrees. Below is a summary of the rules and procedures about which there seems most commonly to have been some confusion in the past and/or which may distinguish our practices from those at other institutions of higher learning, along with a gloss on each rule, that we hope will make it easier for you to advise students well and diminish the unnecessary expenditure of both faculty and administrative time in the future.

### **Academic Warning and Reports of Concern**

The Academic Warning (i.e., probation) and mid-term concerns reporting systems are designed to apprise the deans, the faculty (through CSSP), and specific academic advisors of any information that might conceivably indicate that a student is not performing well, losing momentum, or in personal difficulty that may or may not have an impact on his or her academic performance.

Instructors get notification from the Dean's Office after the drop deadline (i.e., 3 weeks into the semester) regarding which, if any, students in their class are on Academic Warning. For the system to work well, instructors need to err on the side of caution and notify a student's dean as soon as there is any indication that he or she may be veering off course. Students on Warning may not miss class or fail to meet deadlines (i.e., may not have extensions even prior to the end of finals, which is normally a professor's prerogative) without the approval of the instructor and the student's dean. CSSP and the deans would ask the faculty not to exercise discretion in such cases; please remember that you see a student in only one forum, and it is the function of the deans and CSSP to collect information that will provide the fullest possible snapshot of how a student is performing at any given time. If you choose not to report a failure by a student on Warning to meet a deadline or to attend every class, you are diminishing the effectiveness of the "early warning system" that the faculty have thus devised, as the one piece of information you possess might very well be the last crucial piece of evidence that intervention is warranted.

Much the same can be said of reports of concern—please err more on the side of caution even if you feel you may be over-reporting as a consequence. CSSP and the deans will gather all relevant information to see if your experience correlates with what is going on in other courses so as to determine, as best it can, whether your experience is isolated to your course (and therefore perhaps episodic in nature) or part of a broader pattern of academic disengagement. In addition, reports of concern are welcome at all times during the semester—please feel free to contact CSSP by way of the Committee's Secretary, Phil Bean, or a student's dean at any time before or after the mid-term concerns report deadline. While it is better to get information sooner than later, even reports of

evidence that a student is fading late in semester may give a dean and a student's academic advisor enough time to intervene so as to prevent broader academic failure during finals period.

### **Deadlines, incompletes, and extensions**

Prior to the end of final exam period, allowing students extensions on deadlines is entirely within the purview of the individual faculty member. Some faculty members prefer to consult a student's dean before approving an extension even during the semester in the belief that deans may very well know extenuating circumstances that justify additional time or, alternatively, may be aware of a pattern of behavior on the part of the student in question that might make granting additional time problematic vis-à-vis equity toward others and/or inconsistent with the student's personal development. The deans are only too happy to provide such input and to help serve as unofficial "gatekeepers" in such circumstances, but it is not necessary to consult them under the faculty rules.

However, any additional time beyond the last day of final examinations is governed by a formal process in which a dean and the faculty member must agree to give the student additional time. The faculty has collectively rejected open-ended extensions and incompletes, or ones that endure into the following semester (with the possible exception of courses, like studio arts, that require a student to complete his or her work in residence). There are two varieties of additional time: the "extension," which provides three additional days beyond the last day of finals, and the "incomplete," which allows the student up to three additional weeks after finals. In both cases, though, the student must ask the dean and his or her professor before the end of final exams period, and the dean must approve and file the requisite paperwork with the Registrar.

Incompletes and extensions should be granted only in instances in which there are extenuating circumstances beyond a student's control that unavoidably impede the student's ability to complete the work on time. Granting additional time because the student has a daunting workload or because the student might do better if he or she were allowed additional time is not only contrary to the faculty's rules but, more importantly, inconsistent with equity of treatment in that many students might want more time and might do better work if allowed more time, and if some are granted such time in the absence of such extenuating circumstances as described above and others are not, the latter students might reasonably contend that they have been treated unfairly in being required to meet deadlines while others are not.

In addition, students should get only so much time as their circumstances necessitate. For instance, if a student was sick for two days during the exam week, then an extension of two days may be in order; alternatively, if the student is in the grip of a documented, acute emotional or psychological crisis that might take longer to remediate, then a full three-week incomplete may be in order. Still other cases may justify incompletes that last fewer than three weeks. The deans stand ready to confer with the faculty and to provide advice regarding what seems to be the most appropriate amount of time in light of the demands of the assignment and the student's individual circumstances.

If a student has an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, we urge you to allow him or her only so much flexibility as is granted in the student's "Letter of Verification," which the student should present to you. Please note that while some students are given additional time to "sit" an exam (e.g., 90 minutes to take a 60 minute exam), both exams and papers must be completed by the dates established for the general student population. Please do not allow a student to have additional days to finish a paper or to take an examination on the grounds that he or she has a disability, as that may be a disservice to the student in question and is contrary to equity toward the general student population.

Finally, Haverford, Bryn Mawr, and Swarthmore students are held to the academic rules that apply at the institutions at which they are taking courses; if a Bryn Mawr student, for instance, is taking a course at Haverford, she is therefore subject to Haverford's rules regarding extensions and incompletes and must seek additional time with the approval of both the Haverford course instructor and our Dean's Office (which consults with the Bryn Mawr deans on such matters as warranted).

### **Submission by Email**

There has in recent years understandably been an increase in reliance on the use of email for the submission of papers during the semester and final work at the end of semesters. However, there has also been an increase, which has recently seemed to veer sharply upward, in claims by students that they sent papers and other work to professors by the appointed deadline by way of emails that somehow the professor has not received. There have also been instances in which professors get attachments that cannot be opened and students cannot be contacted, on occasion, for weeks to get them to provide the paper that was supposedly attached.

Although there is ample evidence that electronic delivery systems do fail on occasion, the number of instances in which the failure of work to arrive on time has been attributed to supposed technical failures has risen to a level that strains credulity. We would therefore prevail on individual faculty members to consider making explicit in their syllabi procedures that will minimize the potential for these incidents to happen. Among the stipulations you might consider making are the following: students should email papers from their Haverford email accounts; they should cc themselves; particularly if it is a relatively short paper, they should paste the text of the paper into the body of the email (even though they cannot include footnotes in so doing) in addition to attaching the document, as that will prove that the paper existed in case the attachment will not open; stipulate that you will not accept late papers from students who do not follow these procedures and who then seem to encounter technical difficulties.

CSSP and the Deans realize that these suggestions may seem contrary to the spirit of trust that makes Haverford distinctive, but the very existence of the Honor Code is predicated on the notion that some students will fail to live up to reasonable expectations, and anything we might do to diminish the temptation of desperate or negligent students to blame technological failure for their own inability to meet deadlines will, we think, buttress the atmosphere of trust rather than undermine it.

### **Study Away**

Students may not study abroad during the academic year for credit that may be added onto their Haverford transcripts unless they pursue such study on a program administered by the College's International Academic Programs Office (i.e., Donna Mancini) and approved in advance by the Educational Policy Committee. If a student chooses to study abroad on a program not approved and administered by the College during the academic year, regardless of whether the student is on leave of absence or not, Haverford will not accept any credits he or she will have earned abroad on such a program.

Any student hoping to earn transfer credit for summer study, either abroad or domestically, must file with the Registrar a completed "Application for Summer School Credit," which is available on the Registrar's website (under "Printable Forms" in the "For Students" section) prior to studying away. The College Catalog clearly establishes that requests for transfer credit for courses taken without the prior approval of the appropriate department chairs will not be accepted. The same rules apply to students who are on leave of absence who want to study at an institution of higher learning in the

U.S. during the academic year. Exceptions have been made only in cases in which a student can demonstrate that the relevant department approved the courses in advance and the student merely neglected to file the requisite form. However, we would prevail on the faculty to advise students to file the requisite form prior to taking courses elsewhere, as cases in which they do not do so lead to the unnecessary expenditure of faculty and administrative time.

Finally, please note that the foreign language requirement cannot be fulfilled by domestic study outside the Tri-Co/UPenn consortium or summer study abroad except, at the present time, the Bryn Mawr summer program in Pisa and some of Haverford's academic year study abroad programs. In addition, beginning with the Class of 2016 (i.e., this year's incoming first-year students), there will be absolutely no exemptions from the College language requirement, which obliges all students to complete one year of study of a language other than English within the Tri-Co/Penn system by junior year. A very small cohort of students with certain ADA accommodations will be permitted, as in past, to substitute courses in such disciplines as linguistics and computer science, but even so, such substitutions do not constitute exemptions from the language requirement. Students in the classes of 2013, 2014, and 2015 are, however, "grandfathered" and will therefore be permitted to satisfy the language requirement if they earn or have earned sufficiently high grades on SAT II and AP tests.

### **Monitoring Distributional Requirements**

Every fall the Dean's Office sends a message to all members of the senior class advising them to check their degree audits so as to take stock of any distributional requirements they have failed to satisfy and to see whether they are behind schedule in earning general graduation credits (i.e., the minimum of 32 credits one must earn overall in order to graduate). In January, the Registrar runs a program that identifies specific students who fall into one or both of these categories, and he and the deans advise these students to take appropriate action or to plan not to graduate in May (Haverford does not permit students to partake in the graduation ceremony until they have fulfilled all graduation requirements). For many, senior year is filled unnecessarily with anxiety because they must take heavier course loads, forego taking courses they might have wanted to take, or not participate in graduation in May because they were not aware earlier that they had not fulfilled certain requirements.

While it is emphatically the responsibility of students to learn to keep track of such matters, we would ask you, in your capacity as pre-major and major advisors, to set an example for them by showing them how to do a degree audit or, alternatively, exhorting them by email to do so. They can do an audit by going to "View Transcript and Degree Audit" in the "For Students" section on the Registrar's website. Pushing them, when necessary, to embrace this responsibility will save much faculty and administrative time each year that might be better employed and also avert the fate that befalls at least a half dozen students each year, namely, their inability to participate in May graduation simply because they lack a credit.