University Curriculum Committee
Minutes
February 13, 2015

Members Present: Brighouse (skype), Brown, Fadl, Howard, Ingham, Murphy, Smith, Taylor, Weimer

Members Absent: Green, Wilkerson

The meeting began at 9:30 am.

I. Consent item – Minutes of the January 9, 2014 meeting
Motion by Ingham to approve, unanimously approved.

II. Policy Discussion

A first reading/discussion of several of the policy issues that the committee needs to consider.

A. Course Component Types
The committee discussed the need to update the definitions of course component types (LEC, DIS, LAB, FLD etc). The course component types primary purpose is course scheduling but they also give students a sense of how the course is set up. Different component types generally indicate a different type of experience either in the classroom or in other settings. Accurate component descriptions will help students get a realistic sense of the amount and type of work associated with a course. It is important to note that because scheduling is their primary purpose, component types are not intended to full describe the pedagogical model of the course. While the committee wants to develop shared standards across campus, it recognizes that there are disciplinary differences.

It was suggested that perhaps the course proposal form should ask as separate questions for the primary component type and then ask if there is a secondary component type. This will be considered with future updates to the system.

Discussion (DIS)
Much of the discussion was around the description of the discussion (DIS) section type. It is recommended that the language be edited to say “DIS sections may only be used to complement LEC sections”. How is the homework allocation associated with a discussion section that is different than a lecture section? Is there a difference between a discussion section where students are awarded a credit versus those where they are not? If credit is being awarded for a discussion section, does the activity that takes place in the discussion section have to meet the federal credit hour definition of having 2 hours of outside work for the credit? The credit hours associated with a course are based on the aggregate time and work associated with a course and it is not necessary to require an hour by hour accounting for the purpose of awarding credit for the course. An additional credit can be awarded for the discussion if the
aggregate amount of work meets with the definition. Issues do arise when a course is variable credit where there may or may not be a discussion section associated with the course. The count of the credit hours should be considered over the whole of the course, not individual component types.

Laboratory (LAB)
It may be useful to provide other examples or include other terms that would capture the fact that there are different activities other than what occurs in a traditional scientific laboratory experience. In a lab section the student will have an opportunity to learn by engaging in practice associated with scientific experiments, studio art, media production, etc.

Field Studies (FLD)
This component type is frequently used in fields where practical experience is an important part of professional skill development and training. In this type of course the student will engage in the study or application of academic knowledge and expert behavior in the outside world.

Independent Study (IND)
The committee recommends including a sentence of purpose but then refer to the policy that was passed by the UAPC in 2013.

Seminar (SEM)
Seminars include both freshman and senior undergraduate, as well as graduate level courses. There should be flexibility by discipline as well as level. This is a primary component.

Taylor recorded the committee’s specific recommendations regarding edits to the proposed language. She will make the edits and resubmit them for review and approval at a meeting in March.

Disciplinary Boundaries

It may be extremely difficult to differentiate where the boundaries should lie. For example, there are a variety of statistical courses offered in departments all over campus that focus on the application of statistical methods to a discipline. There is great value in situating the abstract in a specific, applied field. Is it enough to require that courses be reviewed by the foundational disciplinary department and allow other departments to teach applied courses?

A possibly similar yet different example might be whether the College of Engineering should teach its own calculus for engineers courses. Or what about teaching composition courses within disciplines? There may be a difference between teaching the basics and teaching a topic in a way that is specific to a discipline where basic or foundational knowledge is applied in specific ways.

A question that may help determine whether disciplinary boundaries are appropriate is to ask where the research on the topic is based. If research on a given topic is being done in the discipline that is requesting a course this may be useful in determining the appropriate home for a course.

Above all it is critical to create the expectation that other departments that may have an intellectual interest in a course are consulted ahead of time. There must be a strict rule that proposals will be sent back without discussion if they have not been reviewed by relevant departments. It should be clear that proposers are expected to indicate this in the proposal. The workflow process of the online course proposal system was explained as was the conflict resolution strategies that are typically used when there is a dispute over which subject listing is the appropriate home for a course.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 am.