

General Policy Change

TO: Claire McCoy, Chair, General Education Committee, and
Alecia Knox, Registrar

FROM: Wade Edwards, Modern Languages Program Coordinator, and
Sally Scott, Director of Disability Services

DATE: 28 November 2006

RE: Change to the Policy on Modification of General Education Requirements

The current policy is listed below, with the part under consideration in bold:

Policy on Modification of General Education or Additional Degree Requirements

Modification to an additional degree (e.g. B.A. or B.S, etc.) requirement or general education requirement for any student is done through a petition submitted to the Faculty Petitions Committee through the Office of Registration. A standing committee of the Faculty Senate, the Faculty Petitions Committee is empowered to handle appeals from students for exemptions or variations from any university-wide academic rule or regulation.

A student petition must include the following:

1. A specific rationale for the exemption or variation
 2. the plan for degree or general education modification
 3. supporting documents when appropriate
- a. If the exemption or variation is sought for a general education or additional degree requirement that is specified by the major, the petition must include a letter of support from the department chair.

b. If the exemption or variation is sought due to the impact of a disability, the petition must include verification of the following:

i. The Director of Disability Support Services, in conjunction with the instructor or department representative, evaluated whether reasonable accommodations could be made to allow the student to complete the requirements of the course and determined that accommodations which would not alter the essential function of the course were not possible.

ii. Appropriate documentation is on file with Disability Support Services (for example, the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing [C-TOPP] would currently be required for a petition to waive General Education Goal 10.)

The petition should be filed before an application for degree is submitted. All decisions of the Faculty Petitions Committee are final. Students may request a review based only on new information.

Proposed change

We are proposing a change to section b.ii., which would remove the mention of a special test for Goal 10 courses.

ii. Appropriate documentation is on file with Disability Support Services ~~(for example, the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing [C-TOPP] would currently be required for a petition to waive General Education Goal 10.)~~

Rational for change

Drs. Edwards and Scott are working to reduce the number of waivers granted for Goal 10 courses (FREN / GERM / SPAN 201) while providing reasonable accommodations for students with learning disabilities. Petitions for a waiver to Goal 10 based on a disability have been steadily increasing in the past four years. These are the data provided by Alecia Knox, University Registrar:

2002-03	4 approved, 3 denied
2003-04	5 approved, 1 denied
2004-05	9 approved, 3 denied
2005-06	13 approved, 1 denied

We believe that the numbers are increasing for several reasons:

1. Current policy, stating that Disability Services and a department representative work together to provide reasonable accommodations for disabled students, has not been followed properly in the recent past;
2. The mention of a specific test for Goal 10 courses incorrectly suggests that a tool exists to determine whether a student is able to gain proficiency in a foreign language; and
3. Students have not often received adequate advising with regards to the timing of a waiver petition for Goal 10 courses. Many wait until their final semesters to begin the foreign language sequence.

Drs. Scott and Edwards are working to follow the established policy (b.i) more closely in order to guide students through the petitions process early in their undergraduate careers, with enough time to allow them to attempt the foreign language goal with accommodations. However, we recommend that Goal 10 courses not be singled out in the stated policy, and that mention of the C-TOPP be struck. The C-TOPP tests only one component of foreign language learning (an auditory component) and is not an appropriate tool for measuring success in foreign language learning.