
Alison Watt, 08:31 AM 5/7/2008, Re: Question for the Senate Meeting

CC: all-senators@sfu.ca
Subject: Re: Question for the Senate Meeting
X-Sender: watt@popserver.sfu.ca
Date: Wed, 7 May 2008 08:31:43 -0700
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To: Kevin Harding <kharding@sfu.ca>
From: Alison Watt <Alison_Watt@sfu.ca>

Hi Kevin,

Attached is the response from Bill Krane to the question you raised for the April Senate meeting.

Regards,
Alison

Hi Alison,

Part of me fears that this is too late for the Senate meeting, but I would like to submit a written question for the Question Period. I can follow up with a paper copy of this question tomorrow to your office if you would like.

Kevin

The Senate Committee on Undergraduate Studies approves undergraduate course proposals and course changes, amongst other things, as part of its delegated authority and responsibilities. The 'course change form' at SCUS identifies many areas which can be submitted as proposed course changes, including credit hour, title, description, and instructional vector (lecture/lab/tutorial/seminar/etc).

In practice, this means that we at times approve credit hour, course description, and vector changes to undergraduate courses across the university. However, there appears to be some degree of confusion in regards to what SCUS is actually required to approve.

For example, while SCUS approves vectors as part of the new course approval process, recent changes in instructional vector are not being forwarded to SCUS for approval. Examples are the many courses in the Department of Psychology where a large number of tutorial sections are being replaced with a smaller number of Open Labs.

These changes are substantial changes in the instructional methods and course formats, and is there appears to be no requirement to request official course changes through the SCUS processes, nor report changes 'for information.' One response upon my questioning this has been that recent changes are temporary in nature and as such do not need to come to SCUS.

I fear that Senators are not aware of the numbers or the nature of the changes because they are not being reported to SCUS or Senate, and as such, that we do not have a sufficient amount of information when considering other, related, proposals at Senate or at SCUS.

This gives rise to the following questions, to be directed to the Vice President, Academic:

- What is the process for changing the instructional vectors of undergraduate courses? Is SCUS required to approve all, some, or none of these changes?

- Are there differences between 'temporary' and 'permanent' changes to courses, and if so, what are the differences? How long can 'temporary' changes remain in place before they are considered 'permanent' changes? What is the approval process for temporary changes to course format or delivery method, or other aspects of courses?

Kevin Harding
Senator, Simon Fraser University



[ResponsetoKHarding.doc](#)

Response to K. Harding's Questions at Senate's Meeting of April 7, 2008

Background

In March of 1994 Senate approved the following with regard to vectors: "that the vector pattern approved by the Senate when a course is initiated may be changed with the approval of the Chair and the Faculty. The vector pattern shall reflect the in-class requirements and the calendar description of the course. The Faculty decision shall be reported to SCUS for information."

There is an important note included in the paper, which reads in part "there are now some additional funding pressures that could result in a shift from the tutorial system in a piecemeal basis. While there is a need to retain flexibility and to respond to innovative ways of delivering course material, there is a corresponding need to keep track of what is happening across faculties and the University as a whole. . . . The added step of reporting to SCUS allows for a broader monitoring of such activity across the University, and for bringing forward expressions of concern to [SCUP] and Senate."

At the May 2006 meeting of SCUS the following was noted in the minutes:

- c. Business processes (SCUS 06-09 a)
 - i. Vectors

R. Mathewes gave the definition of *vector* according to the Oxford dictionary (a definition is not shown in the Calendar). It was felt that a definition was useful for the Faculties because vectors are used to assess workload and financing issues but it was also acknowledged that variations on the use and definition of vectors exist within all the different Faculties. R. Mathewes reported that vectors seem to be referenced only on New Course Proposal forms and Course Change forms. It was reported that they are necessary for Scheduling staff who must manually change each vector component when requested for purposes of space assignment (but they do not monitor these changes).

It was agreed that each Faculty will work with their own definition of vectors and SCUS will not question these or the assignment of hours. _____

Practice

There are four main vector components: lecture, seminar, tutorial, and laboratory contact hours. In addition, there are a number of other components that are primarily used for specific-purpose courses including Field School, Section with no meeting time, Practicum, Studio, Workshop, Open Laboratory, Instruction, Online Conference, Studio Laboratory, and Required Laboratory.

The type of vector, i.e., the way the course is to be delivered, is approved by SCUS as part of the initial "new course proposal". The components are recorded in SIMS, but the actual contact hours associated with each component are not.

Departments do their own scheduling and can specify the contact hours they want within the types of vectors approved. The system does not flag changes from semester to semester.

If a department wishes to change the contact hours for the components of a course, they must contact Student Services' central scheduling department for assistance. These changes are not noted in the system as temporary or permanent since they can be revised from term to term.

Questions

What is the process for changing the instructional vectors of undergraduate courses?

Departments control their own scheduling practices. Any changes are to be approved by the department and/or Faculty and reported to SCUS. In practice, Student Services does not know if departments have Faculty approval for changes and they are not regularly reported to SCUS.

Is SCUS required to approve all, some, or none of these changes?

SCUS is not required to approve any changes.

Are there differences between 'temporary' and 'permanent' changes to courses, and if so, what are the differences?

There are no "temporary" changes made to courses. Changes might be made in SIMS when the documentation has passed through SCUS or SGSC and is pending approval by Senate. Because changes to vectors are within the purview of departments and Faculties and can be made at any time, they are considered neither temporary nor permanent.

How long can 'temporary' changes remain in place before they are considered 'permanent' changes?

Not applicable.

What is the approval process for temporary changes to course format or delivery method, or other aspects of courses?

Not applicable.