

## EPC Proposal for Revising Arts and Sciences' Continuance Standards

March, 1998 Faculty Meeting

The EPC presents the following two-part proposal as an item for discussion at the March 1998 Faculty Meeting and as an item for Faculty Vote at the April 1998 Faculty Meeting. The two parts of the proposal may be voted on separately.

Part I of the EPC Proposal:

Beginning Fall, 1998, a system of mid-semester reporting will be instituted. The reporting will cover all first year students, including both freshmen and transfers, and all students on probation. It need not assign a grade but need only indicate all students doing marginal or unsatisfactory work. Reports will be submitted electronically for distribution to advisors.

Rationale: The mid-semester reporting system will strengthen academic support for students by enabling advisors to intervene more quickly and hence more effectively when students are in academic trouble. Reporting that students are performing unsatisfactorily will be done on a user-friendly form. Transmitting the reports electronically will insure that advisors can receive information about students' academic performance almost instantaneously. We can be ready for transmitting these reports by next Fall.

Part II of the EPC Proposal: Revised Continuance Standards to take effect Fall, 1999:

Origin of the Continuance Proposal:

Last semester an Ad Hoc Committee was formed with EPC approval for the purpose of reviewing our current Continuance Standards and recommending improvements. Forming such a committee came at the suggestion of the Committee on Academic Status, the Provost and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

The Committee, chaired by Mark Fowler (Undergraduate Dean), had this membership: Monica Augustin (Registrar), Randy Coleman (Academic Advising), Karen Cottrell (Associate Provost), Thomas Goodale (Education), Jennifer Krasula (Student), Matthew Lambert (Student), Susie Mirick (Dean of Students), Sharon Reed (Academic Advising), Roger Smith (Government), Trish Volp (Dean of Students), and Tom White (Business).

In discharging its task, the Committee a) compared our Continuance Standards to those of other Virginia and peer institutions, b) collected examples of how the existing Standards harmed students as well as other relevant data, c) consulted with Academic Advising and the Dean of Students to gauge the extent of our support services for at-risk students, and d) ran a check to see how the Committee's proposed new Standards would have affected the academic standing of students at the end of their freshmen years for the classes of 95, 96 and 97.

The committee made a series of recommendations to EPC, which EPC discussed, revised and formulated into the following proposal:

### I Basic Assumptions Behind Proposed Continuance Standards

Underlying the EPC proposal is the expectation that normal academic progress for students is equivalent to earning at least 12 credits per semester with at least a 2.00 QPA. We allow a period of adjustment' for incoming freshmen and transfer students to permit time for them to become accustomed to W&M academic standards. But that period lasts only through students' fourth semester at the College. With this expectation in mind, we recommend that the existing Continuance Standards (which are attached for your reference) be supplanted by those below. We further recommend that the new Standards be effective Fall, 1999, not next year. The extra year will enable us to test more fully the support system which we want in place when the new Continuance Standards take effect. They will apply to all new students, including transfers, who enter the College in Fall 1999 or thereafter:

### II Rationales for Proposed New Continuance Standards:

1. Despite the fact that the College amended its Continuance policies only three years ago, they are still flawed. For instance, they allow some students (admittedly, a small number) with poor academic performances to linger on at the College semester after semester even when there is no hope of their ultimately graduating. Also they make more difficult effective earlier intervention with at-risk students which might lead to their ultimate academic success. In the Committee's opinion, under the current Standards we too often intervene too late.
2. Ours are among the lowest Continuance Standards in Virginia. Although our grading is more stringent, this doesn't warrant having Continuance Standards this low.
3. In contrast to the old, the new Continuance Standards are premised on the idea that students should be able to maintain at least a C average after their sophomore year. This gives them two years to fully adjust to William and Mary's academic demands. Since only W&M credits determine whether Continuance Standards are satisfied, our proposal also allows transfer students time to adjust to transfer shock'. We deem this appropriate.
4. We have consulted with Academic Advising and the Dean of Students offices. Both agree that we would have enough support services for students in academic trouble even if our Continuance Standards were raised in the recommended way and even if we demanded that every student on probation be advised. This is especially true given the new at risk' program under the Dean of Students where students are required to make an appointment for academic consulting upon receiving a warning letter. (At present, a warning is issued when a student's QPA drops below a 2.00.)
5. Under existing rules, underload semesters are disregarded when determining whether students have met Continuance Standards. They count under the proposed new Standards because the Committee believes that students should be

- expected to make continual progress toward graduation within 10 semesters and because we believe that normally this would impose no great hardship on students.
6. Cases demanding a special response because of special circumstances will still be handled by the Committee on Academic Status, in the belief that exceptions to the Standards should be made where compassion and a wider sense of fairness call for them.
  7. Although arrived at through an independent line of reasoning, the recommended new Continuance Standards coincidentally harmonize with the standards suggested by Virginia's Council on Higher Education for the satisfactory academic progress required of students receiving financial aid. (The Council's suggestions are yet to be approved by the Legislature.)

### III Proposed New Continuance Standards:

1. Cumulative QPA and minimum W&M credits earned:

End of 1st semester: 1.7 and 12 credits End of 2nd semester: 1.7 and 24 credits  
End of 3rd semester: 1.85 and 36 credits End of 4th semester: 2.00 and 48 credits  
End of 5th semester: 2.00 and 60 credits End of 6th semester: 2.00 and 72 credits  
End of 7th semester: 2.00 and 84 credits End of 8th semester: 2.00 and 96 credits  
End of 9th semester: 2.00 and 108 credits End of 10th semester: 2.00 and 120 credits

2. Students whose work falls below the minimum qpa and earned credit standards will be placed on probation. While on probation, they must earn at least a C average with at least a 12-credit load. They will have one regular semester to bring their work up or beyond the minimum standards-- i.e., the QPA and credit earned requirements. Failing this, they will be required to withdraw from the College.

(Under current rules, students are suspended for at least one semester; but this can be for a longer period if the Committee on Academic Status thinks it in the students' best interest. Before returning, students must normally supply a) a personal statement, b) evidence of a solid work record, paid or unpaid, and c) transcripts from another higher education institution showing that they have received B's or better in two courses-- the credit from these courses isn't transferable to W&M. With very rare exceptions, students who are dropped a second time are not reinstated.)

C) Normally, the suspension period should last one semester, although the duration of suspension will still be at the discretion of the Committee on Academic Status.

D) Students are not removed from probation due to credit earned at William and Mary Summer School. While on probation, students must maintain at least a C average in their W&M Summer School work.

E) Only credit earned in William and Mary courses should count toward determining whether students are meeting Continuance Standards. Hence no transfer, AP or IB credit should count for Continuance, though of course such credit will count toward the 120 credits required for graduation and toward general education and concentration requirements. From a Continuance perspective, students enter William and Mary with a clean slate'.

F) Students must meet at least once with the Dean of Students Office for academic counseling during the first week of the semester in which they are placed on probation. A mandatory hold will be placed on their record by their Advisors which will be removed once the counseling has occurred. Under such a hold, students can neither register for new classes nor drop classes in which they are already enrolled.

G) Students granted underloads are expected to keep up with Continuance Standards and to abide by the ten-semester rule.

H) The Committee on Academic Status will hear individual cases for exceptions to the Standards.