

RECEIVED BY SENATE  
04/03/2023

## **Proposal to the Senate Educational Policy Committee and the Council on Student Conduct Expectations and Accountability**

**PROPOSAL TITLE:** Revise Sections 3-203 and 3-204 of the *Student Code*

**SPONSOR:** Julie Fredenburg, Assistant Director of Student Placement and Proficiency Testing, Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning

**CONTACT:** Kathy Martensen, Associate Provost for Educational Programs and Success Initiatives, Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost, [kmartens@illinois.edu](mailto:kmartens@illinois.edu)

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION:** Proposed to revise the minimum letter grade required to receive credit on Proficiency Examinations (Section 3-203) and Special Examinations (Section 3-204) from a C- to a C.

**JUSTIFICATION:** The revisions to the *Student Code* detailed in the following documents were originally proposed and voted upon by the Conference on Conduct Governance (now called the Council on Student Conduct Expectations and Accountability) in 2017; however, the Code itself was not updated to reflect the approved changes because the version that went to the Senate Educational Policy Committee did not include them. At this time, this request is being made to correct this oversight.

Both in 2017 and remaining true today, graduate schools often inquire as to whether the grade of “PS” that the university awards for earning proficiency or special examination credit is equivalent to a C or better as part of their applicant processing. With the *Code* stating the minimum for these exams is a C-, we are unable to say yes, thereby putting any applicants to graduate programs who have a “PS” on their transcript from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign at a disadvantage.

Upon investigation specifically into proficiency exams as to what the impact would be on students if this change goes into effect, CITL reached out to all departments currently offering proficiency exams, as each department sets its own definition of what score actually constitutes a “pass” on the exam. Unfortunately, most departments do not keep or were unable to find records of actual scores or the exams themselves, so determining specific numbers of students impacted is challenging. However, noteworthy is that several departments are using a cutoff significantly higher than what might be considered a C-. As such, students who earn proficiency credit in these departments are doing so at a level at least more accurately represented by moving the stated minimum to a C.

Specifically, the Department of Computer Science requires a B- or higher to earn proficiency credit for CS 101, 105, 124, 128, and 173. The Department of Economics requires a score of at least 85% to earn credit for ECON 102 and 103. The Department of Mathematics’ minimum is a

B- to earn credit for MATH 220, 225, 231, 241, 285, and 415. For credit in PHYS 101, 102, 211, 212, 213, and 214, the Department of Physics requires a score of at least 80%. The School of Molecular and Cellular Biology states on their website that a C- or higher is required for credit in MCB 100, 150, 250, and 252; the Department of Chemistry's website says the same for credit in CHEM 102 and 104. Psychology is currently the only department using a percentage that most would consider lower than a C-: They require a score of at least 70% for proficiency credit for PSYC 100.

All departments offering proficiency exams would receive communication about any changes actualized within the *Student Code* so they may update their requirements as they see fit.

This proposal has been discussed by the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning, the Office of the Registrar, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost, and the Council of Undergraduate Deans. All recommend approval. In 2017 when originally proposed, these same constituents were consulted, along with the Conference on Conduct Governance, and all recommended approval at that time as well.

Please see the attached proposed changes and documentation for specifics

**DESIRED EFFECTIVE TERM:** Fall, 2023

## § 3-203 PROFICIENCY EXAMINATIONS

### a. All Students

1. Proficiency exams offer students the opportunity to earn academic credit that counts toward degree completion without actually taking the course for which they earn the credit.
2. Information concerning proficiency examinations may be obtained from the student's college or from the department offering the course for which the student wishes to earn proficiency credit. Except as provided in subsection (3)(D) below, a student must secure the consent of the head or chairperson of the department concerned to take these examinations.
3. Departmental proficiency examinations may be taken only by the following:
  - A. Students who are currently enrolled for courses on the Urbana-Champaign campus. (A person attending only as an auditor is not considered to be "currently enrolled.") For the purpose of this rule, a student who has completed the work of fall semester or winter session is considered to be "currently enrolled for courses" for fifteen days after the close of the final examination period, including graduating seniors; and a student who has completed the work of spring semester or a summer session is considered to be "currently enrolled for courses" up to the end of the registration period for the following fall semester, including graduating seniors.
  - B. Persons who have been previously registered in a degree program and are currently registered in an online course, or an extramural course offered by the university.
  - C. Persons who are not registered in the university at the time they wish to take a departmental proficiency exam but who are candidates for undergraduate degrees at the University of Illinois who need no more than ten semester hours to complete the requirements for their degrees. (See § 3 204 on special examinations.)

- D. Students who participate in the proficiency testing sessions offered during New Student Welcome Week, at the beginning of the fall semester, or at the beginning of the spring semester. Credit earned by this method does not become a part of the student's university record until after the student has completed registration.
4. Departmental proficiency examinations may NOT be taken in the following circumstances:
- A. To earn credit for a course that has been failed, meaning the student earned a grade of F, FR, or ABS. (See § 3-204 on special examinations.)
  - B. To change to a PS an earned grade that was lower than what the student desired.
  - C. To earn credit for an elementary-level college course which is part of a sequence of courses covering elementary- and intermediate-level material when the student has already received credit, or is scheduled to receive credit, for one or more than one semester of work in the subject.
5. The grade for proficiency examinations is PS or F.
- A. A grade of PS is awarded when the student earns at least a ~~C~~ C on the examination. Individual departments may set the minimum passing score for their departmental proficiency exams to be higher than a ~~C~~ C.
  - B. A grade of F is awarded when the student earns lower than a ~~C~~ C, or lower than the department's minimum score. An F is not recorded in the student's official academic record and does not appear on the student's transcript. However, departments may keep internal records and prohibit a student from re-taking the departmental proficiency examination.
  - C. The department that offers a departmental proficiency exam is responsible for submitting PS grades to the Registrar's Office within 4 weeks of the date of the proficiency exam.

6. Proficiency examinations are generally given at no cost to the student; however, a fee may be charged for proficiency examinations from agencies outside the university.
7. Students wishing to take a proficiency examination in a subject not offered at the campus at which they are or have been registered, but offered at another campus of the university, may do so upon satisfying the above conditions, provided they obtain approval from their primary campus (the campus at which they were last registered) for concurrent registration prior to taking the examination.
8. Departments have no obligation to administer proficiency exams to students from other institutions who are not currently enrolled at the University of Illinois, as defined in subsection (a)(3)(A) above.

b. Undergraduate Students

1. Proficiency examinations for advanced standing are offered in all university courses normally open to freshmen and sophomores.
2. A student may take proficiency examinations in more advanced undergraduate courses on the recommendation of the head or chairperson of the department and with the approval of the dean of the college in which the department offering the proficiency exam is located.
3. Proficiency examinations for advanced courses may be taken by graduating seniors at any time designated by the instructor within the time limits of subsection (a)(3)(A) above.
4. Undergraduate students who pass a proficiency examination are given credit toward graduation for the amount regularly allowed in the course, provided such credit does not duplicate credit counted for admission to the university and provided the credit is acceptable in their curriculum.
5. Credit earned by a proficiency examination does not count toward satisfying the minimum requirement of sixty semester hours of University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign credit. (See § 3-801 for details on the credit requirements for a bachelor's degree.)

c. Graduate Students

1. Graduate students may satisfy specific requirements by passing proficiency examinations.

- 
2. Credit earned by passing a proficiency examination cannot be applied toward graduate degrees.

## § 3-204 SPECIAL EXAMINATIONS

- a. Special examinations offer students who failed a course another opportunity to pass the course and earn academic credit counting toward degree completion.
- b. A special examination may be given only in the following circumstances:
  1. the student earned a failing grade (F, FR, or ABS) in the University of Illinois course.
  2. a special examination is recommended by the head or chair of the department offering the course which the student failed, or by an individual duly authorized by the head or chair, whether the course is traditional, blended, online, a self-paced online course, or other.
  3. the special examination is approved by the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled.
  4. a special examination permit was issued by the Office of the Registrar because the individual seeking the special examination is a currently enrolled student, or is a former student who is not currently registered but who has no more than 10 semester hours remaining to complete their degree.
  5. the instructor designates when the special examination will be given, within the time limits of § 3-203, subsection (a)(3)(A), including for graduating seniors; but students who are not currently enrolled in the university and who have failed an online course or a self-paced online course must take the Special Examination within 30 days of grade roll.
    - A. The exam must be administered after the close of the semester, winter session, or summer session in which the course was failed.
    - B. The exam must be administered before the end of the next semester in which the student is registered following failure in the course.
- c. A student who has been dropped from the university is not eligible to take special examinations unless the student has been reinstated and meets the conditions stated in § 3-203(a)(3)(A) above.
- d. Special examinations are given at no additional cost to the student.

e. Special examination grades are reported as PS or F.

1. A grade of PS is awarded when the student earns at least a ~~C~~ C on the examination.
2. A grade of F is awarded when the student earns lower than a ~~C~~ C.
3. An F is not recorded in the student's official academic record and does not appear on the student's transcript. However, departments may prohibit a student from retaking the examination.
4. The instructor that administers the special exam is responsible for submitting PS grades to the Registrar's Office within 4 weeks of the date of the exam.
5. A student given a grade of PS in a special examination will receive the credit normally allowed for the course, subject to all regulations governing the individual student's curriculum.
6. Grades earned on special examinations are not included in the computation of grade point averages. (A passing grade on a special examination does not remove the previously earned failing grade.)