

Memo

To: Senate Council

From: Undergraduate Council

Date: March 8, 2017

Re: Proposal to make the free elective (Senate Rule 5.4.3) optional

The Undergraduate Council recently reviewed the attached proposal from the College of Engineering regarding the free elective requirement in SR 5.4.3. The council was tasked with providing guidance about any possible unintended consequences that would stem from the removal of the free elective requirement. After a discussion with Kim Anderson, Associate Dean for Administration and Academic Affairs for the College of Engineering, and BJ Brandenburg, Director of Student Records for the College of Engineering, council members identified three potentially negative outcomes if the free elective requirement is removed:

- Transfer credit hours are frequently used to fulfill free elective requirements
- AP credit hours are frequently used to fulfill free elective requirements
- Free electives are designed to allow students freedom to take courses without “restriction or control” (SR 9.6, Glossary of Terms)

However, it is recognized that programs will still have the option to include free electives in their curriculum if they so choose. In addition, some programs currently only include 1-3 hours of free elective hours, and most students have more than 3 hours of transfer or AP course credit that could be used to fulfill the free elective requirement. Removing the 1-3 hours of free electives in these programs would not have that much of an impact. Also, if students are using these types of credit hours to fulfill the free elective requirement, then they are not using the requirement for its intended purpose.

The Undergraduate Council voted to approve the proposal to make the free elective optional, with revisions to SR 5.4.3 as stated in the proposal. Council members also recommend that a *maximum* number of elective hours for undergraduate programs be established and stated in SR 5.4.3.

Proposal to make the Free Elective (Senate Rule 5.4.3) Optional
Kimberly W. Anderson, Associate Dean
College of Engineering
February 27, 2017

With the recent mandate by CPE, the College of Engineering is required to modify their curricula so that the maximum number of hours to complete the BS degree is 128. Currently, the number of hours to complete the BS degrees in engineering range from 128 – 135. As we work to meet this mandate, it is imperative that we continue to meet our engineering accreditation requirements through math, science and engineering classes.

To assist with this mandate, we are requesting that the University consider modifying the Senate Rule 5.4.3 to make the Free Elective optional. This would give our programs the choice of including the Free Elective or not in their curricula. In addition, many of our students come in with college or AP credit with the Free Elective already taken while the student is in high school. Therefore, many of our students are not taking this elective at UK. Finally, we believe our engineering students are receiving their broad education through the UK Core.

On January 25, 2017, I discussed this issue at the Associate Deans' meeting and all of the Associate Deans present were in unanimous agreement that the Free Elective should now be optional.

I would like to request that Senate Rule 5.4.3 be changed as follows

5.4.3 REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

To be eligible for any degree, a student must have completed the requirements as approved by the University Senate, except that curriculum substitutions may be made by the college affected if not inconsistent with these Rules. Curriculum requirements must include, in addition to specified credits, a specified grade point average both overall and in the student's major which shall in no case be less than 2.0. [US: 10/10/94]

- * The 2.0 requirement applies to all major requirements, including pre-major and lower division courses but not to those courses taken in the major beyond the minimum requirements. [SREC: 12/4/95]

Every baccalaureate degree program shall include four divisions or components:

1. UK Core
2. Pre-major or Pre-professional
3. Major or Professional
4. Free-Electives

5.4.3.4 Electives

The free elective degree component must meet the definition of free electives as set forth in the Glossary of Terms of the University Senate Rules. **An free elective component is a mandatory part of every baccalaureate program, and baccalaureate programs may satisfy this requirement with a free elective.** The free elective degree component must meet the definition of free electives as set forth in the Glossary of Terms of the *University Senate Rules*. **Electives have no minimum hour requirement**--that is, it is left to the discretion of the Undergraduate Council as it approves programs and program changes.

Definition in Glossary

9.6 FREE ELECTIVE

Designates those courses freely chosen by the student without restriction or control except that the course or courses must meet course standards as set by the University of Kentucky.

We are requesting that the Councils consider this request so that we can move forward with program changes that meet the 128-hour requirement.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kim Anderson