

Final Report  
of the Faculty Policy Committee's  
Subcommittee on  
Examination and Term Regulations



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Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
May 1999  
Revised March 2000

## SUMMARY OF PROPOSED CHANGES TO REGULATIONS

The Subcommittee on Examination and Term Regulations was asked to “re-examine current Faculty regulations governing the administration of quizzes, tests, and examinations during the regular term as well as the Faculty regulations governing the end of term.” Specifically the Subcommittee looked at seven areas: term and end-of-term regulations, evening examinations, take-home examinations, governance of examination policy, procedures to deal with violations, suggestions for informing faculty members of the regulations, and changes to *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty*.

The Subcommittee’s Findings and Recommendations are in Section IV of the full report, which follows this summary. This summary includes only proposed regulation changes. In the full report, the Subcommittee also endorses continuation of a number of existing regulations.

The Subcommittee's report was first presented to the faculty on May 19, 1999, so that there could be discussion before the vote of the faculty on this report. As a result of that discussion, the Subcommittee has amended some of its recommendations. These changes are noted in Section IV.

### IV.A. Term and End-of-Term Regulations

#### *1. Announcement of Assignments at Beginning of Term*

**In each undergraduate subject faculty members must provide to students, by the end of the first week of classes, a clear and complete description of the required work, including the number and kinds of assignments, the approximate schedule for tests, whether or not there will be a final examination, the due dates for major projects, and the grading criteria and procedures to be used. By the end of the third week, faculty members must provide the precise schedule of tests and major assignments.**

Currently, during the first three weeks of classes, instructors are to provide a clear and complete description of the requirements in each subject, including the due dates for required work, the schedule of examinations during the term, whether there will be a final examination, and the grading criteria and procedures to be used. Major assignments are to be made early enough to allow students the opportunity to manage their time effectively throughout the term. See p. 4.

#### *2. Testing during Last Week of the Term*

**No tests may be held in undergraduate subjects after the Friday preceding the start of reading period, to be called the Last Test Date. Instead, all testing at the end of semester in undergraduate subjects must be conducted during the final examination period.**

Currently, comprehensive examinations are to be held during the final examination period. The Friday preceding the reading period is defined as the Final Exercise Date for subjects with finals. Tests covering the last section of a subject may be scheduled after the Final Exercise Date, provided there is no other assignment during that period and the subject does not have an examination during the finals period. See pp. 4-5.

#### *3. No End-of-Term Assignment in a Subject with a Final*

**In an undergraduate subject with testing during the finals period, no assignment may fall due after the Last Test Date. Optional assignments during the last week are for self-study, and may not be used toward part of**

**the grade in the subject, even for extra points or as substitutes for earlier assignments. Normal background reading in preparation for lectures or class discussions is permitted.**

Currently, no assignment may fall due in the last week but there is no regulation about optional assignments. See p. 5.

#### *4. One End-of-Term Assignment in a Subject without a Final*

**In an undergraduate subject without a final examination only one assignment may fall due after the Last Test Date. An oral presentation and written report based on the same project will be considered as one assignment. Optional assignments during the last week are for self-study, and may not be used toward part of the grade in the subject, even for extra points or as substitutes for earlier assignments. Normal background reading in preparation for lectures or discussions is permitted in addition to the assignment.**

Currently, only one assignment may fall due. See p. 5.

### IV.B. Tests (and Other Required Academic Exercises) outside Scheduled Class Times (including Evening Tests Given by Daytime Classes)

#### *1. Scheduling of Academic Exercises*

**a. For undergraduate subjects: No required academic exercises may be held between 5 p.m. Friday and 8 a.m. Monday.**

Currently, no required academic exercises may be held between 1 p.m. Saturday and 8 a.m. Monday. See p. 7.

**b. For undergraduate subjects: the regulation prohibiting required academic exercises between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Thursday should be retained but limited to the instructional periods of the fall and spring terms. “Optional” review sessions should not be scheduled during this time, and if a conflict test is scheduled during this time, the instructor must offer an alternative to students who request it. Evening tests scheduled outside class time should begin no earlier than 7:30 p.m. Evening tests may not be held on Monday evenings.**

Currently, evening tests may start at 7 p.m. They may not be held on Monday evenings, and it is “preferable” that they not be offered on Wednesday evenings. See pp. 7-8.

#### *2. Reduction in Class Time and Work When Test Is Added*

**When an evening test or other test outside class time is scheduled, a regularly scheduled class hour (lecture or recitation) shall be cancelled, or no assignment shall fall due within the two calendar days preceding the test, on the day of the test, and during the remainder of that calendar week.**

Currently, during the week of an evening test either a class hour shall be cancelled or, alternatively, no homework shall fall due during that week. See p. 8.

### 3. Length of Tests

**For undergraduate subjects the length of tests scheduled outside class times during the term shall not exceed 2 hours.**

Currently, an evening test must be the equivalent of a quiz that could be given in a normal class period. See p. 9.

### IV.C. Take-home Examinations

***Ex camera* (out-of-room) finals may be held in undergraduate subjects with the permission of the Chair of the Faculty. The following restrictions apply: the *ex camera* final must be scheduled through the Schedules Office; the *ex camera* final must be offered over the course of a single afternoon, starting at 1:30 p.m. and ending no later than at 7:30 p.m.; and students must be permitted unrestricted use of resources, i.e., open book, open notes, etc. The faculty member must state expectations of the students, i.e., inform students what is and is not acceptable behavior during the course of taking an *ex camera* final. *Ex camera* examinations are intended to be a different mode of testing, not a way to double the amount of material covered in a conventional examination.**

Currently, finals are given in assigned rooms and may be no longer than three hours. Take-home final examinations are not permitted. See pp. 9-10.

### IV.D. Governance

**Issues regarding assignments and examinations, including requests for exceptions to regulations and permission for *ex camera* examinations, should be referred to the Chair of the Faculty who will direct them to the appropriate committee. Exceptions to regulations and permissions for *ex camera* finals should be granted for no more than five years.**

Currently, there is no designated recipient for requests. Exceptions to policies have been granted indefinitely. See pp. 10-11.

### IV.E. Violations

**Violations should be reported to the Chair of the Faculty, who will respond by contacting not only the faculty member whose actions are in question but also his or her Department Head.**

Currently, violations are reported to the Chair of the Faculty, who contacts only the faculty member. See p. 11.

### IV.F. Informing Faculty Members of Regulations

**An educational campaign should be undertaken to raise faculty awareness of the relevant policies and regulations.**

See p. 12.

### IV.G. Changes to Faculty Regulations

***Rules and Regulations of the Faculty* have been revised and are being submitted to the Faculty for approval, so that changes will go into effect beginning with the academic year 2000-2001. Policy statements should be revised for consistency, and the regulations governing examinations should be published so as to be readily accessible.**

See p. 12-14.

## V. Review

**Examination practices should be monitored, and there should be periodic review of examination and term regulations. A committee designated by the Chair of the Faculty should undertake the first review four years after the new regulations are implemented.**

See p. 14.

# Final Report of the Faculty Policy Committee's Subcommittee on Examination and Term Regulations

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

May 1999

Revised March 2000

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A copy of the full report, including the appendices, is available at  
[web.mit.edu/faculty/reports/exam-termregs](http://web.mit.edu/faculty/reports/exam-termregs).



## I. INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1998, the Faculty Policy Committee formed a Subcommittee on Examination and Term Regulations “to re-examine current faculty regulations governing the administration of quizzes, tests, and examinations during the regular term as well as the faculty regulations governing the end of term.” As stated in the charge to the Subcommittee (Appendix A):

This review is motivated by the concern over the increasing number of evening tests being scheduled by daytime classes as well as by the increase in the number of end-of-term rules violations reported by students. Many of these reported violations result from disregard or ignorance of faculty policies, but some are intentionally undertaken with the learning experience of students in mind. It seems timely, therefore, to begin a full review of these regulations, to ensure that they meet the goals of the educational experience, and to devise procedures to sanction their disregard.

Specifically the Subcommittee was asked:

- to review (and re-endorse or change) current policies governing end-of-term regulations, including the regulations governing the definition and administration of comprehensive exams;
- to review the current practices with respect to quizzes and exams scheduled in the evening by daytime classes in terms of length of tests, the scheduling of conflicts, and the encroachment on regularly scheduled evening classes and extra-curricular activities;
- to review the policies that currently prohibit take-home exams;
- to decide which faculty committee or other authority should be empowered to monitor these regulations, to provide guidance to faculty members in following them, and to grant exemptions to them when warranted by the goals (e.g. CAP, COC, Chair of the Faculty, Dean’s office);
- to review the means by which reports of violations can be communicated and acted upon, including a process of identifying and working with departments to keep violations to a minimum;
- to recommend the best timing and medium of reminding faculty members of these regulations; and
- to recommend additions to and changes in *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty*, as necessary.

Membership of the Subcommittee included: a chairman selected from the Faculty, the chairs of the Committee on Academic Performance and the Committee on Curricula, a representative of the Office of Academic Services, and the chair of the Undergraduate Association’s Student Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP).

## II. METHODOLOGY

During the spring, summer, and fall of 1998, the Subcommittee conducted a thorough review of current practices. The Subcommittee examined relevant regulations of the Faculty, as well as a number of pending issues. These included requests from several faculty members for revision of current regulations. Input was also obtained from Housemasters and members of the Athletics Department. The Subcommittee consulted periodically with students via SCEP.

The Subcommittee also examined background material including the 1998 survey of undergraduates about evening examinations which was conducted by the Committee on Academic Performance, the Office of the Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education, and the Undergraduate Association (Appendix B). In addition, the Subcommittee

reviewed data provided by the Schedules Office about the frequency of examinations, and summaries describing violations of the regulations, which were provided by the Chair of the Faculty and by the Associate Dean for Curriculum Support.

Although originally scheduled to make its recommendations in May 1998, the Subcommittee found that it could not complete its deliberations until the following academic year. In early 1999 the Chairman of the Subcommittee discussed various versions of the draft report with affected parties and members of the Committee on the Undergraduate Program in order to seek advice and to gain acceptance prior to presenting the report officially to the Faculty as a whole. The report was shaped by these conversations and by those with the Faculty Policy Committee to whom this Subcommittee presented its recommendations.

The Subcommittee presented its recommendations at the Faculty Meeting on May 19, 1999. In light of commentary from faculty, students, and staff received over the course of the past year, a number of changes have been made. The amended report was presented to the Faculty Policy Committee, and with its approval is now being presented to the Faculty for its approval. Revisions are noted in this final report.

### III. PRINCIPLES

Five interrelated principles inform the Subcommittee's conclusions and represent the basis for its recommendations.

- **The highest priority is student learning.** Examination policies must reflect the commitment of our entire community—faculty members, staff, and students—to providing an education of the highest quality. Accordingly, everyone involved in the process is expected to act in ways that make sense from the standpoint of enhancing student learning. Regulations should enable actions that serve to enhance student learning and should restrict actions that, however well intentioned, detract from the overall learning experience.
- **Student learning as defined by the Task Force's Educational Triad encompasses academics, research, and community.** The Subcommittee reaffirms the Educational Triad concept enunciated by the Presidential Task Force on Student Life and Learning. "Academics, research, and community are all important to education; each of these areas should be conducted in ways that both contribute themselves and enable the contributions of the other areas." Examinations fall within this purview.
- **Regulations must enable MIT's educational mission.** All regulations should be viewed in the context of the educational mission. They are not intended to micromanage faculty members as they go about the business of teaching.
- **Regulations must be adopted by the Faculty.** The regulations that govern academics at MIT, including those pertaining to examinations, are Faculty regulations. The regulations pertaining to examinations must be published prominently and disseminated widely amongst the Faculty and students, so that there can be no justifiable excuse for not knowing the regulations.
- **Every academic activity must take into account the many demands on a student's time.** Faculty members cannot expect to be able to optimize without external constraint any individual subject they teach; students have other time commitments. Hence, assignments must be viewed in the context of the time requirements of the subject as published in the Bulletin. Problem sets, term papers, laboratory reports, and other work products during the semester must be constructed so that they can be completed within the weekly time allowance by the majority of students in the class (not by only the top students).

## IV. SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The charge to this Subcommittee specified six topics for its consideration: term and end-of-term regulations, evening examinations, take-home examinations, governance of examination policy, procedures to deal with violations, and suggestions for informing the Faculty of the regulations. For each of these topics, the Subcommittee summarizes background information and then gives its findings and recommendations. The seventh task of the Subcommittee is to make recommendations for changes to *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty*.

The focus of this Subcommittee's work has been undergraduate subjects. The Chair of the Faculty is expected to appoint another Subcommittee to make recommendations concerning graduate subjects.

### A. Term and End-of-term Regulations

Note: while the charge to the Subcommittee asked for a review of end-of-term regulations, the Subcommittee felt that it also needed to review term regulations about the scheduling and announcement of required work and assignments.

#### Background

Current term and end-of-term regulations can be found in Appendix C. They were voted by the Faculty in the early 1980s. At the time, the Dean of the Graduate School and the Student Committee on Educational Policy both reported instances in which instructors announced scheduling of finals almost at the end of the term. Therefore, in March 1983, the Faculty voted to specify in *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty*, 2.51, that final examinations "shall be scheduled through the Office of the Registrar, as well as announced to the class, before the end of the third week of the term."

A year later, in February 1984, the Faculty approved recommendations from the Committee on Educational Policy to alleviate end-of-term pace and pressure. In addition to lengthening the reading period, the Faculty voted to limit assignments as well as examinations during a prescribed end-of-term period:

For each subject with a final examination no examination shall be given and no assignment, term paper, or oral presentation shall fall due... For each subject without a final examination at most either one in-class examination may be given, or one assignment, term paper, or oral presentation may fall due... An in-class examination given during those six days is limited to one normal class period (or to one and one-half hours, whichever is shorter).

At that time the Faculty also voted to add the word "scheduled" to the last sentence of this regulation, so that it reads: "No assignment, term paper, or oral presentation for any subject shall fall due after the last day of class exercises scheduled for that subject." Since 1984, the only changes to this regulation have been a redefinition of the end-of-term period (since 1996 defined as after the last Friday before the start of reading period) and a renumbering of the regulations.

As students have become more aware of these regulations through the efforts of Feedback Forum and the Student Committee on Educational Policy, the number of reported violations of these regulations has risen. Appendix D summarizes the types of violations that have recently been reported to the Chair of the Faculty.

## Findings and Recommendations

In keeping with the principles stated above, **the Subcommittee reaffirms the need to regulate end-of-term activities and recommends that most of the existing regulations be sustained.** At the same time, some changes are recommended.

### *1. Announcement of Assignments at Beginning of Term*

Currently, Term Regulations in the MIT Bulletin state:

During the first three weeks of classes, instructors are asked to provide a clear and complete description of the requirements in each subject, including the due dates for required work, the schedule of examinations during the term, whether there will be a final examination and the grading criteria and procedures to be used. Major assignments should be assigned early enough to allow students the opportunity to manage their time effectively throughout the term.

If undergraduates are to make sound judgments about which subjects to take and how to budget their time during the semester, it is incumbent upon the Faculty to lay out the requirements of each subject and to do so as early as possible.

**The Subcommittee recommends that in each undergraduate subject the faculty member provide to students, by the end of the first week of classes, a clear and complete description of the required work, including the number and kinds of assignments, the approximate schedule for tests, whether or not there will be a final examination, the due dates for major projects, and the grading criteria and procedures to be used. By the end of the third week, the faculty member must provide the precise schedule of tests and major assignments.**

Once the requirements are announced and scheduled, major changes should not be made. In particular, final examinations should not be cancelled once they are announced, and after the final examination schedule is published by the Schedules Office, the schedule for a final should not be changed.

### *2. Testing during Last Week of the Term*

The Subcommittee examined the present regulations governing tests administered during the last week of the semester in subjects without finals (Appendix C) and concluded that the distinction set forth between tests and comprehensive examinations in the current regulations are ambiguous and effectively unenforceable. Under current regulations, tests must be restricted to subject matter taught in the last part of the semester. Comprehensive examination of the entire semester, even by a test lasting only a single class period, is forbidden. The rationale for this policy is that the last week of term is very hectic, and students do not have adequate time without the benefit of the reading period to review the entire semester's material. Therefore, the current regulations state that comprehensive examination of the entire semester must be done by holding a final examination that is scheduled during the final examination period.

The Subcommittee believes that it is inappropriate to attempt to regulate content. Besides, the main issue is the time pressure placed upon the student during the hectic last days of the semester. In particular, this is precisely the time when cumulative projects come due. To avoid overloading, to allow students time to focus on term projects, papers, and presentations, and to give students the benefit of time to review over the reading period, the Subcommittee believes that it makes sense to shift all testing out of the last week of class and into the final examination period, regardless of the topical coverage of the test. **The Subcommittee recommends that the regulations be changed to forbid all testing after the Last Test Date (currently called the Final Exercise Date), which is the Friday preceding the reading period. Instead, all testing at the end of semester must be conducted during the final examination period.**

Faculty members are reminded that final examinations need not be three hours in length; regulations provide for examinations lasting from one hour to three hours. The Subcommittee is proposing that more faculty members give the last unit test during the finals period with no increase in length of examination. If they do so, faculty members do not have to use a class period for the test, so there is more time for instruction. Students can use the reading period to review and then have up to three hours to work the test.

### *3. No End-of-Term Assignment in a Subject with a Final*

The Subcommittee examined the regulation banning problem sets and other homework assignments at the end of term for undergraduate subjects with tests in the final examination period. **The Subcommittee believes that this regulation should be sustained.**

However, the use of sample problems during the last week of the term needs clarification. To help students to review and prepare for finals, some faculty members provide sample problems or questions. These sample problems or questions may be used to facilitate learning. **Solutions to sample problems or questions should not be submitted as part of the grade for the subject, even for “extra points” or as a replacement or make-up for an earlier assignment.** Sample problems or questions should be given to students only for self-study.

In this regard the Subcommittee suggests that faculty members consider providing model solutions for optional sample problems or questions distributed for the last week.

As a result of discussions after the report was initially introduced, the Subcommittee offers the following clarification: **Normal background reading in preparation for lectures or class discussions is permitted.**

### *4. One End-of-Term Assignment in a Subject without a Final*

**The Subcommittee endorses continuation of the regulation stating that in an undergraduate subject without a final only one assignment may fall due in the last week of semester (after the Friday preceding reading period, to be called the Last Test Date).** The Subcommittee proposes one small change.

In some subjects, an oral presentation is scheduled at the end of the term to be accompanied by the submission of a written report. This is not allowed when the regulation is interpreted strictly. However, the Subcommittee believes that it is in the spirit of the current regulations to require both an oral presentation and a written report when the two derive from the same project. In other words, the assignment due the last week has two components: an oral component and a written component. Accordingly, **the Subcommittee recommends that faculty members be allowed to require in the last week of semester an oral presentation and a written report when the two are parts of the same assignment, i.e., work products for the same project.**

The Subcommittee adds the following clarifications: **Normal background reading for lectures and class discussions is permitted in addition to the one assignment. As in the case of subjects with testing in the final examination period, optional assignments during the last week shall be for self-study, and may not be used toward part of the grade in the subject, even for extra points or as substitutes for earlier assignments.**

## 5. Scheduling of Finals

In recommending that testing in undergraduate subjects be moved to the finals period, the Subcommittee recognizes that increasing the number of tests in the finals period will mean that more rooms (including departmentally controlled rooms) will have to be used during examination week, more conflict examinations will have to be given, and more subjects will have to give tests scheduled later into the final examination period. **The Subcommittee recommends that the Schedules Office continue to schedule all finals, and asks for the cooperation of the Faculty in this effort. The Schedules Office should have scheduling priority in departmentally controlled rooms during finals week.**

One of the reasons that faculty members teaching large subjects do not want to have their examinations on the last day of examination period is the short time they are given to submit grades to the Registrar's Office. **The Subcommittee recommends the expansion of on-line grade submissions so that the Registrar's Office does not need to hand-input grades.**

## B. Tests (and Other Required Academic Exercises) outside Scheduled Class Times (including Evening Tests Given by Daytime Classes)

### Background

Current regulations and policy statements regarding scheduling of academic exercises and evening tests can be found in Appendix E. According to a history written by Norma McGavern in 1990 (Appendix F), discussions about evening tests given by daytime classes and attempts to regulate them have occupied the Faculty and its committees for almost 15 years. In 1985, because several faculty members were scheduling classes between 5 and 10 p.m., the chair of the Committee on Academic Performance (CAP) wrote a memo to the Faculty (Appendix G) reminding faculty members that under Faculty regulations there should be no academic exercises between 5 and 7 p.m. on weekdays. The CAP asked that faculty members tell students at the beginning of the term if they planned to schedule "class sessions" after 7 p.m. on weekdays. In addition, the CAP asked that the daytime schedule of that subject be reduced accordingly.

The following year, in 1986, the issue was raised in the Committee on the Undergraduate Program after a number of complaints that evening quizzes, primarily in Engineering subjects, were conflicting with scheduled evening subjects in Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS), and students were feeling compelled to miss their HASS subjects. At that time there were 21 evening HASS subjects, enrolling approximately 25 students each, and at least 15 other subjects scheduling evening tests (these numbers represent tests scheduled through the Schedules Office). Most evening classes were given on Mondays, so conflicts were worse on that day.

In 1988, the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science put into effect its own policies regarding evening tests (see Appendix F). These policies formed the basis for some of the current Institute-wide regulations that were promulgated by the Committee on Academic Performance and the Faculty Policy Committee in 1991 (Appendix H).

In 1997 a reexamination of the policies governing evening tests was requested by the Economics Department in a letter to the chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Program (CUP) following a student complaint about lengthy evening tests in two Economics subjects, 14.01 and 14.02. That request was the first in a series of policy discussions that led eventually to the charge to this Subcommittee.

During the 1997-98 academic year, 54 evening tests were scheduled by the Schedules Office in the fall semester, and 46 evening tests in the spring. These subjects were from eight departments. Electrical Engineering and Computer Science continues to be the department having the most subjects with evening tests (17 in the fall, 11 in the spring), but evening tests are now also offered in one of the science core subjects (5.11), two of the HASS subjects with the largest enrollments (14.01 and 14.02), and other heavily enrolled subjects like 1.00 and 5.12.

The number of evening HASS subjects has also increased, to 40 in the fall of 1997 and 33 in the spring of 1998 (Appendix B).

The survey of students about evening tests which was conducted in spring 1998 (Appendix B) found that almost all respondents (95%) had taken evening tests for daytime classes and 80% had taken evening tests during the 1997-98 academic year. During that year, 33% were also taking subjects in the evening, and 87% were participating in extracurricular activities in the evening. As is to be expected, students taking subjects or participating in multiple extracurricular activities in the evening were more apt to agree that evening tests caused students to miss other subjects and extracurricular activities.

Asked their opinion about whether evening tests for daytime classes were better than daytime tests, approximately one-third thought they were better than daytime tests, one quarter thought they were about the same, and the remainder, two-fifths, thought they were worse. The survey report also offers a snapshot, from the student perspective, of current practices when evening tests are offered.

For the last three years student complaints to the Chair of the Faculty have increased as students have been made aware of the regulations by the creation of the on-line Feedback Forum three years ago and through mailings from the Student Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) (Appendix I). A summary of complaints from fall 1998 is in Appendix D.

### Findings and Recommendations

In considering the need for evening test regulations, the Subcommittee suggests that the Faculty imagine the inverse of this extension of daytime subjects into the evening schedule: students unable to attend lectures or conduct laboratory experiments because a subject that meets normally in the evenings is offering a two-hour test during the day. The Subcommittee is concerned about the increasing numbers of such tests and their impact on evening subjects and activities. Given the trend, **it is important to have regulations governing these tests.**

The Subcommittee recommends that the Faculty approve the following changes to the existing regulations governing scheduling of academic exercises and for evening tests for undergraduate subjects (Appendix E).

#### *1. Scheduling of Academic Exercises*

a. **Weekends:** Currently for undergraduate subjects there shall be no required academic exercises between 1 p.m. Saturday and 8 a.m. Monday. **The Subcommittee recommends that this weekend period begin at 5 p.m. Friday, instead of 1 p.m. on Saturday, and continue (as is now the case) to 8 a.m. on Monday.** This change not only reflects the reality that undergraduate subjects are not offered on Saturday morning, but it also reinforces the current regulation that evening tests, or review sessions, not be held on Friday evenings. The Subcommittee also believes that Friday evenings are not an appropriate time for scheduled undergraduate subjects.

b. **Monday-Thursday, 5-7 p.m.:** **The Subcommittee strongly supports preservation of the 5-7 p.m. period Monday through Thursday for student dining, athletics, and other activities.** Faculty are reminded that not only evening tests, but all academic exercises related to undergraduate subjects fall under this regulation. For example, review sessions, which can attract students who feel compelled to attend for fear of missing out on presentation of important material, should not be scheduled between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. It has also come to the attention of the Subcommittee that some laboratory subjects routinely run past 5 p.m. Laboratory subjects should be structured in such a way as to allow students to complete their work by 5 p.m. or to allow students to leave at 5 p.m. and return later to complete the work.

**As a result of discussions with faculty after the report was initially reported, the Subcommittee recommends that the Monday through Friday 5-7 p.m. period be in force during the instructional periods (from the first to**

**the last day of classes) in the spring and fall terms.** It is not relevant to the reading and examination periods of the terms and to the Independent Activities Period.

Recognizing that many students participate in athletics during the 5-7 p.m. period, the Subcommittee believes that students need some time to compose themselves between athletics and evening tests, so **evening tests should start no earlier than 7:30 p.m.**

The Subcommittee makes this recommendation with the expectation that a student with a 7:30 test will be released from athletic practice as if he/she had a 7 p.m. class. In general, students who have academic exercises until 5 p.m. or beginning at 7 p.m. must be given adequate time by their coaches to dress and travel. They cannot be required to cut part of their classes.

With increasing numbers of subjects and tests scheduled in the evenings, scheduling conflict tests is an issue. If conflicts arise, students need to be accommodated. Unfortunately, it is becoming more common to schedule conflict tests during the 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. period. If students prefer not to take the conflict test at this time, they need not have an academic reason, and faculty members must offer alternatives.

c. **Weekday Evenings:** In keeping with the efforts recommended by the Task Force on Student Life and Learning to invigorate the programs in the living groups and student activities, **the Subcommittee reaffirms the regulation that prohibits evening tests and other academic exercises outside regularly scheduled class times from being held on Monday evenings.** The current policy recommendation that evening tests “preferably” not be held on Wednesday evenings is not being observed: 85 percent of student respondents to the evening test survey (Appendix B) reported having tests or review sessions on Wednesday evenings during the 1997-98 academic year. **The Subcommittee judges it appropriate to allow tests to be held on three evenings (Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday).**

d. **Daytime Tests:** The Subcommittee suggests that faculty members consider offering outside-of-class tests at times when classes are less frequently scheduled during the day. According to data provided by the Schedules Office, most undergraduates are not in class at 9 a.m. weekdays or on Friday afternoons. By polling students at the beginning of the term, faculty members in smaller classes may be able to find acceptable two-hour blocks during the day.

## *2. Reduction in Class Time and Work When Test Is Added*

Current regulations require that a regularly scheduled class period should be cancelled or that no homework should be assigned for the week during which an evening test is given. **The Subcommittee affirms the need for this regulation and recommends more explicit language: that (a) one regularly scheduled academic exercise be dropped or (b) no assignment fall due within two calendar days before the test, on the day of the test, and for the remainder of the calendar week.** This regulation would apply to all tests offered outside of class time for undergraduate subjects.

Tests held outside scheduled class time add to the time spent on the subject. Hence, the work load should be reduced to comply with the units distribution, e.g., 4-0-8. Initially the Subcommittee recommended that both a lecture/recitation and an assignment be cancelled. However, after discussion with faculty the Subcommittee now recommends that when an outside-class test is given, either one lecture/recitation should be cancelled or no homework assignment should fall due. Because the Subcommittee believes it is not pedagogically sound to have a homework assignment fall due concurrently with an outside-class test, it recommends the explicit language that “no assignment fall due within two calendar days before the test, on the day of the test, and for the remainder of the calendar week.”

## *3. Length of Tests*

Currently, regulations state that an evening test should be the equivalent of a quiz that could be given in a normal class period, even though students are allowed more time to complete the test. The Subcommittee finds that the current regulation is difficult to enforce and recommends that it be simplified: **Tests outside class time should be limited to no more than 2 hours.**

Faculty members are reminded that one of the justifications for adopting the longer format made possible by evening testing is its capacity to reduce time pressure. This advantage is lost when faculty members set tests of length and difficulty that make it impossible for students to finish in the time allotted.

Initially in its report the Subcommittee recommended, “Faculty members are to set tests (both those scheduled outside as well as during class times) at a difficulty such that the large majority of students (not just the top student) can comfortably finish the entire test with time to spare.” After discussion with faculty, the Subcommittee now believes that the simplified statement, “such tests should be no more than 2 hours,” is sufficient.

#### *4. Review Sessions*

**Faculty members should consider time spent by students attending review sessions as part of study time budgeted for a subject.** Faculty members are reminded that review sessions are not meant for introducing new subject matter.

#### *5. Tests Scheduled by the Schedules Office*

**Tests held outside regular class times should continue to be scheduled by the Schedules Office**, so that there can be a central source of schedule information on these tests. As noted earlier, tests should be announced in the first week of class, and the precise schedule of tests made available by the end of the third week. **In scheduling such tests faculty members should try to avoid conflicting with evening subjects and with other evening tests—especially subjects with large enrollments or those that are likely to be taken by the same students.**

### C. Take-home Examinations

#### Background

Currently, as stated in the Term Regulations distributed by the Chair of the Faculty, take-home finals are not allowed in undergraduate subjects. *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty*, 2.51 states that the final examination scheduled in any subject shall be scheduled by the Registrar’s Office and last “not more than three hours.” (See Appendix J for Current Regulations on Take-home Examinations.)

Take-home finals have been prohibited since 1994. In April of that year Linn Hobbs, the chair of the Committee on the Undergraduate Program, announced at the Faculty meeting that the Committee had decided to end approval of an experiment permitting take-home finals for subjects satisfying the distribution requirement in Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences and at the same time decided not to approve a request for a take-home final in 6.001. The rationale for these decisions were described in a letter from Professor Hobbs to the Faculty (Appendix K).

In spring of 1998 a request was made to the Chair of the Faculty, Lotte Bailyn, to permit an extended final examination so that students could take the examination out of the classroom to use the library and to write on computers. The argument made pedagogical sense to Professor Bailyn, who approved the request. She also asked this Subcommittee to examine whether the three-hour final period should be made less restrictive to permit such testing.

## Findings and Recommendations

**The Subcommittee does not support unbridled take-home final examinations** and wants to avoid the situation in which a take-home final in a single subject consumes vast quantities of students' time during the final examination period. However, the Subcommittee does support adding more flexibility to the current testing format.

**The Subcommittee recommends allowing faculty members to offer *ex camera* (out-of-room) finals with the following restrictions: an *ex camera* final must be scheduled through the Schedules Office; the *ex camera* final must be offered over the course of a single afternoon, starting at 1:30 p.m. and ending no later than 7:30 p.m. (students may pick up and return examinations 15 minutes before and after these times); students are permitted unrestricted use of resources, i.e., open book, open notes, etc. The faculty member must state expectations of the students, i.e., inform students what is and is not acceptable behavior during the course of taking an *ex camera* final. Requests for *ex camera* examinations should be approved by the Chair of the Faculty.**

*Ex camera* examinations are intended to be a different mode of testing, used only in a limited number of subjects. The Subcommittee sees giving students access to computers and libraries as justification for *ex camera* examinations. *Ex camera* examinations can also be designed to evaluate student ability to select resources and answer questions of an integrative nature. *Ex camera* examinations are not intended to be opportunities to double the amount of material covered in conventional examinations.

The Subcommittee initially included in its recommendation, “the *ex camera* examination is set at a difficulty such that the large majority of students (not just the top student) can comfortably finish the entire examination within the available time.” After meeting with faculty subsequent to the initial report, the Subcommittee does not think this statement should be included as it would not be easy to use such a measure of difficulty.

## D. Governance

### Background

Five standing committees of the Faculty can be involved in examination policies. The roles of the Faculty Policy Committee (FPC), the Committee on Graduate School Policy (CGSP), the Committee on the Undergraduate Program (CUP), the Committee on Curricula (COC), and the Committee on Academic Performance (CAP) are described in *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty* (Appendix L). The committees' responsibilities overlap generally on issues of academic policies, not just in regards to examination policies.

### Findings and Recommendations

The Subcommittee—whose membership includes the chairs of COC and CAP—has not taken on the redesign of the Faculty committee structure. Rather, **the Subcommittee recommends that issues involving assignments and examinations, including requests for exceptions to the regulations and permission for *ex camera* examinations, should be referred to the Chair of the Faculty, who will direct them to the appropriate committee or committees.**

In the past, exceptions have been granted indefinitely. **The Subcommittee recommends that the Chair of the Faculty grant exceptions to regulations and permissions for *ex camera* examinations for periods of no more than five years. Once existing policies have been revised, all exceptions currently in effect should be reviewed once again by the Chair of the Faculty and renewed for no more than five years.**

**The Subcommittee reaffirms the regulation forbidding faculty members from securing “agreement” to departures from the regulations by asking students to vote on the matter.** Because such votes are typically conducted by show of hands (not by secret ballot) and because students feel pressured to comply with the wishes of the Faculty, this procedure cannot be deemed a fair measure of student opinion.

## E. Violations

### Background

Currently, as the Chair of the Faculty tells faculty members at the beginning of each term (Appendix M), students report violations of the regulations to her or him, usually via an email message to *feedback@mit.edu*. During the 1997-98 academic year students could report complaints through the Feedback Forum web site which provided an electronic filter removing the identity of complainants. At this time, Feedback Forum is inoperative.

In recent years, as student groups like Feedback Forum and the Student Committee on Education Policy have educated students about policies (see sample mailing in Appendix I), the number of reports of violations has increased. A summary of complaints reported to the Chair of the Faculty in Fall 1998 is in Appendix D. When the chair receives a complaint, she or he talks directly to the faculty member involved. Frequently the faculty member is unaware of the regulations, and has not intentionally flouted the rules.

### Findings and Recommendations

The Subcommittee believes that enforcement of the regulations is critical to the success of the educational enterprise. Indeed, in the past, enforcement has been a great challenge. Furthermore, there is a need to act swiftly when violations of regulations occur. Time passes quickly; MIT semesters run only 14 weeks.

**The Subcommittee recommends that violations of regulations continue to be reported to the Chair of the Faculty.** However, in a departure from current practice, **the Subcommittee recommends that the Chair of the Faculty contact not only the faculty member whose actions are in question but also his or her Department Head.** The hope is that it will become a matter of pride on the part of the department not to be confronted with “problems” in connection with violations of regulations.

The Subcommittee appreciates that students are reluctant to report violations of regulations, primarily out of concern about loss of anonymity. For fielding reports from students the Subcommittee endorses the use of an electronic filter such as Feedback Forum. In its absence, a student who is concerned about anonymity may send a letter by interdepartmental mail to the Chair of the Faculty. However, this limits the Chair’s ability to handle the case. If students identify themselves, the Chair can discuss the situations with them and report back to them on how the situations have been resolved. To begin the process, students may contact the Student Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) for advice and support.

## F. Informing Faculty Members of the Regulations

### Background

Regulations are currently published in print and in most cases also on the web in *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty*, the Bulletin, and Term Regulations from the Chair of the Faculty (see Appendices C, E, J, L, M). Summaries of the policies are also in the *Academic Guide for Undergraduates and Their Advisors* (available in print and on the web at <http://web.mit.edu/acadinfor/undergrad/academic-guide>). In addition, the Student Committee on Educational Policy has recently been mailing summaries of the regulations to students (Appendix I). Administrators in the academic departments are informed of the regulations by mail and at regular meetings, and are asked for their help in enforcing them.

The previous Chair of the Faculty reported that frequently when she investigated violations, the instructor said that he or she is unaware of the regulations. In the 1998 Evening Examination Survey, 23 percent of the student

respondents were very familiar with the evening examination policies, while 56 percent knew about some, but not all, of the policies.

### Findings and Recommendations

**In the opinion of the Subcommittee there is an acute need to raise faculty awareness of the relevant policies and regulations.** Recall that when MIT became proactive on the issue of sexual harassment, an educational campaign was an integral component of the program. The Committee believes that making Deans and Department Heads more knowledgeable about the issues could start a cascade of awareness. Presentations at departmental meetings are in order.

In parallel, students need to be informed of all regulations by such means as mailings by SCEP and bulletin boards.

## G. Changes to Faculty Regulations

### Background

As noted above, currently relevant regulations include not only sections of *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty*, but also policy statements in the MIT Bulletin and other publications. Each term the Chair of the Faculty now summarizes these and other Term Regulations for the Faculty.

### Findings and Recommendations

**The Subcommittee proposes revisions to two sections of Rules and Regulations.**

**First, in “2.10 Calendar,” the last paragraph of 2.12 should be revised to state:**

For undergraduate subjects, during the instructional periods of the fall and spring terms, there shall be no required academic exercises between 5 P.M. and 7 P.M. Monday through Thursday and between 5 P.M. Friday and 8 A.M. Monday. Requests for exceptions shall be referred to the Chair of the Faculty, who will direct them to the appropriate committee. Exceptions shall be granted for no more than five years.

The changes to this section reflect the Subcommittee's recommendations regarding scheduling of undergraduate academic exercises.

**The Subcommittee also proposes that 2.50 now be called “Assignments and Examinations,” and be expanded and re-organized to state:**

#### 2.51

These regulations apply to academic exercises during the fall and spring terms including the Reading Periods and final examination periods as defined in Section 2.11. Questions of interpretation and requests for exceptions to regulations shall be referred to the Chair of the Faculty, who will direct them to the appropriate committees. Exceptions to regulations shall be granted for no more than five years.

#### 2.52

The regulations in this section apply to all subjects, undergraduate and graduate.

Final examinations shall be held during the final examination period following each term,

and shall be scheduled through the Schedules Office. The final examination scheduled in any subject shall last at least one hour and not more than three hours. Final examinations may not be cancelled once they are announced, and after the final examination schedule is published by the Schedules Office, the time of the final may not be changed.

No assignment, term paper, or oral presentation in any subject shall fall due after the last scheduled class period of that subject.

The Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education in the case of an undergraduate student, or the Dean for Graduate Students in the case of a graduate student, may excuse a student from a scheduled final examination for reasons of illness or significant personal problems. (See the grade of OX, Section 2.62.3.) The Faculty member in charge of a subject may excuse a student from a final examination for such reasons as conflicts either between examinations or with religious holidays, if a mutually satisfactory agreement can be reached between the student and the Faculty member, if the agreement is ratified in advance of the examination by the head of the department in which the subject is offered, and if the Faculty member is prepared to submit a grade based on other evidence.

## 2.53

The regulations in this section apply to undergraduate subjects only.

The faculty member must provide to students, by the end of the first week of classes, a clear and complete description of the required work, including the number and kinds of assignments, the approximate schedule of tests and due dates for major projects, whether or not there will be a final examination, and the grading criteria and procedures to be used. The precise schedule of tests and major assignments must be provided by the end of the third week.

The length of tests held outside scheduled class times shall not exceed two hours. Such tests must be scheduled through the Schedules Office. They may begin no earlier than 7:30 P.M. and may not be held on Monday evenings. A student who is unable to take the test owing to a conflict with a scheduled academic exercise or extracurricular activity shall be allowed to do so at another time.

When a test is held outside scheduled class time, a regularly scheduled class hour (lecture or recitation) shall be cancelled, or no assignment shall fall due within the two calendar days preceding the test, on the day of the test, or during the remainder of that calendar week.

*Ex camera* finals may be held with the permission of the Chair of the Faculty. Permissions for *ex camera* finals shall be granted for no more than five years. The following restrictions apply: the *ex camera* final shall be offered over the course of a single afternoon, starting at 1:30 P.M. and ending no later than at 7:30 P.M., and students shall be permitted unrestricted use of resources.

There shall be no tests after the Friday preceding the start of the Reading Period, to be called the Last Test Date. For each subject in which there is testing during the final examination period, no assignment may fall due after the Last Test Date. For each subject in which there is no testing during the final examination period, at most one assignment may fall due between the Last Test Date and the end of the last scheduled class period in the subject. Optional assignments during the last week shall be for self-study, and may not be used toward part of the grade in a subject, even for extra points or as substitutes for earlier assignments.

2.54

The regulations in this section apply to graduate subjects only.

The faculty member must provide, by the end of the third week, a clear and complete description of the required work, including the number and kinds of assignments, the schedule for tests and due dates for major projects, whether or not there will be a final examination, and the grading criteria and procedures to be used.

For each subject with a final examination, no examination shall be given and no assignment, term paper, or oral presentation shall fall due after the Last Test Date. For each subject without a final examination, at most, either one in-class examination may be given, or one assignment, term paper, or oral presentation may fall due, between the Last Test Date and the end of the last regularly scheduled class in the subject. An in-class examination given during this period is limited to one normal class period (or to one and one-half hours, whichever is shorter).

This section thus becomes the single source for regulations regarding assignments and examinations, incorporating the recommendations of this Subcommittee regarding undergraduate subjects, as well as existing policies for graduate subjects currently published in the Bulletin and Term Regulations for the Faculty. The Subcommittee hopes that another Subcommittee will make now review these policies and make recommendations regarding graduate subjects.

**The Subcommittee proposes that its changes go into effect beginning with the academic year 2000-2001. Once these changes to regulations are approved, other policy statements should be revised for consistency, and the regulations should be published so as to be readily accessible.**

## V. REVIEW

**The Subcommittee recommends that examination practices be monitored, and examination and term regulations be reviewed periodically. A committee designated by the Chair of the Faculty should undertake the review four years after the new regulations are implemented.**

Report  
of the Faculty Policy Committee's  
Subcommittee on  
Examination and Term Regulations



Appendices A-M

Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
May 1999  
Revised March 2000

## APPENDIX A

### Charge to the FPC Subcommittee on Examination and Term Regulations

The purpose of this special faculty committee is to re-examine current faculty regulations governing the administration of quizzes, tests, and exams during the regular term as well as the faculty regulations governing the end of term. This review is motivated by the concern over the increasing number of evening tests being scheduled by day-time classes as well as by the increase in the number of end-of-term rules violations reported by students. Many of these reported violations result from disregard or ignorance of faculty policies, but some are intentionally undertaken with the learning experience of students in mind. It seems timely, therefore, to begin a full review of these regulations, to ensure that they meet the goals of educational experience, and to devise procedures to sanction their disregard.

#### Goals:

1. to protect the students from overload caused by excessive demands on their time that go outside the bounds of regular class hours or what has been determined as a reasonable end-of-term load;
2. to enhance the learning experience of students by recognizing that some of these apparent violations have pedagogical strengths worth acknowledging; and
3. to support educational experimentation when a faculty member is trying something new.

#### Specific Tasks:

1. to review (and re-endorse or change) policies governing end-of-term regulations, including the regulations governing the definition and administration of comprehensive exams;
2. to review the current practices with respect to quizzes and exams scheduled in the evening by day-time classes in terms of length of tests, the scheduling of conflicts, the encroachment on regularly scheduled evening classes and extra-curricular activities;
3. to review the policies that currently prohibit take-home exams;
4. to decide which faculty committee or other authority should be empowered to monitor these regulations, to provide guidance to faculty in following them, and to grant exemptions to them when warranted by the goals (*e.g.*, CAP, COC, faculty chair, Dean's office);
5. to review the means by which reports of violations can be communicated and acted upon, including a process of identifying and working with departments to keep violations to a minimum;
6. to recommend the best timing and medium of reminding faculty of these regulations; and
7. to recommend additions to and changes in *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty*, as necessary.

The Committee shall consist of a chairman, the chairs of CAP and COC, a representative of the Dean's office, the head of the student committee concerned with regulations, and another student representative.

# **1998 Evening Exam Survey Results**

Prepared by:

Alberta Lipson  
Academic Services Office  
Office of the Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education  
June, 1998  
revised May, 1999



# Evening Exam Survey Results

## Introduction

An ad-hoc committee composed of the CAP Chair, the Associate Dean for Educational Research, and student representatives from the UA, SCEP, and CAP met several times during the early spring to design a short survey for undergraduates to elicit their opinions about evening exams given for daytime classes. The survey was pilot-tested by SCEP and revised. Some paper copies were administered by SCEP members, and in addition the survey was placed on Feedback Forum. Technical difficulties prevented the electronic survey from being available to students until the second week of May. A postcard which included the Feedback Forum URL was sent to all undergraduates informing them that the faculty was going to review the regulations that govern exams and that their input about evening exams was needed.

## Methodology

Three hundred and seventy-one responses were received (133 paper; 238 electronic).

This represented 8 percent of the undergraduate population. The respondent group, though small, was fairly representative of the undergraduate student body. It was slightly over-represented by women and under-represented by men. It was also under-represented by lower GPAs and over-represented by higher GPAs. Both patterns are typical for surveys.

Demographics		
	Survey Respondents (N=371)	Undergraduate Population (N=4381)
Year in School		
Fresh.	24%	24%
Soph.	30%	25%
Jr.	27%	25%
Sr. (4th, 5th yr.)	20%	26%
Sex		
Male	50%	60%
Female	50%	40%
Residence		
On Campus	73%	
Off-Campus	27%	
CUM		
Less than 3.50	5%	14%
3.5 - 3.99	12%	18%
4.0 - 4.20	19%	13%
4.21 - 4.50	22%	21%
4.51 - 5.0	43%	34%
No response	(105, including 84 freshmen)	

The major independent variables in the study are: year in school, GPA, sex, number of extracurricular activities, number of evening subjects, number of subjects that offered evening exams during the year, number of evening exams taken during the year. All relevant items were crosstabulated by these independent variables. Only those relationships where the chi-square test indicated statistical significance at the .05 level are discussed.

## Registrar's Data

Data was collected from the Registrar's Office about regularly scheduled evening exams and evening classes. Fifty-four evening exams were scheduled by the Registrar's Office in Fall '97-'98, and forty-six were scheduled in Spring '98. Only one subject scheduled evening exams on a Monday night. The most popular night for evening exams was Thursday, with 49 scheduled for that night. Fourteen subjects offered one evening exam and 23 subjects offered two. (See Figures 1-3.)

## Survey Data Results

### Participation Statistics

Ninety-five percent had taken evening exams for daytime classes, and 80 percent had taken at least one during the current '97-98 academic year. Among those who had taken evening exams this year, 43 percent had taken one subject that held evening exams and 37 percent had taken two subjects. Among this same group, 31 percent had taken one or two evening exams; 35 percent had taken three or four; and the remainder had taken five or more evening exams. (See Figures 4 and 5.)

Since students' experiences and attitudes toward evening exams may be influenced by their other evening activities, we asked students about the number of evening subjects they had taken during the year as well as the number of extracurricular activities they participated in.<sup>1</sup> Two-thirds had not taken any evening subjects; 24 percent had taken one; 5 percent had taken two; and the remainder had taken more than two. Regarding extracurricular evening activities, 13 percent were not involved in any; one-third participated in one; 27 percent participated in two; 17 percent participated in three; and the rest participated in more than three.

### Awareness of Evening Exam Policies

Twenty-three percent were very familiar with the evening exam policies, while 56 percent knew about some, but not all, of the policies. The remainder either had heard about the policies, but did not know what they were (17%) or did not know there were any policies (4%)<sup>2</sup>. Students who had taken three or more evening exams during the past year were

Figure 1. Number of Evening Exams by Term Week: Registrar's Data

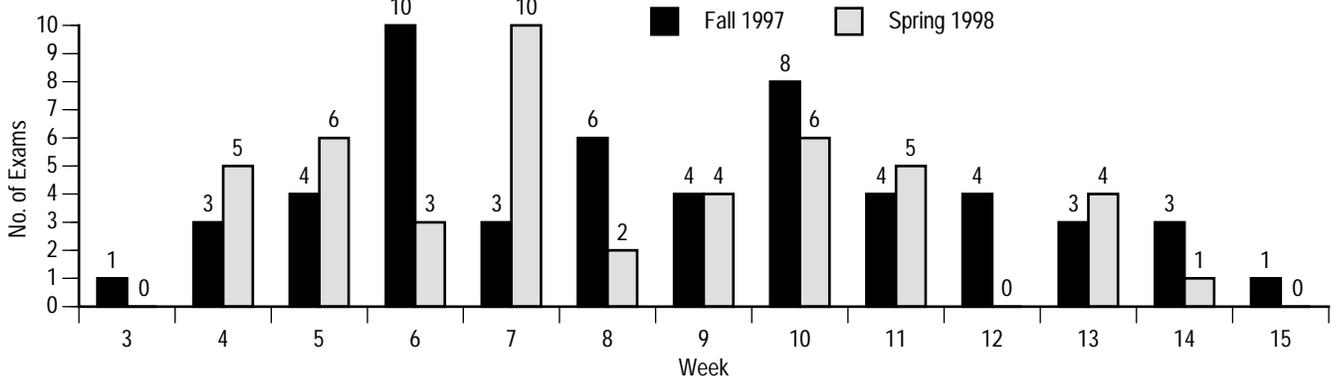


Figure 2. Number of Subjects by Number of Evening Exams: Registrar's Data

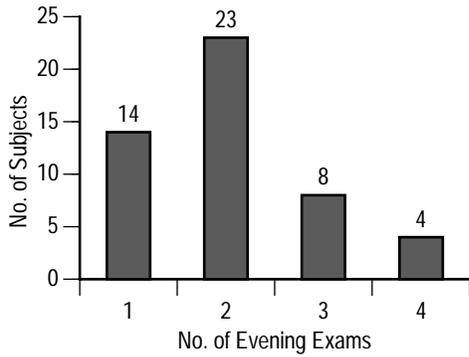


Figure 3. Number of Evening Exams by Day of Week Given: Registrar's Data

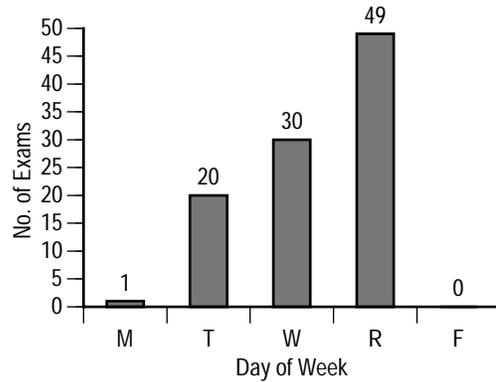


Figure 4. Number of Evening Exams Taken by Students

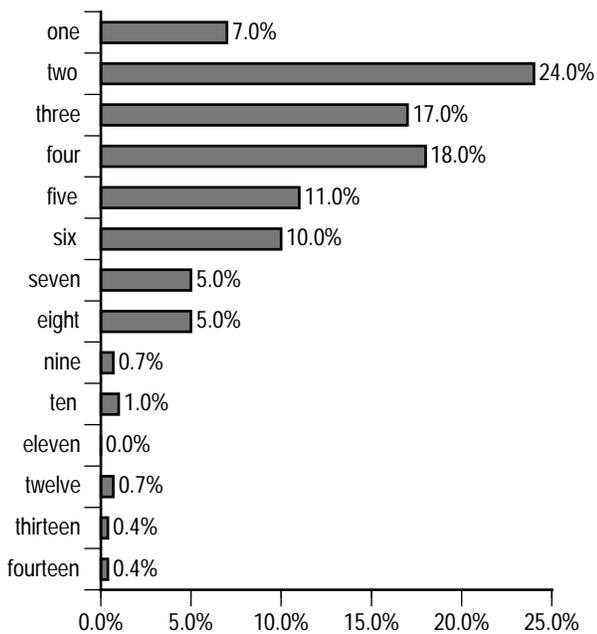
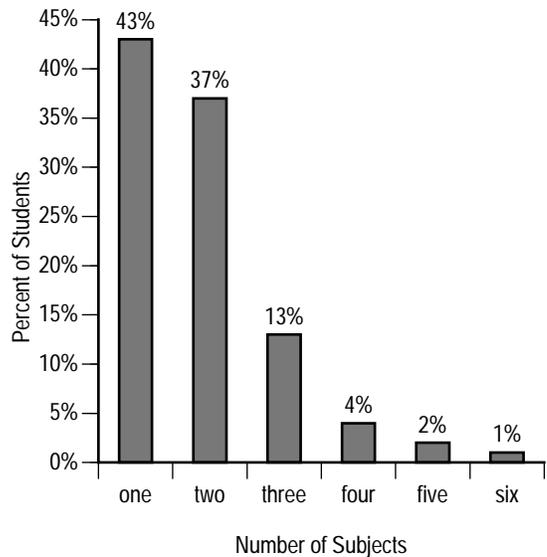


Figure 5. Number of Subjects Taken by Students that Offered Evening Exams



somewhat more likely to be aware of the evening exam policy than those who had taken fewer evening exams (30% vs. 18%,  $\chi^2 = 9.58, p < .01, \text{Gamma} = .33$ ). There were no relationships by year in school or sex.

Overall Attitude Toward Evening Exams

The opinion about whether evening exams for daytime classes were better than daytime exams was varied. Approximately one-third thought they were better than daytime exams, one quarter thought they were about the same, and the remainder, two-fifths, thought they were worse. (See Figure 6.) There was a slight tendency for juniors and seniors to have a more favorable attitude toward evening exams than freshmen and sophomores. Forty-one percent of the seniors and 45 percent of the juniors said evening exams were much better, compared to 22 percent of the freshmen and 37 percent of the sophomores ( $\chi^2 = 15.48, 6df, p < .05, \text{Gamma} = -.15$ ).

The survey included an open-ended question which asked students why they thought evening exams were either better or worse than daytime exams for daytime classes. The reasons are indicated below.

Those who said that evening exams were “better” or “much better” said:

- There is more time given for the exam (35)
- Less rushed/more relaxed (25)
- More time to study during the day (22)
- Student is more alert in the evening (14)
- Evening exams cover more material (3)

Those who said that evening exams were “worse” or “much worse” gave as their reasons:

- Scheduling conflicts (27)
- Too long (20)
- Throws off studying schedule (14)
- More difficult (10)
- Too late in the day (7)
- Problems for commuters (4)
- Not enough time pressure (3)
- Have to worry about evening exam all day (3)

Exam Scheduling and Administration Practices

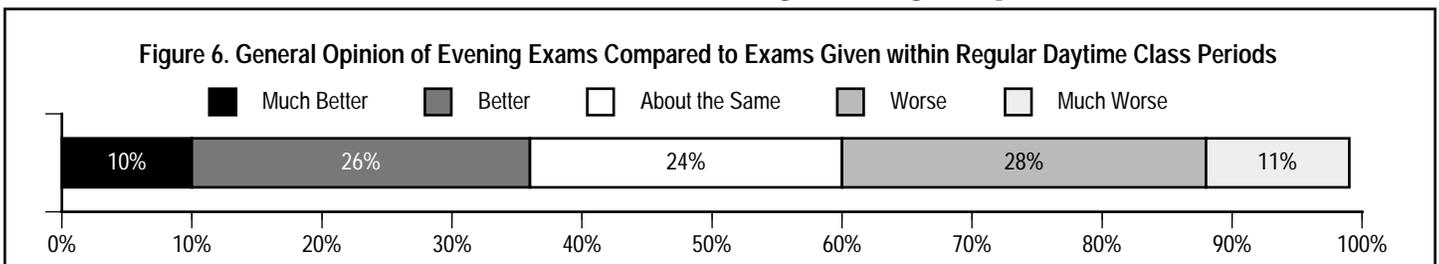
Students were asked about evening exam scheduling and administration practices with regard to the frequency of occurrence and whether there were problems connected with these practices. Eighty-five percent said evening exams or review sessions had been scheduled for Wednesday evenings, and three-fifths said review sessions had been scheduled for Monday nights. However, only 9 percent said evening exams were scheduled on a Monday night. Concerning the scheduling of conflict exams, nearly two-fifths said they were scheduled between 5-7 pm. In regard to whether any of these scheduling practices had caused problems, the two most frequently mentioned problems related to exams which were scheduled on Friday night and conflict exams which were scheduled before 9 am. However, these events occurred infrequently. (See Figure 7.)

Juniors and seniors were more likely than freshmen and sophomores to say that their instructors allowed more than two hours for completion of the evening exams (seniors, 34%; juniors, 29%, sophomores, 18%; freshmen, 4% -  $\chi^2 = 19.86, 3df, p < .001, \text{Gamma} = .49$ ). Perhaps this explains why they had more a favorable attitude toward evening exams than freshmen and sophomores.

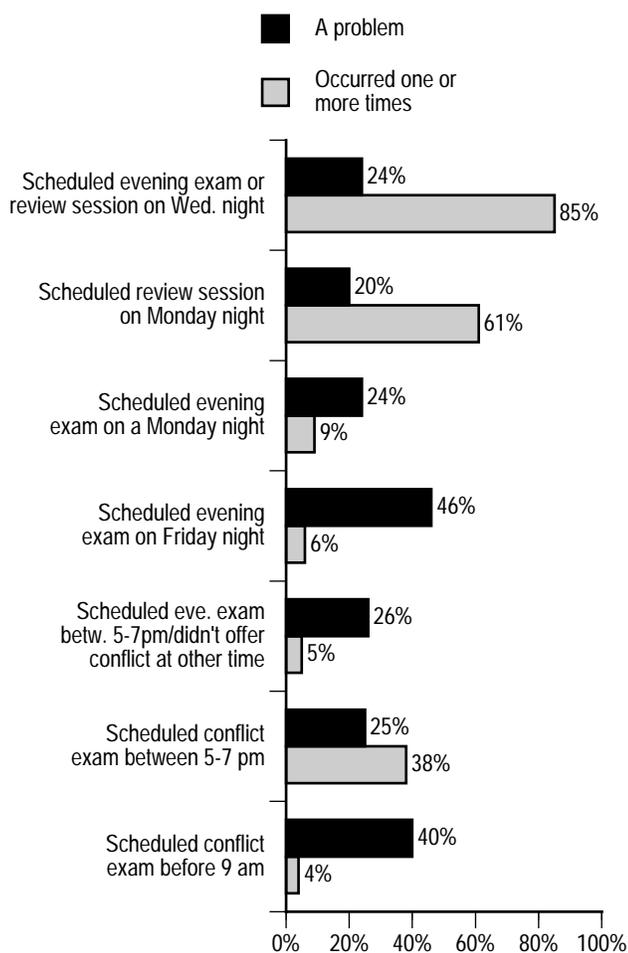
With regard to the administration of evening exams, 86 percent said faculty designed evening exams to be longer than one hour. Approximately one-third considered this a problem. Over half the students indicated problems occurred when faculty implied that students who took conflict exams imposed on their time and when faculty made the conflict exam more difficult than the regular exam. One-third of the students considered the practice of faculty asking students to vote on an exam practice that differed from the stated policy to be a problem. (See Figure 8.)

Students were asked about faculty practices during the week in which an evening exam was given. Approximately one-third said that new material was introduced that was covered on the exam that evening or the next evening. Nearly one-third said faculty canceled the lecture or recitation but asked for homework due the day after the exam. One half or more mentioned the following:

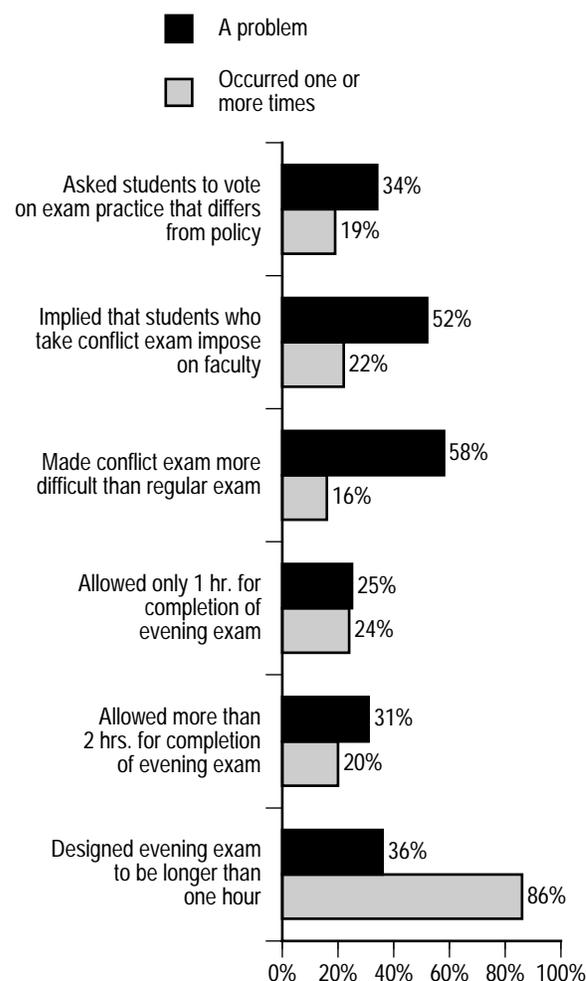
- faculty canceled class after the exam rather than before,
- they held the regularly scheduled lecture or recitation but gave out ungraded problem sets,



**Figure 7. Evening Exam Experiences: Scheduling Occurrences Compared to Problems**



**Figure 8. Evening Exam Experiences: Administration Practices Compared to Problems**



- they canceled lectures or recitations and replaced them with optional reviews,
- they did not cancel the regularly scheduled lecture or recitation and gave students compulsory homework that week.

The problems most frequently mentioned had to do with:

- the instructor asking for homework the day after the exam (although canceling a recitation or lecture),
- giving students compulsory homework and not canceling a recitation or lecture,
- introducing new material during the week in which an exam was given which was covered on the exam that evening or the next evening. (See Figure 9.)

Advantages and Disadvantages of Evening Exams

Students were given a series of “Agree/Disagree” statements (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree — 5 categories) and

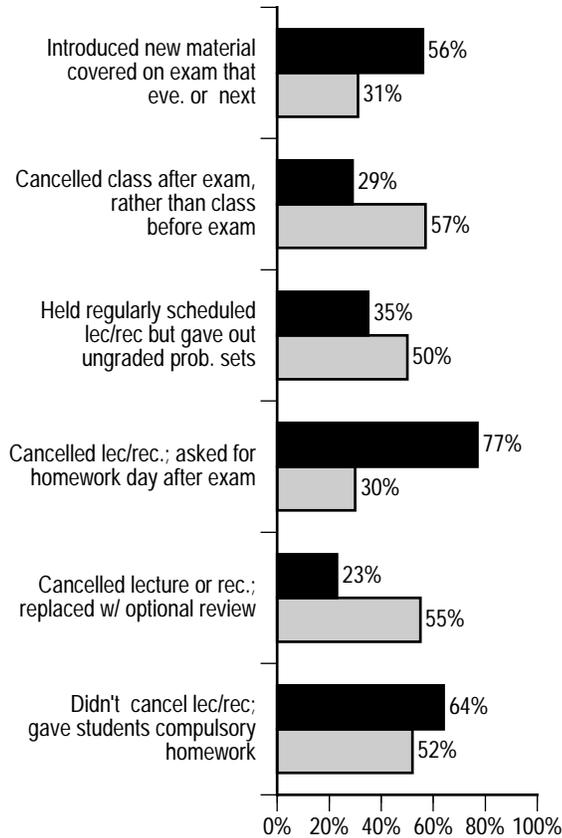
asked about the possible advantages and disadvantages of evening exams. The biggest advantages mentioned by over half the students were that evening exams give students the opportunity to prepare during the day and they provide a better environment for test-taking due to the longer time period. The biggest disadvantages were that they cause students to skip extracurricular evening activities; they cause students living off-campus to stay on-campus in the evening; and they disrupt the normal rhythm of studying at night. They were divided in their opinion as to whether evening exams added to or alleviated pressure. Slightly more than one-third mentioned they added to a student’s academic pressure, while fewer, one-fifth, said they alleviated it. (See Figures 10 and 11.)

As one would expect, students who had one or more evening subjects were more apt than those who had no evening subjects to agree that evening exams conflict with other evening classes ( 56% vs. 27%,  $\chi^2 = 26.87, 2df, p < .001, \text{Cramer's } V = .28$ ). They were also more likely to agree that evening exams cause students to skip their evening classes ( 59% vs. 35%,

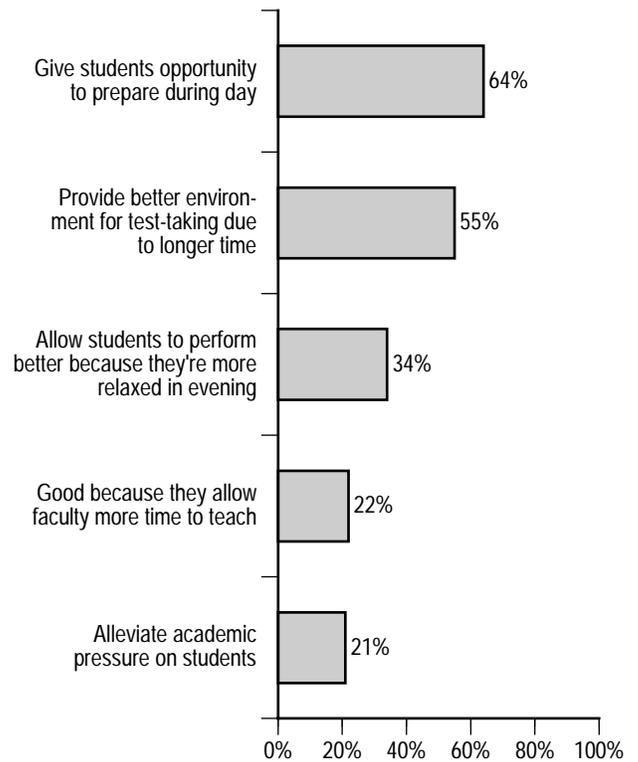
**Figure 9. For the week in which an evening exam was given, the instructor:**

■ A problem

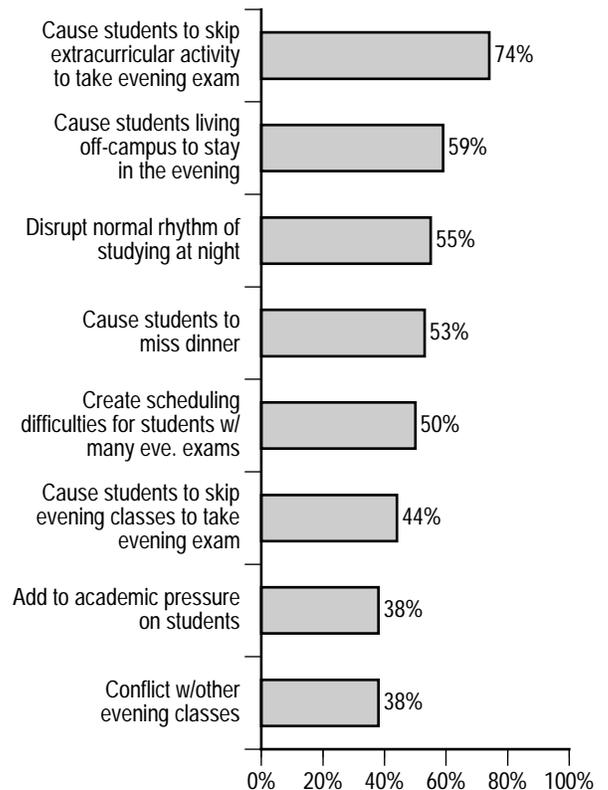
□ Occurred one or more times



**Figure 10. Advantages of Evening Exams: Percent who Agree with Statements**



**Figure 11. Disadvantages of Evening Exams: Percent who Agree with Statements**



chisq = 17.06, 2df,  $p < .001$ , Cramer's  $V = .22$ ). Similarly, those who participated in two or more extracurricular activities were more likely than those who participated in none or one to agree that evening exams cause students to skip extracurricular activities (chisq = 44.90, 4df,  $p < .001$ , Gamma =  $-.57$ ) and disrupt the normal rhythm of studying at night (chisq = 20.10, 4df,  $p < .001$ , Gamma =  $-.34$ ).

Students were asked about the number of subjects they took during the year that offered evening exams. When this variable was crosstabulated with two of the "Agree/Disagree" statements: evening exams "add to academic pressure of students" and evening exams "alleviate academic pressure on students" both relationships were statistically significant at the .05 level. Students who took three or more subjects that offered evening exams were divided between those who thought that evening exams alleviated academic pressure and those who thought that evening exams added to academic pressure.

All the "Agree/Disagree" statements about advantages and disadvantages of evening exams were correlated with the

question “What is your general opinion of evening exams compared to exams given within regular daytime class periods?” The answer choices using a 5-point scale were “Much Better” to “Much Worse”.

Students who preferred evening exams thought the biggest advantages had to do with the evening exam providing students with a longer time period, under more relaxed conditions. Students who thought evening exams were worse thought that they disrupted the normal rhythm of studying at night and added to academic pressure.

<b>Correlations Between Attitudes and Whether Students Thought Evening Exams Were Better or Worse Than Daytime Exams: Spearman Correlation Coefficients</b>	
a. Provide better environment for test-taking due to longer time period	0.67
b. Give students opportunity to prepare for test during day	0.53
c. Allow students to perform better bec. they are more relaxed in eve.	0.72
d. Good for students because they allow faculty more time to teach	0.45
e. Conflict with other evening classes	-0.34
f. Cause students to skip evening classes to take evening exam	-0.39
g. Cause students to skip extracurricular activities to take evening exam	-0.48
h. Disrupt normal rhythm of studying at night	-0.63
i. Create scheduling difficulties for students with many evening exams	-0.37
j. Add to academic pressure on students	0.67
k. Alleviate academic pressure on students	0.60
l. Cause students to miss dinner	-0.50
m. Cause students living off-campus to stay on campus in the evening	-0.37

ods in a term. Therefore, during the week that an evening exam is given, a regularly scheduled class hour (lecture or recitation) shall be cancelled; or, alternatively, no homework shall be assigned for that week.

3. There is a need for times when evening classes and undergraduate seminars can be scheduled free from potential conflict with evening exams. Therefore, no evening exams or review sessions are to be scheduled on Monday evening, and faculty are urged to avoid scheduling exams and review sessions on Wednesday evening.

4. When possible, evening exams should be scheduled through the Registrar's Office three weeks before Registration Day so that dates can be included on students' Class Schedules for planning purposes during the Registration process. In any event, faculty must announce the schedule of any evening exams during the first week of the term.

5. Students who have a conflict between a scheduled evening exam and other scheduled academic or extracurricular activities will be provided with an exam at an alternate time. Alternate exams may not be scheduled between 5:00 and 7:00 pm, in accordance with current Faculty Regulations (although any individual student could request an alternative exam between 5:00 and 7:00 pm).

(From CAP/FPC Memorandum, January 25, 1991)

<sup>1</sup> Registrar's Data: In fall '97 there were 40 evening HASS classes. In Spring '98 there were 33.

<sup>2</sup> Policy on Evening Exams/Quizzes in Undergraduate Subjects:

1. An evening exam is defined as a written exercise (quiz) that is not given in a regular class period and begins after 7:00 pm. It must be the equivalent of a quiz that could be given in a normal one-hour class period. The duration of an evening exam may not exceed two hours.

2. It is the intent of the Faculty that evening exams be used only to ease the time pressure on students of one-hour exams given during a regular class period, and not as a means of adding to the number of class peri-

## APPENDIX C

### Current Term and End-of-term Regulations

#### Rules and Regulations of the Faculty

- 2.51 Final examinations shall be held during the final examination period following each term, and shall be scheduled through the Office of the Registrar, as well as announced to the class, before the end of the third week of the term. The final examination scheduled in any subject shall last at least one hour and not more than three hours.
- 2.53 For each subject with a final examination: no examination shall be given and no assignment, term paper, or oral presentation shall fall due after the Final Exercise Date for classes with final examinations. This Date shall be set as the Friday preceding the start of reading period. For each subject without a final examination: at most, either one in-class examination may be given, or one assignment, term paper, or oral presentation may fall due, between the Final Exercise Date and the end of the last regularly scheduled class in the subject. An in-class examination given during this period is limited to one normal class period (or to one and one-half hours, whichever is shorter).

No assignment, term paper, or oral presentation for any subject shall fall due after the last day of class exercises scheduled for that subject.

#### 1998-99 MIT Bulletin

##### Term Regulations

The Faculty Regulations governing end-of-term examinations and assignments, together with the Faculty Policy Committee's interpretation, are described below. They apply both to undergraduate and graduate subjects.

##### *Beginning of Term*

- During the first three weeks of classes, instructors are asked to provide a clear and complete description of the requirements in each subject, including the due dates for required work, the schedule of examinations during the term, whether there will be a final examination and the grading criteria and procedures to be used. Major assignments should be assigned early enough to allow students the opportunity to manage their time effectively throughout the term.
- It is the instructor's responsibility early in the term to inform students of expectations regarding permissible academic conduct in the subject. Particular attention should be given to such questions as the extent of collaboration permitted or encouraged, and the use of prior years' materials in completing problem sets, lab reports, and other assignments.

##### *End of Term*

- Final examinations are held during the final examination period following each term, and must be scheduled through the Schedules Office, as well as announced to the class, before the end of the third week of the term. The final examination scheduled in any subject can last from one hour to three hours.

- For each subject that has a final examination, no examination may be given and no assignment, term paper, or oral presentation may fall due after the Final Exercise Date. This date shall be set as the Friday preceding the start of the Reading Period. The scheduled time for a final examination cannot be changed once it has been officially published; inquiries about limited exceptions to this policy should be directed promptly to the Schedules Office.
- Each subject in which no final examination is given may have at most one of the following fall due between the Final Exercise Date and the end of the last regularly scheduled class in the subject: one in-class quiz given during a regularly scheduled class period or one assignment (term paper, lab report, take-home quiz, problem set, oral presentation, etc.) An in-class quiz given during this period is limited to one normal class period (or to one and one-half hours, whichever is shorter).
- A comprehensive examination (covering most of the term's work) can only be given during the final examination period or before the last week of classes.
- No classes, examinations, or exercises of any kind may be scheduled beyond the end of the last regularly scheduled class in a subject, except for final examinations scheduled through the Schedules Office. Any formal reviews of subjects should be held during regular class periods, but the rule does not exclude the possibility of sessions after the last day of classes at which the instructing staff is available to answer questions of students who choose to attend. (The architecture design reviews that occur during finals week are considered to be equivalent to final examinations and are scheduled by the Department of Architecture.)
- No assignment of any kind may be given that falls due after the last regularly scheduled meeting of the class for that subject. This does not prevent an instructor from giving an extension to an individual student, but blanket extensions should not be given to the entire class.
- Any departure from these rules requires permission of the CAP for undergraduate subjects or the CGSP for graduate subjects. Any such approved exception will be announced early in the term and emphasized appropriately. Asking students to vote on some deviation from the rules is not an acceptable procedure.

Faculty or students with questions regarding the interpretation or application of any of these provisions should contact the Chair of the Faculty or request the assistance of the CAP, Room 7-104, (617) 253-4164.

## Term Regulations from the Chair of the Faculty (Spring 1999)

### 1.2 **FIRST THREE WEEKS**

During the first three weeks of classes, faculty members are asked to provide a clear and complete description of the requirements in each subject, including: 1) the due dates for required work; 2) a schedule of examinations during the term; 3) whether there will be a final examination; and 4) the grading criteria and procedures to be used. Major assignments should be assigned early enough to allow students the opportunity to manage their time effectively throughout the term.

### 2.2 **REGULATIONS FOR SUBJECTS WITH A FINAL EXAMINATION**

In a subject with a final examination, no other examination may be given and no assignment may fall due after Friday, May 7. Please note that extending the due date makes it harder, not easier, for students to plan their work. Any such extension should only be done on an individual basis and at the request of the student. Of course, regular classes and reading assignments may continue during the last week of the term (through May 13), and new material presented during this period may be covered in the final examination. The scheduled time for a final examination cannot be changed once it has been officially published; inquiries about limited exceptions to this policy should be directed promptly to the Schedules Office.

**2.3 REGULATIONS FOR SUBJECTS WITH NO FINAL EXAMINATION**

In a subject with no final examination, only one of the following may be given or fall due during the last week of classes (May 10-13): a quiz given during a regularly scheduled class period (1 to 1.5 hours, depending upon the length of the class period and not in the evening) or one assignment (paper, lab report, problem set, oral presentation, etc.).

**2.4 COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS**

A comprehensive examination (covering most of the term's work) can only be given during the final examination period or before the last week of classes (i.e., before May 7).

**2.5 EXERCISES AFTER THE LAST SCHEDULED CLASS**

No classes, examinations, or exercises of any kind may be scheduled beyond the end of the last regularly scheduled class in a subject, except for Architecture design reviews and final examinations scheduled through the Schedules Office.

No assignment of any kind may fall due after the last regularly scheduled meeting of that subject. This does not prevent an instructor from giving an extension to an individual student, but blanket extensions should not be given to the entire class. Although formal reviews of subjects should be held during regular class periods, the rule does not exclude the possibility of sessions after the last day of classes at which the instructing staff is available to answer questions of students who choose to attend. Such sessions should be publicized in advance and open to all students enrolled in a subject.

## APPENDIX D

### Summary of Violation Reports

#### Fall Semester, 1998

During the Fall 1998 semester, most students reported violations of academic policies to the Chair of the Faculty via email to *feedback@mit.edu*. The chair also received some additional messages forwarded from SCEP (the Student Committee on Educational Policy) and a few telephone calls.

A review of the 33 messages sent to *feedback@mit.edu* reveals that some students were knowledgeable about the Faculty regulations, some were confused and uncertain as to whether or not there had been a violation, and some were mistaken. The students questioned procedures in 21 different subjects. The Chair of the Faculty, Professor Lotte Bailyn said that the messages in this sample are typical of all of the messages she received that fall or in the prior year.

What follows is a breakdown of complaint types. Some of the 33 messages concerned more than one violation, so there were a total of 37 complaints/questions.

#### EVENING EXAMINATIONS —11 complaints/questions

##### Complaints/questions about time allotted to an evening examination (8 complaints)

- 1 complaint that examination could not possibly be interpreted to fit into a normal class period.
- 3 complaints about one evening examination which was extended during the examination itself, placing at a disadvantage students who had to leave because of other obligations.
- 3 complaints that showed a misunderstanding of the policy. Students thought the evening examination should only last for as long as a normal class period.
- 1 question about whether the 7:30-9 time slot for an evening examination was against policy.

##### Complaints about the scheduled class or assignments during the week of an evening examination (3 complaints)

All 3 complaints concerned scheduled presentations of some sort when no class/lecture/recitation, etc. was cancelled. (In these situations, students were making the assumption that these presentations were the equivalent of an examination).

#### ANNOUNCEMENT OF ASSIGNMENTS AT BEGINNING OF TERM— 10 complaints

##### Complaints about instructor changing quiz or final examination dates (7 complaints)

- 5 complaints that instructor changed the examination date (not the final examination) well into the term.
  - 3 concerned the same subject in which the instructor moved the quiz date to an earlier date at the last minute due to unforeseen holiday conflicts.

- 2 complaints that an instructor did not have an official examination time registered and later in the term decided to set an examination date.

#### Complaints about length of final examination (1 complaint)

1 complaint about a final examination being scheduled to last for 4 hours.

#### Complaints about changes in grading policy after term began (2 complaints)

Both complaints dealt with the same class in which a decision was made later in the term that a portion of the problem sets would count toward the final grade.

### SCHEDULING OF ACADEMIC EXERCISES—3 complaints

- 1 complaint that a laboratory was running later than 5 p.m.
- 2 complaints that a review session and an activity linked to an evening examination were scheduled for a Monday night.

### END OF TERM REGULATIONS—10 complaints

- 7 complaints that assignments were due during last week of classes in subjects with final examination.
  - 3 concerned same class; 4 concerned different classes.
- 1 complaint that an optional problem set was due during last week of class, and the instructor was to grade this problem set and drop lowest problem set grade for term.
- 1 complaint that presentations were due on the same day as final. For this same class, there was an additional complaint that presentations were changed to the week before the final (counted in 7 complaints above).
- 1 complaint that there was an examination during the last week of class as well as homework.

### MISC. — 3 complaints

- 1 complaint about an unreasonable workload during a short period of time (paper, problem set, group presentation, take-home test).
- 1 complaint about review sessions on Monday nights.
- 1 report in which student confused the rules governing evening examinations and regular examinations taking place during normal class period.

## APPENDIX E

### Current Regulations on Scheduling Academic Exercises and on Evening Examinations

#### Rules and Regulations of the Faculty

- 2.12 Exercises shall, in general, be held between 9 A.M. and 5 P.M. Monday through Friday. Exercises shall begin five minutes after and end five minutes before the scheduled hour or half-hour.

It is the intent of the Faculty that for undergraduate subjects there shall be no required academic exercises between 5 P.M. and 7 P.M. Monday through Friday and between 1 P.M. Saturday and 8 A.M. Monday. Exceptions may be made with the concurrence of the Committee on Academic Performance.

- 2.83 One unit of credit toward degree requirements represents approximately one hour per week of lecture, exercise, or preparation for one term. Unit designations of courses normally shall be multiples of three units. No instructor shall require more outside work than can be satisfactorily performed under ordinary working conditions in the preparation time assigned to the course by students of average capacity, adequate preparation, and reasonably good habits of work; and, in order that this rule may be practically enforced, each instructor is expected from time to time to ascertain the amount of outside preparation actually given to each of his or her courses by students whose work is of passing grade.

#### Bulletin

##### Policy on Evening Examinations/Quizzes in Undergraduate Subjects

An evening examination is defined as a written exercise (quiz) that is not given in a regular class period and begins at or after 7:00 pm. It must be the equivalent of a quiz that could be given in a normal class period.

- It is the intent of the Faculty that evening examinations be used only to ease the time pressure on students of examinations given during a regular class period, and not as a means of adding to the number of class periods in a term. Therefore, during the week that an evening examination is given, a regularly scheduled class hour (lecture or recitation) shall be canceled; or, alternatively, no homework shall be assigned for that week.
- There is a need for times when evening classes and undergraduate seminars can be scheduled free from potential conflict with evening examinations. Therefore, no evening examinations or review sessions are to be scheduled on Monday evening, and faculty are urged to avoid scheduling examinations and review sessions on Wednesday evening.
- When possible, evening examinations should be scheduled through the Schedules Office three weeks before Registration Day so that dates can be included on students' class schedules for planning purposes during the registration process. In any event, faculty must announce the schedule of any evening examinations during the first week of the term.
- Students who have a conflict between a scheduled evening examination and other scheduled academic or extracurricular activities will be provided with an examination at an alternate time.

## Term Regulations Distributed by Chair of Faculty (Spring, 1999)

### **1.3 CLASS TIMES**

In accordance with the Regulations of the Faculty Section 2.10, exercises should, in general, be held between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Exercises begin five minutes after and end five minutes before the scheduled hour or half-hour. No undergraduate academic exercises may be required between 5 and 7 p.m., Monday through Friday without the prior approval of the Committee on Academic Performance (CAP). This rule also covers “optional” sections that students may feel obliged to attend. It also means that asking students to shift a scheduled class into this time slot is not acceptable.

### **1.4 EXAMINATIONS**

**1.4.1** The policy on evening quizzes/examinations for daytime classes states that 1) evening examinations should be the equivalent of a quiz that could be given in a normal class period; 2) a regularly scheduled class period should be canceled or no homework should be assigned for the week during which an evening examination is given; 3) there should be no examinations on Monday evenings, and preferably not on Wednesday evenings; 4) evening examinations should be scheduled through the Schedules Office; and 5) alternate evening examinations should be provided for students who have conflicts with scheduled academic or extracurricular activities.

### *A Partial History of the Evening Exams Issue:*

Concern about evening exams was brought to the attention of the CAP five years ago, in April of 1985. A memo from the Faculty Chair (then Prof. Arthur Smith) made reference to conflicts with regular scheduled subjects, forcing students to miss class, with little attempt to work these evening exams around student schedules by using conflict exams. No action was taken by the CAP at that time.

The evening exam issue was raised again a year later. A faculty member in SHSS brought to the attention of the CUP in April 1986 the fact that a number of quizzes, particularly in engineering subjects, were being held during the evening hours,<sup>1</sup> conflicting with scheduled HASS subjects held in the evening. Students having conflicts with their HASS class felt compelled to miss class. They were described as reluctant to ask for conflict exams in their engineering classes. The CUP chair (Dean Margaret MacVicar) requested that the CAP review evening exam policy.

The issue posed was essentially, *'Can those classes offered in the evening be protected from conflict with exams in other courses?' A larger question that followed on the former was, 'Should evening exams be permitted? Do they increase student workload in a term already extended to the limit?'*

Numbers of students affected at any given time was not the issue, as it would be a de facto minority. In fall of 1986 the number of scheduled undergraduate evening subjects (primarily HASS subjects with an average of 25 students per course) was 21. (These numbers were about the same in 1988.) Undergraduate subjects holding quizzes in the evening numbered at least 15.<sup>2</sup> More evening classes are given on Mondays than on other days; hence Monday was the least liked day for evening exams. Sometimes the class missed was a several hour long class, so the equivalent of week's worth of class was lost.

Faculty in the subjects giving evening exams were polled informally in the same year. Those who supported holding evening exams cited (1) the need to give students a more relaxed atmosphere for quiz-taking, and (2) a reluctance to give up a lecture hour for quizzes.

Undergraduates were also polled informally about their feelings about evening exams in general in 1986 by an ODU staff member (and polled also by a student interested in the issue in 1987). Students agreed generally that (1) evening exams provided breathing room, but (2) evening exams were sometimes structured to take two hours to complete.

At an April 1988 CAP meeting, student representatives, Dean MacVicar, and departmental representatives were invited to discuss evening exams. (Some undergraduate officers had also responded in writing before the meeting.) Results of a quick poll of course 16 faculty was presented, although these faculty rarely gave evening exams themselves; nevertheless, the poll indicated that while most did not favor evening exams in general (voting 41 to 11), limiting evening exams to certain evenings to avoid conflicts (44 to 8) was favored. Student representatives (the then UA president and a representative from the FPC) did not support having evening exams. Other faculty present (as well as several who had written the CAP) expressed a desire to avoid conflicts, but were not agreed how that was to be done.

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<sup>1</sup>Evening, as used here, does not include the hours between 5 PM and 7 PM, since required academic exercises are prohibited in those hours by the Faculty Rules.

<sup>2</sup>An underestimate, since the number of quizzes scheduled through the Schedules Office may not reflect the actual number of quizzes held.

In the spring semester of 1988 EECS put into effect its own policy regarding evening exams which addressed the issue of student workload and arranging for conflict exams,<sup>3</sup> but did not address the issue of protecting evening classes in other courses from conflict with evening exams.

N. McGovern, Office of the Dean for Undergraduate Education, 10/25/90

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<sup>3</sup>EECS policy is as follows: (1) An evening quiz should be designed so that students can theoretically complete it in one hour; no more than two hours of time should be scheduled for such a quiz; (2) During the week an evening quiz is scheduled, either no homework should be required or a regularly scheduled class hour (lecture or recitation) should be cancelled. Quiz review sessions that precede the quiz are not considered regularly scheduled class meetings; (3) If a student has a conflict with a scheduled evening quiz, the conflict exam may not be scheduled during the hours of 5 PM to 7 PM which would violate Faculty Rules.

## MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

CAMBRIDGE MASSACHUSETTS 02139

COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE  
MEMO # 105  
(617) 253-4194

December 4, 1985

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Faculty

FROM: Vernon M. Ingram *V.M.I.*  
Chairman

SUBJECT: Scheduling of evening classes

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It has come to this Committee's attention that several instructors schedule classes or meetings between the hours of 5-10 p.m.

I would like to remind my colleagues of Regulation 2.11.1 of the Rules and Regulations of the Faculty which states:

"It is the intent of the Faculty that for undergraduate subjects, there should be no required academic exercises between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and between 1 p.m. Saturday and 8 a.m. Monday. Exceptions may be made with the concurrence of the Committee on Academic Performance."

The Committee has discussed the following two problems and feels that students should be alerted at the beginning of the term if you plan to schedule class sessions after 7 p.m. on weekdays. Also, for every evening session which by itself extends the normal total weekly hours of a subject, the C.A.P. asks that the daytime schedule of that subject be reduced accordingly.

**COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE  
FACULTY POLICY COMMITTEE****POLICY ON EVENING EXAMS/QUIZZES IN UNDERGRADUATE SUBJECTS**

Evening exams — in which students typically have up to two hours to complete a one-hour exam — have become a replacement for one-hour in-class exams for some MIT undergraduate subjects.

These evening exams are seen as an advantage by many students and faculty because they can provide a better evaluation of understanding the material (less emphasis on speed), and provide a better, less pressured environment for the quiz. However, these exams can conflict with MIT classes (especially HASS subjects) scheduled in the evenings, which can mean missing a week's worth of classes in a subject in order to take an evening exam.

Further, evening exams can conflict with evening non-academic activities, disrupt students' normal rhythm of studying and attending classes, and, in some cases, violate existing Faculty Regulations (i.e., the scheduling of conflict quizzes from 5 to 7 p.m.)

The following policies, **applicable to undergraduate subjects only**, are designed to maintain in a simple way the positive features of evening exams while minimizing their negative impacts:

1. An evening exam is defined as a written exercise (quiz) that is not given in a regular class period and begins after 7:00 p.m. It must be the equivalent of a quiz that could be given in a normal one-hour class period. The duration of an evening exam may not exceed two hours.
2. It is the intent of the Faculty that evening exams be used only to ease the time pressure on students of one-hour exams given during a regular class period, and not as a means of adding to the number of class periods in a term. Therefore, during the week that an evening exam is given, a regularly scheduled class hour (lecture or recitation) shall be cancelled; or, alternatively, no homework shall be assigned for that week.
3. There is a need for times when evening classes and undergraduate seminars can be scheduled free from potential conflict with evening exams. Therefore, no evening exams or review sessions are to be scheduled on Monday evening, and faculty are urged to avoid scheduling exams and review sessions on Wednesday evening.
4. When possible, evening exams should be scheduled through the Registrar's Office three weeks before Registration Day so that dates can be included on students' Class Schedules for planning purposes during the Registration process. In any event, faculty must announce the schedule of any evening exams during the first week of the term.
5. Students who have a conflict between a scheduled evening exam and other scheduled academic or extracurricular activities will be provided with an exam at an alternate time. Alternate exams may not be scheduled between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m., in accordance with current Faculty Regulations (although any individual student could request an alternative exam between 5:00 and 7:00 p.m.)

# FACULTY RULES YOU SHOULD KNOW

The Faculty have a number of regulations designed to ensure that you are able to get the most out of your educational experience. Here are a few of these rules.

Brought to You by the UA STUDENT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY (SCEP)

## EVENING EXAMS:

- "Must be the equivalent of a quiz that could be given in a normal class period."
- "During the week that an evening exam is given, a regularly scheduled class hour (lecture or recitation) shall be canceled; or, alternatively, no homework shall be assigned for that week."
- "No evening exams or review sessions are to be scheduled on Monday evening, and faculty are urged to avoid scheduling exams and review sessions on Wednesday evening."
- "Students who have a conflict between a scheduled evening exam and other scheduled **ACADEMIC OR EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES** will be provided with an exam at an alternate time."

MIT Bulletin 98/99, p. 69. Emphasis added.

## NON-ACADEMIC TIME: 5 TO 7 PM

"It is the intent of the Faculty that for undergraduate subjects there shall be no required academic exercises between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and between 1 p.m. Saturday and 8 a.m. Monday. Exceptions may be made with the concurrence of the Committee on Academic Performance."

*Rules and Regulations of the Faculty, 2.12, p. 9*

## COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS:

"A comprehensive examination (covering most of the term's work) can only be given during the final exam period or before the last week of classes."

*MIT Bulletin 98/99, p. 70*

## REQUIRED WORK AND COLLABORATION RULES:

- "During the first three weeks of classes, instructors are asked to provide a clear and complete description of the requirements in each subject, including the due dates for required work, the schedule of examinations during the term, whether there will be a final examination and the grading criteria and procedures to be used."
- "It is the instructor's responsibility early in the term to inform students of expectations regarding permissible academic conduct in the subject."
- "Asking students to vote on some deviation from the rules is not an acceptable procedure."

MIT Bulletin 98/99, p. 70

## RELIGIOUS ABSENCES:

- Any student who is unable to attend classes or participate in any examination, study, or work requirement on a particular day because of his or her religious beliefs is excused from any such activity. The student will be given the opportunity to make up the work that was missed, provided that the makeup work does not create an unreasonable burden upon MIT.
- The Institute will not levy fees or charges of any kind when allowing the student to make up missed work. In addition, no adverse or prejudicial effects will result because students have made use of these provisions.

MIT Bulletin 96/99, p. 73

## RIGHT TO REPORT VIOLATIONS:

"Individuals will not be reprimanded or discriminated against for initiating an inquiry or complaint..."

MIT Bulletin 98/99, p. 73

**TO REPORT PROBLEMS TO THE CHAIR OF THE FACULTY: [feedback@mit.edu](mailto:feedback@mit.edu)**

ALL NAMES WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

Many potential problems are much easier to deal with at the beginning of the term than at the end. Each of your classes should have given you a written syllabus that summarizes all tests, quizzes, and required work—if not, you should get one by the end of the third week of the term. We urge you to check each of your syllabi against this checklist. Let us know if you notice any problems. It will be much easier both for you and for your professor to catch problems and make changes early.

Subject  
Numbers



## Syllabus Checklist for Undergraduate Subjects

UA Student Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP)

Thanks to the **Academic Services Office** in the Office of the Dean of Students and Undergraduate Education (ODSUE)  
Contact information on other side of page.

<input type="checkbox"/>	All exams, quizzes, and problem sets are marked on the syllabus.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>In weeks when evening exams are given:</b> Either a class is cancelled, or no homework is assigned. No exam or review session is scheduled on a Monday night. Students who have conflicts with <i>scheduled academic or extra-curricular activities</i> are provided an exam at an alternate time.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	No academic exercises are scheduled between 5 PM and 7 PM.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	The syllabus provides a clear description of the rules for collaboration in the subject. <b>Note:</b> If these guidelines aren't there, ask the professor to provide them. Collaboration rules vary from subject to subject.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Any final exams are scheduled during the final exam period. Exams given in the last week of the term cover only recently presented material, not most of the term's work.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>If the subject has a final exam:</b> No tests are given and no assignment is due after Friday, May 7. <b>If the subject does not have a final exam:</b> AT MOST one assignment falls due OR one test or quiz is given after Friday, May 7.				
<input type="checkbox"/>	No assignment falls due and no exercise other than a final exam is scheduled after the last day of classes, Thursday, May 13.				

## APPENDIX J

### Current Regulations on Take-home Examinations

#### Rules and Regulations of the Faculty

- 2.51 Final examinations shall be held during the final examination period following each term, and shall be scheduled through the Office of the Registrar, as well as announced to the class, before the end of the third week of the term. The final examination scheduled in any subject shall last at least one hour and not more than three hours.

#### Term Regulations distributed by Chair of the Faculty (Spring 1999)

- 1.4.2 Take home final examinations are not permitted for any undergraduate subject. Final examinations must be announced to students before the end of the third week of the term (Friday, February 26). All final examinations are held during the final examination period following each term and must be scheduled through the Schedules Office. Scheduled final examinations may be from one to three hours.

## MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

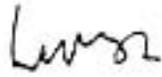
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## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** 19 April 1994

**To:** Institute Faculty

**From:** Linn Hobbs   
Chair, CUP

**Re:** **Take-Home Final Examinations**

The *Committee on the Undergraduate Program* (CUP) voted at its 17 November 1993 meeting to discontinue an experiment, begun in the Spring 1992 semester, which had permitted certain HASS-D subject instructors to set take-home final examinations in place of a traditional, scheduled 1-3 hour sit-down final. The experiment had required an exemption from a *Regulation of the Faculty* which does not permit take-home final examinations.

The experiment was undertaken in response to a previous decision of the HASS-D Overview Committee to require a final exam in all HASS-D subjects. The motivation behind the experiment was to help the HASS-D Overview Committee evaluate alternative forms of student assessment for subjects where a traditional final examination appeared inappropriate or pedagogically questionable and to help determine whether final examinations should continue to be required in these subjects. CUP's reconsideration was precipitated, at least in part, by a request from the faculty who teach 6.001 for a take-home final exam experiment in that subject. After considerable discussion, CUP concluded that the HASS-D take-home final examination experiment had not been a success and should not be extended to other subjects. The CUP voted to end the experiment, beginning with the Spring semester 1994.

The CUP thought it would be useful to report to the Faculty the motivation for the original experiment and its subsequent implementation, the nature of the 6.001 request, and the reasoning behind CUP's action to end the experiment. Several HASS-D instructors feel strongly that the traditional sit-down form of an examination represents a pedagogically-irrelevant examination tool, inappropriate to the mode or manner in which their subjects (poetry- or play-writing, for example) are taught. The 6.001 request was likewise prompted by pedagogical concerns, in this case that a traditional final does not allow the instructors to pose real-world design-like experiences, and that time-pressured exams discriminate unfairly against those students who are slow but nonetheless wise; an exercise was additionally sought which would encourage students to work together, rather than independently.

CUP, together with the Committee on Academic Performance who also considered the question at CUP's request, feared that a take-home final exercise could easily escalate beyond what was reasonable to expect in a traditional three-hour exam, even counting in preparation time for the traditional exam. Indeed, their fears appeared confirmed by the extensive nature of some of the questions asked in HASS-D take-home examinations. Though survey data revealed that many

students liked the idea of take-home finals, several other significant problems were raised in discussion: 1) Few or no controls appear to have been instituted (or appear possible to have been instituted) in the HASS-D experiment over how much time a student would spend on a take-home final examination. 2) It seemed difficult for an outside overview committee to assess the time commitment required. 3) It seemed difficult also to guarantee fairness to those students who might have several other final examinations to prepare for and could find correspondingly less time to devote to a take-home exercise. 4) There appeared no easy way to assure equal access to resource materials, which might be easily available to some students through subject repositories in certain living groups and unavailable to others. 5) The difficulty of extending the experiment to *only* one or a few deserving subjects in other departments and other schools was acknowledged. And, 6) it was considered unrealistic to expect a student to complete multiple take-home finals in the brief time available. These problems are particularly compounded for a heavily-enrolled, demanding subject like 6.001, involving a large number of freshmen.

Given MIT's present short reading and final examination periods, CUP felt that the final examination period should continue to remain distinct. Exercises of the sort proposed for take-home final examinations might be done within the semester and should not extend into the final examination period. CUP was therefore reluctant to sanction continuation of the HASS-D take-home final experiment and unwilling to extend the experiment to other subjects. CUP therefore welcomed the recommendation of the HASS-D Review Committee that final examinations in HASS-D subjects should no longer be mandatory.

In summary, take-home final examinations in any subject therefore remain proscribed, as specified in §2.51 of *Rules and Regulations of the Faculty*. Any final examination given *must* be scheduled during the final examination period and cannot last more than three hours. Alternative evaluation exercises given in the semester must conform to the end-of-term regulations distributed to faculty members each semester by the Chair of the Faculty.

## APPENDIX L

### Current Regulations regarding Governance of Examinations

#### Rules and Regulations of the Faculty

##### 1.72 The Faculty Policy Committee...

*The Committee shall have the following duties and responsibilities:*

- a. Formulate policy on matters of concern to the Faculty, for approval by the Faculty; interpret and implement policy as approved by the Faculty.
- b. Coordinate the work of the other Committees of the Faculty, establishing liaison with them, providing guidance and direction, and referring issues to particular Committees or establishing Ad Hoc Committees as appropriate.
- c. Maintain a broad overview of the Institute's academic programs, coordinating and reviewing proposals from the Standing and Ad Hoc Committees for presentation to Faculty meeting.
- d. Communicate with the Faculty as a whole on important matters of policy, reporting regularly at Faculty meetings....

##### 1.73.1 The Committee on Graduate School Policy...

*Among the duties and responsibilities of the Committee shall be:...*

- d. Cooperating with the Committee on Academic Performance in making recommendations to the Faculty on such matters as calendar changes, examinations, and grading.

##### 1.73.2 The Committee on the Undergraduate Program...

*Among the duties and responsibilities of the Committee shall be:...*

- a. Considering proposals that would change or modify undergraduate educational policies, and making suitable recommendations to the Faculty.
- b. Exercising oversight responsibility for undergraduate education, including the freshman year, the General Institute Requirements, and other interdepartmental programs, giving attention to both short-term and long-term trends and directions.
- c. Encouraging experimental innovation in undergraduate education, including the approval and supervision of limited educational experiments and granting of exceptions to allow any experiment to depart from specific Faculty Regulations and MIT administrative procedures. Descriptions of experiments and reports on their progress and outcome shall be circulated to the Faculty. Experiments that show enduring value should be incorporated in the usual ways into the Faculty Regulations and administrative practices.

d. Interacting with other Faculty Committees and with the Schools, departments, and programs on important issues in undergraduate education and communicating with the MIT community as a whole about such issues.

1.73.3 The Committee on Curricula...

a. The Committee shall interpret and implement undergraduate educational policy as approved by the Faculty.....

g. The Committee shall serve as the standing Faculty advisory body to the Registrar.

1.73.5 The Committee on Academic Performance...

a. ... shall be concerned with the academic performance of undergraduates. It shall make recommendations to the Faculty on such matters as minimum scholastic standards, calendar changes, examinations, and grading, in consultation with the Committee on Graduate School Policy on those matters which also relate to graduate students.

## Appendix M

### Current Regulations regarding Violations of Examination Policies

#### Term Regulations Distributed by Chair of Faculty (Spring, 1999)

##### 2. **PLANNING FOR THE END OF TERM**

To ensure that student and faculty workloads do not become overwhelming, the Faculty regulates examinations and work assignments at the end of term. Nonetheless, each term violations of these regulations arise in a number of subjects. While usually well intended, requirements that are in violation of the rules often impose hardships on students. When such violations occur, the Chair of the Faculty has the responsibility to contact the instructor to resolve the problem. It is often difficult and awkward to resolve such situations late in the term in a way that is fair to the students and that preserves the educational value intended by the instructor. For this reason, please read these guidelines carefully and contact the Faculty Chair Lotte Bailyn (*lbailyn@mit.edu*) early in the term with any questions you may have.

Please note that students are aware of these regulations; do not be surprised if they call them to your attention. Students are entitled to expect that no faculty member will deviate from these rules except with prior permission of the CAP for undergraduate subjects and the Committee on Graduate School Policy (CGSP) for graduate subjects, and that any such approved exception will be announced and appropriately emphasized early in the term. Having students vote on some deviation from the rules is not an acceptable procedure.