



MEMORANDUM

To: Executive Committee of Faculty Council (April 4, 2023)
Faculty Council (April 26, 2023)

From: Professor Daniel Posen
Chair, Undergraduate Assessment Committee

Date: March 3, 2023

Re: **Undergraduate Assessment Committee Update for the 2022-2023 Academic Year**

REPORT CLASSIFICATION

This is a routine or minor policy matter that will be considered by the Executive Committee for approving and forwarding to Faculty Council for information.

BACKGROUND

In accordance with Procedures for Committees of Council of the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering, this report is a brief summary of the activities undertaken by the Undergraduate Assessment Committee (UAC) during the current academic year.

ACTIVITIES

From August 2022 to March 2023, UAC has met approximately 25 times, for a total of approximately 40-45 hours of meeting time. In addition, UAC maintains an active Teams site, which includes regular discussion and e-voting for certain time-sensitive matters. Many UAC members also spend time outside of meetings to develop new policy proposal and communications to the Faculty. Undergraduate advisors have also met numerous times outside of UAC to review petitions prior to UAC meetings. A more detailed accounting of key UAC activities is described in the sections below.

RECOMMENDATION FOR COUNCIL

For information.

Faculty Grading Practices

At the end of each term, UAC reviews undergraduate course grades for consistency and fairness across the faculty and communicates with instructors about any concerns (see [Report 3868](#) for more information about Faculty Norms).

The committee also reviews proposed Composition of Final Marks (COFM) for all undergraduate courses, and adjudicates requests for deviations from the Faculty Grading Policies ([Academic Regulations, Section XI](#)). For the 2022-2023 academic year, approximately 40-50 such requests were received. A majority were approved. Of note: approximately 160 courses (~1/3 of courses in the Faculty) have either automatic or pre-existing exemptions from Faculty COFM rules – primarily design courses and laboratory courses. As a snapshot: in Winter 2023, approximately 50 out of 250 course codes deviated from the standard COFM, generally by exceeding 50% weight on not closely supervised work and/or by having no final exam.

Policy Discussions

Throughout the current academic year, UAC has discussed a number of policy items related to:

- Procedures surrounding petition adjudication
- Assessment Mark and Deferred Exam policies
- Computer-based exams
- Restricted exam policies
- Composition of Final Marks (e.g., for Design Courses)
- Extra Credit Policy
- Exam Viewing and Exam Copies (especially with regard to electronically graded exams)
- Clarification of various existing Academic Regulations
- UAC Manual Updates

As relevant, policy proposals related to these topics have been / will be presented to Faculty Council.

Petitions

Adjudicating petitions for special consideration and for final exams constitutes a majority of the Committee meeting time. Straightforward petitions are reviewed and accommodated in separate meetings of the Undergraduate Academic Advisors; however UAC still reviews several hundred petitions per year, either in Full Committee or on occasion with Sub-Committees. Note that Term Work Petitions are generally evaluated at the departmental level and are seen by UAC only in the event of a dispute.

Since returning to in-person learning, there has been a large increase in the number of petitions compared to the historical average as shown in Figures 1-3 below. The trends are generally consistent across programs and years of study, with the exception of 4th year, where the increase is present but less pronounced. A number of factors may have contributed to this increase. Potential reasons discussed in UAC are listed below, but these are mostly speculative:

- Canceled Exam Period in 2021: 9 (Special Consideration petitions for deferred exam)
- University policy allowing self-declaration of absence for illnesses
- Shift in cultural norms or student preparation resulting from remote learning
 - Including explicit communication by the Faculty not to attend final exam if ill, and accelerated deferred exam schedule in Winter 2022
- More flexible promotion rules adopted during remote learning
- Increased rates of illness following the end of lockdowns

The Committee will continue to monitor these data for trends over the coming semesters.

So far, in the 2022-2023 academic year, approximately 75% of requests for Special Consideration were deemed valid and received some type of accommodation. Approximately 90% of final exam petitions received were deemed valid and received some type of accommodation, most often either an assessed mark or deferred exam. We speculate that petitions with a low likelihood of success are generally not submitted in the first place.

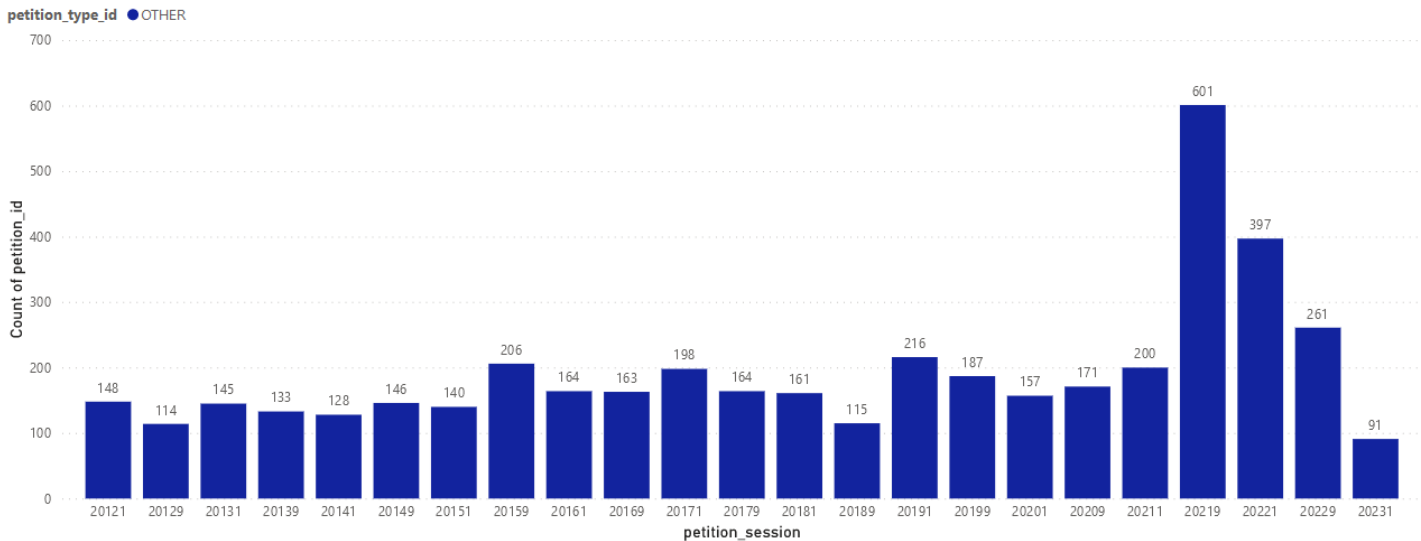


Figure 1. Petitions for Special Consideration (e.g., retroactive withdrawals, probation relief, relaxation of 9-year rule for graduation). As of March 3, 2023.

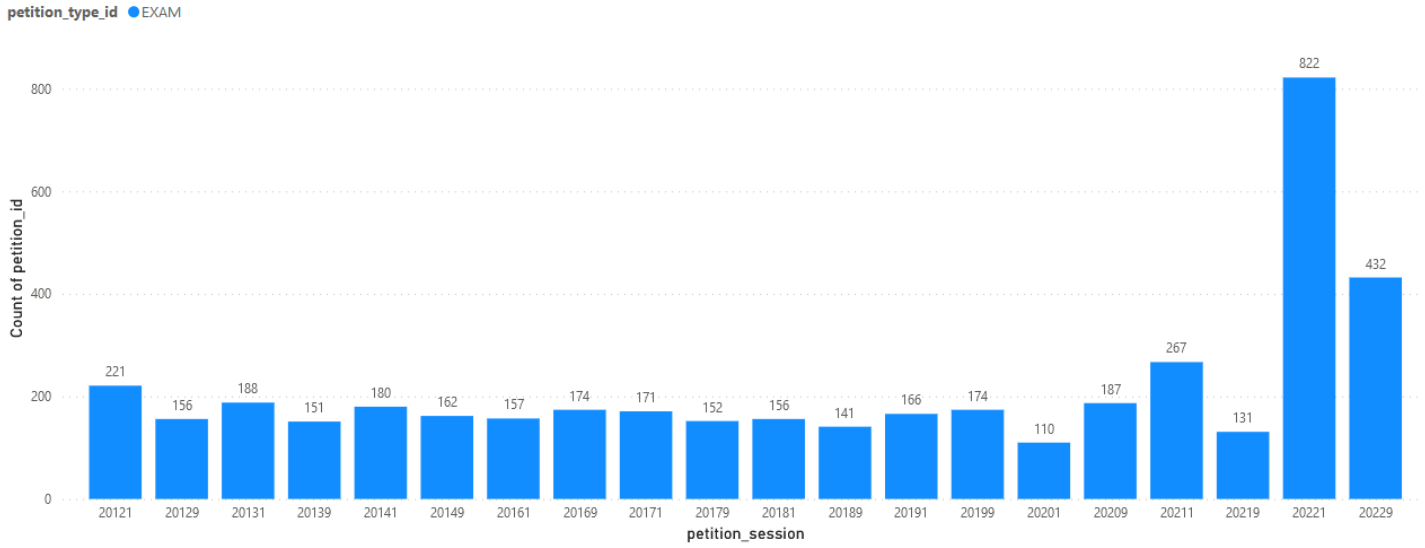


Figure 2. Petitions for Final Exams (e.g., missed exam, illness during exam). As of March 3, 2023.

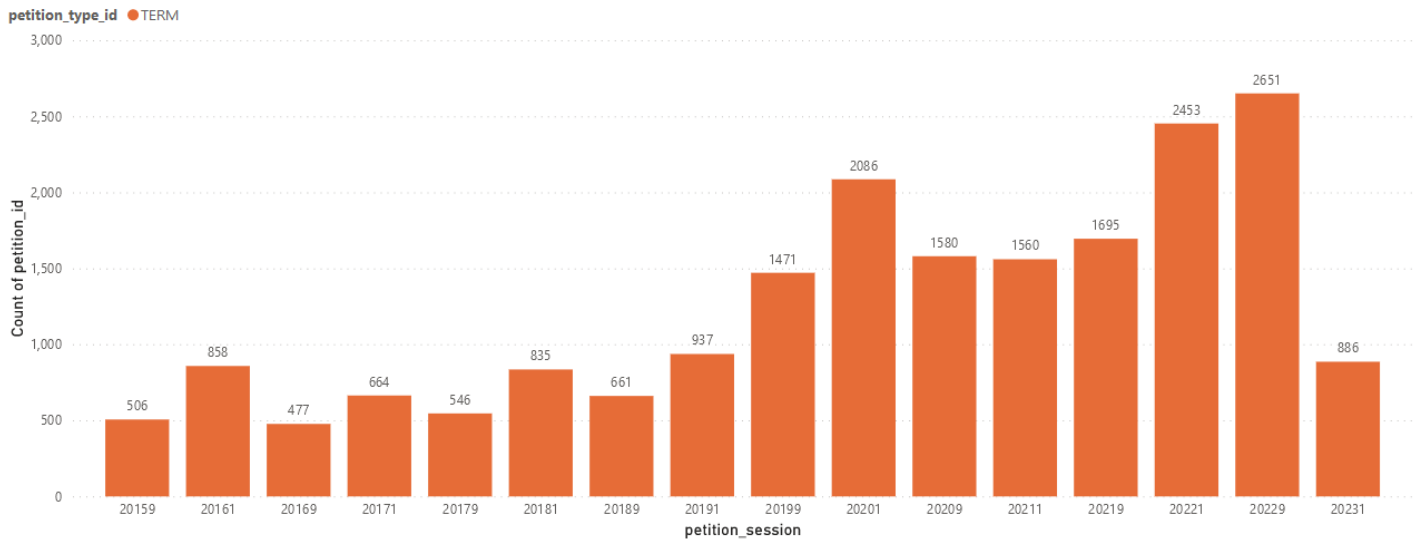


Figure 3. Term Work Petitions (e.g., assignment extensions, missed midterms). March 3, 2023.

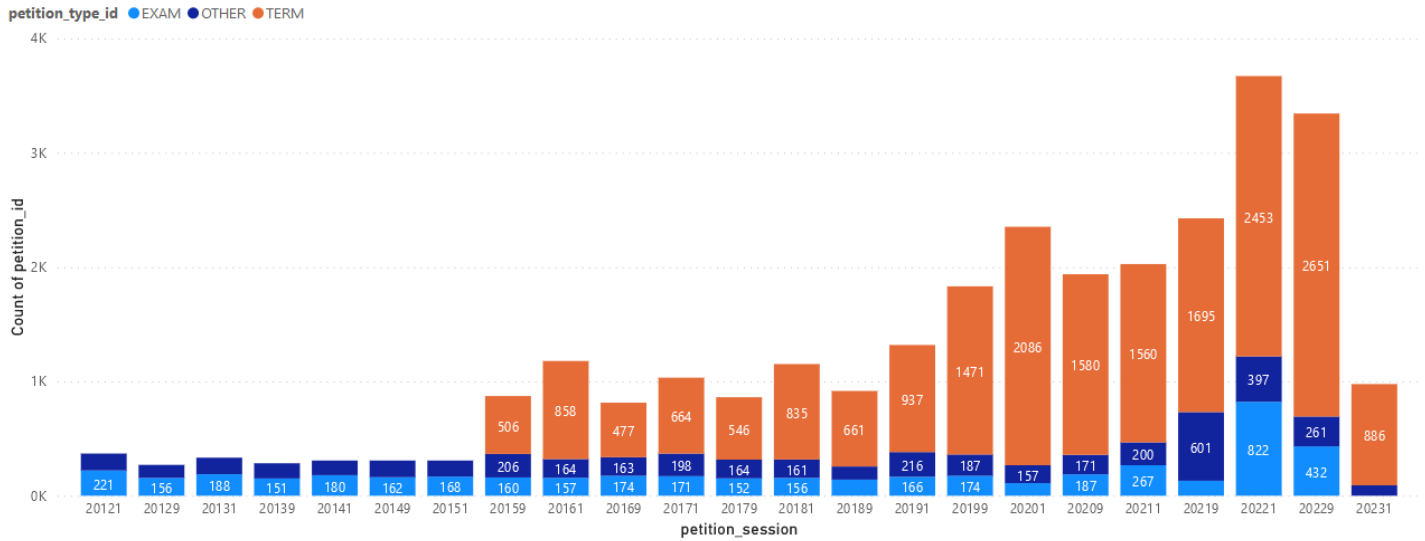


Figure 4. All petition types on a common scale. Light blue = Final Exams; dark blue = Special Consideration; Orange = Term Work. March 3, 2023.