



**University Senate  
Instruction, Curricula, and Advising Committee  
Response to Charge 2305-2 on Auditing Courses at Rutgers**

**Charge S-2305-2** Auditing Courses at Rutgers: Review course auditing at Rutgers. Make any appropriate recommendations.

The Rutgers Senate Instruction Curricula and Advising Committee was charged with exploring policies and practice regarding auditing courses across Rutgers campuses.

A Sub-Committee was appointed to look at issues relating to course auditing policies at Rutgers and to make recommendations regarding minimal standards with the recognition that policies may vary based on discipline and other factors. The Sub-Committee consisted of:

Victoria Axelsson, Rajita Bhavaraju (Chair), Debra Keates, Nkechi Mbadugha, Jennifer Oberle, Lucio Volino, and Mary Wagner.

The Sub-Committee found that currently there are a range of audit policies in the different schools; policies differ from campus to campus.

While the Sub-Committee was able to complete a survey of registrars to compile the mix of current practices, they did not find a way to uniformly distribute a survey to faculty and students. It was felt that a piecemeal survey would not serve the interests of Rutgers as a whole.

**Areas of Discussion**

The Committee had a number of wide-ranging discussions concerning auditing and auditing policies at Rutgers. Some questions could be answered although the answer might vary from school to school and program to program. Others remain open.

- Eligibility for auditing:
  - Non-RU students?
  - Courses that might be pre-requisites?
  - Courses in a student's major?
- Attendance policy
- Rate policy (per credit or IF credit is available)
- Credit? Is it possible to get credit?
- Is there a limit on the number of courses audited (per time period)
- Reasons for auditing

- Auditing as a refresher/to assist with taking the course for credit in the future (as a prerequisite) or for failure (may want to retake later) – have to pay?; auditing to refresh previous classes to take a class that was failed
- Auditing to provide assistance to students with challenges (e.g., illness) so they can perform when they take to course for credit; where does this fall with disability accommodations
- Auditing to experience the field (decision-making on whether to pursue a major)
- School policies (or Senior Audit Policy) conflicting with larger RU policy
- Auditing a course counting toward a major/minor?
- Who grants permission?
- Where do classes taught by adjuncts lie?
- Grading/appearance in transcripts (final and during course)
- Minimum standards of work or proxy for those standards
- Should auditing be mentioned in the course syllabus?
- Limitations on senior auditing
- Enrollment min/max for instructors
- Access to advising/course resources; what about disability services (you have to be an enrolled RU student)

## Rutgers Auditing Policies

A search was made of all posted, official “audit” policies at all of the Rutgers schools.

### Findings:

We did not find posted policies consistently through all schools and campuses. What we found was all time-stamped as having been posted prior to 2020.

**In many cases** (School of Environmental and Behavioral Sciences, SAS English Department, School of Management & Labor Relations, Graduate School, Mason Gross, School of Criminal Justice, School of Health Professionals) **there is basic language repeated.**

- None seem to require registration (language is sometimes explicit: Management & Labor)
- **Basic policy language:**  
Upon obtaining the permission of the instructor of the course and subject to the availability of space, students may audit a course without registration. No academic credit is earned in this manner, and audited courses do not appear on the student's transcript.
- **Modifications to Basic policy language:**

The SAS English Department adds a separate process for Graduate Program classes.

Mason Gross adds: At Mason Gross School of the Arts, auditing studio courses is not typically permitted.

School of Criminal Justice adds: Space must be available for a student to audit a course, and he or she must obtain permission from the course instructor.

School of Health Professionals adds: a grade of “AU” appears on the transcript. Students are charged full tuition and fees for the audit.

**There were schools with different policies.**

**School of Business in New Brunswick and Newark:**

A student may enroll in a course without receiving academic credit if (1) space is available; (2) the Rutgers Business School: Undergraduate-Newark dean's office has given advance approval; and (3) the instructor is notified by the dean's office. At registration an N is placed in the credit-hour prefix column by the registrar's office. Students must pay the normal tuition fee for the course and fulfill the same requirements during the semester as all other students, including the execution of any written assignments. Students must perform all the assigned work; however, they may not take the final examination. The student is graded S or U (satisfactory or unsatisfactory), and the course and grade are entered on the student's permanent record, but no credit is given toward a degree for the course. Rutgers Business School: Undergraduate-Newark does not permit students (full-time, part-time, or non matriculated students) to audit courses without registration.

**Bloustein (similar to School of Business):**

A student may enroll in a course without receiving academic credit if (1) space is available, (2) the instructor has approved the audit, and (3) the graduate program director has given advance approval. At registration an N is placed in the credit-hour prefix column on the course request card. All course requirements except the final examination must be completed. The student is graded S or U (satisfactory or unsatisfactory), and the course and grade are entered on the student's permanent record, but no credit is given toward a degree for the course.

**School of Public Health:**

Matriculated students may elect, with the permission of the instructor, to enroll in the course as an audit (without credit). To audit a course, students must register for the course, request audit status, pay tuition, and the usual fees. Once a student is registered for the approved course as an audit, no changes will be made. When the course is completed, a grade of AU will be listed on the transcript. No other grade will be assigned. A student cannot take a course for a grade after auditing the course.

For students auditing a course because they previously received a low grade in the course, the performance in the course will not count toward the GPA but will be considered by the Academic Progression Committee in deliberations concerning academic standing.

**Graduate School of Rutgers Newark:**

Students in the Graduate School-Newark may audit courses without registration. No academic credit is earned in this manner.

Upon obtaining the written permission of the course instructor, and subject to course availability, matriculated students of the school may audit courses without registration.

Non-matriculated students may not audit courses (under any circumstances).

### **Rutgers Camden Graduate School**

Links students to the Senior Audit page and also suggests contacting the Camden Registrar Office.

Upon obtaining permission from the instructor of the course and subject to the availability of space in the course, full-time students may audit a course without registration. No academic credit is earned in this manner, and the audited course does not appear on the student's transcript.

Students are expected to attend and complete all work for the course but are not required to take the final exam. The student does not earn a grade for the course. Online courses and courses open only to restricted populations may not be audited. The course does not count toward the total credits for the semester (for purposes of full-time status, overloads, or financial aid). Students are not charged independently for the course, but may be required to pay any individual course, lab, or materials fees.

### **Rutgers Surveys Regarding Auditing**

#### **Survey of School/Campus Registrars:**

A survey was sent to registrars in all Schools at Rutgers Health/RBHS, Rutgers, New Brunswick, Rutgers – Newark, Rutgers Business School – New Brunswick/Newark, and Rutgers – Camden. However, response rates were low. Policies are uneven.

#### **Survey of Rutgers Faculty and Students.**

**Background:** As part of its “Proposal to Improve the Process of Auditing Classes at Rutgers University,” RUSA (Rutgers University Student Assembly) provided results of a student survey that they conducted for which there were a maximum of 633 responses. While not a large enough pool to be representative, that survey found these responses:

- Have you been dissuaded from taking a course because of a bad grade?
  - YES: 550; NO: 53; MAYBE: 36.
- Would you audit courses if the option were available to you?
  - YES: 290; NO: 48; MAYBE: 275.
- Are you aware of any auditing opportunities at Rutgers?
  - YES: 50 NO: 560.
- Do you know how to audit courses at Rutgers?
  - YES: 48; NO: 530.

So while the survey showed a strong interest in auditing options, clearly students are not aware of auditing options or procedures.

The Committee created and tested a follow up survey but was unable to find a means of distribution to faculty and students across the university that would yield even-handed and representative findings.

### **Survey of Senior Auditing Program Staff**

**Process:** The directors of the Senior Auditing Program were asked for their policies and replied to questions by email.

**Findings:** Rutgers University has an established senior auditing program with well-defined guidelines:

“The Senior Citizen Audit Program was created by the Rutgers University Board of Governors to permit retired New Jersey residents, age 62 or older, to audit courses on a space-available, noncredit basis. There are no tuition costs for auditing courses. Senior auditors do not receive academic credit for audited courses.”

<https://community.rutgers.edu/programs-services/program-directory/senior-citizen-audit-program>

However, it is unclear (to the administrators in this office) if seniors may audit any course offered by Rutgers University, specifically programs that do not offer auditing to other students, for example the medical school and physician assistant program.

Nor do seniors necessarily have access to all resources that they may need to fully participate in a course. For example, while senior auditors have access to course Canvas sites and their contents, if there is a link out to a Library electronic resource the auditor will not have access to that resource unless they physically come into a Rutgers library, register to use a guest computer terminal, and use that resource on-site.

Furthermore, while several Senators have attested that their courses participate in the senior auditing program, there is no consensus regarding the parameters of auditing for non-seniors. There are also no known standards for auditing eligibility, availability, and guidelines for all courses throughout the University.

### **Survey of policies at other Big 10 universities**

The Committee conducted a search of policies and registration processes at peer institutions.

**Findings:**

- Indiana has a policy that differs between schools but which is centrally posted. It allows auditing for registered students; an NC grade appears on their transcript.
- University of Iowa, College of Liberal Arts & Sciences has a centralized policy. Registered students may audit with the approval of class instructor and their advisor; audited classes receive no credit but students must complete coursework. Classes are marked on transcripts as Audit Successful or Audit Unsuccessful. Student may switch from audit to fully registered status.

- University of Michigan, School of Literature, Arts, and the Sciences, has a centrally posted policy. Registered students may audit classes. “Official audits” require attendance and completion of course requirements. Audited courses are not counted towards credits for graduation but do appear on the transcript as successfully completed or failed.
- University of Illinois at Champaign Urbana has a centrally posted policy. Permission of the instructor is required. Not all classes are available for audits. Students may not participate in exercises. Registered students are permitted without additional fees; non-registered students and staff may be permitted at a cost. All audited classes appear on student transcripts with the grade “AU.”
- University of Wisconsin has a centrally posted policy. Auditing is permitted for full time students as part of their fees; part-time students pay the per-credit fee for an audited course. Students do not participate in exercises or exams. Classes do not count as credit, but appear on the transcript as successfully or not successfully completed.
- Penn State permits auditing without “signature” permission. Audited classes appear on the transcript but do not count towards full-time status or graduation credit. Audited classes are marked on the transcript as successfully or not successfully completed.
- University of Nebraska at Lincoln allows auditing for currently enrolled students who are “eligible to enroll” the class in the term they wish to audit. Courses involving “extensive laboratory work are usually not open to auditors.” There is an application process that must be approved by the instructor. Students must file a request to have the audited class appear on their transcript.
- The University of Minnesota has a centrally posted policy. Auditing is permitted for registered students except for courses “only set up for an A-F grading basis.” Students do not participate in assignments or exams. The class does not count as a credit but appears on the transcript.
- University of Maryland has a centrally posted policy. Registered students may audit classes on a space-available basis. Testudo, UMD’s registration portal, allows students to select an audit option, if available, when registering for classes. Audited courses appear on the transcript but do not count for credit.
- Northwestern has a centrally posted policy. “Certain undergraduate courses may be audited.” Students do participate in discussions but not in exercises or graded coursework.
- Michigan State has a centrally posted policy. “A person” may enroll as a visitor with “appropriate approval.” No credit is earned. Students must enroll in the normal fashion and then request the status to be changed to “visitor.” Attendance is required. Instructors may drop students from the class.
- Policies at MIT, Dartmouth, and Brown were also checked.

## CONCLUSION

While there would appear to be interest on the part of Rutgers students for auditing opportunities, it seems that those opportunities are not apparent to most students. On the other hand, the lack of response from school registrars and the out-datedness of many of the school and department websites makes it clear that auditing policies—and opportunities—are not of great importance to most programs.

While we found some consistent policy language, the differences between programs at Rutgers (where we found them) is often significant. However in light of the different needs of individual schools,

programs, and courses, differences would seem appropriate. And individual instructors are in the best position to determine the impact of auditors on a specific course.

We have the following **concerns**, given what we found, that could warrant follow up:

- Policies, where they exist, may not be easily locatable and are outdated.
- Allowing auditors to attend classes without requiring registration or some other way of identifying who is there not only means we don't know how many students are actually auditing classes, but may be a security risk.
- Schools/Departments/Divisions may have different constraints on allowing auditing:
  - Some subject matters require consistent attendance and measurement of performance (e.g., labs, languages) that auditing policies may not be able to enforce
- Auditors may change class dynamics (positive or negative): Participation of auditors is said to affect group projects and class dynamics.
- Some schools make it possible for students to “fail” an audit (we assume to guarantee uniform participation) BUT we think this adds a layer of responsibility for faculty.
- A comparison with peer institutions suggests several policies that could make it easier for students to find information about auditing as an option.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Rutgers University Senate recommends that:

1. Decisions about which courses are available for auditing be made at the program/department level. Auditing should only be possible with the consent of the course instructor and course coordinators (when applicable).
2. The University consider an online registration system, similar to the University of Maryland's, where courses available to be audited are marked as such and students can select an audit option, if available, when registering for classes.
3. Where that is not already an option, potential auditors be required to request permission/approval from the course instructor, and that approval should then be reported to and recorded by the program office.
4. The office responsible for registration on each campus provide information regarding auditing classes on their central registration site, stating if an online system is available (recommendation #2) or that directing students to contact the course instructor (recommendation #3).
5. Deans' offices should work with their undergraduate and graduate schools to post their auditing policies on their respective websites where they would be most visible to students during the registration process.
6. The parameters of the Senior Auditing Program be clarified to make it clear that there are courses/programs that are not eligible for senior auditing.
7. The policies pertaining to senior auditors be reviewed to ensure that when a senior auditor has been admitted to a course, they have access to all required resources. The Libraries should investigate providing senior auditors with online library access to facilitate this.
8. All faculty be regularly informed of their school's/program's auditing policies and procedures. This information should be included in onboarding orientations so as to inform new faculty.