

chapter **6** **REASSESSMENT TIME/DROP DATE:**  
**Forget About "To Be or Not To Be?".**  
**The Question Now is "To Run or to Punt?"**



## chapter 6

# REASSESSMENT TIME/DROP DATE:

## Forget About "To Be or Not To Be?"

## The Question Now is "To Run or to Punt?"

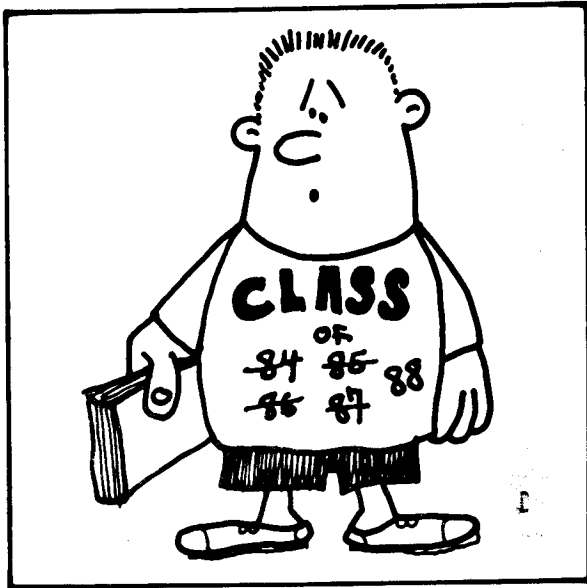
4th down and 87 yards to go; shall I punt? DECISIONS, Decisions, decisions, decisions, . . . .

On this fateful date, many students are deciding to decrease course loads (see Sections 6.1 and 6.2) or deciding to change their majors (see Section 6.3). These are really important decisions, so think them through carefully.

### 6.1 SHOULD I DECREASE THE LOAD?

#### 6.1a Minimum Load

Most schools have a minimum course load for full-time students. Check the regulations before you drop anything. If you are considering dropping below the minimum load, find out what problems this might cause you.



#### 6.1b Graduation Date

A decrease in course load can mean either an excessive load later on or an extension of your graduation date. If you extend your undergraduate education for an extra term (or some summer sessions), that need not be serious. If you drop a course which is a prerequisite in a sequence, it has more serious consequences than dropping a course which leads to nothing else. Before dropping a "prerequisite" course, consult a *good* advisor.

#### 6.1c Grade Point Average

Most courses are dropped to help maintain (or improve) the student's average. All too often it doesn't work. Dropping a course may prolong the time during which you will be forgetting prerequisite knowledge. Is a drop the only reasonable way to improve your average?

### 6.1d Your Credibility

Dropped courses usually appear on your record. But even when they don't, the reduced load will be there. This could make you appear to be a less-than-serious student, especially if you do this often. But an F is clearly worse.

### 6.1e Time for Employment (or Beer, or Movies, or . . . .)

First of all, be sure that the other activity is *more* important to you than the progress that you will lose toward your professional career. Time for employment so that you can earn enough to afford to *eat* IS that important. Most other activities are not. If financial problems are your main reason for dropping, check with your financial aid office first. Your college or other local agencies may have grants or loans that could solve temporary financial problems so that you could continue your full course of studies.

### 6.1f Professional Requirements

If you plan to go to graduate school or a professional school, the requirements are higher than just for graduation. For medical school, for example, an extremely high average must be maintained. Even if you don't plan to go further, a good average will increase the job possibilities when you graduate. If dropping a course is the *only* reasonable way to improve your grade average, it may be worthwhile.

## 6.2 THE ULTIMATE DECISION: SHOULD I DROP AND, IF SO, WHAT?

The best answer is usually "drop nothing", . . . . but there are exceptions! If you have determined that your best interests might be served by a decreased load, construct an analysis chart for your courses similar to the *example* given in Table 6.1. (Blank copies of this chart are included in the back of this book.) In this **EXAMPLE** the student has an 18 hour load (with approximately equal amounts of technical and nontechnical courses), in which he is doing poorly.

To see how this chart works, consider the first line (for a "3 hour", chemistry course). The student must decide upon the "Desired" (here an A) and the "Minimum Acceptable" (here a B) letter grades and then convert these to percents (using 95%, 85%, 75%, 65% for A through D respectively). He then enters his present grade (as a percent) and the corresponding letter equivalent. Next, he consults the course syllabus (or his professor) and finds that 2/5 of the total points possible have already been covered. Thus far he has actually been using six hours per week in out-of-class study for this course.

With this data collected, it is now possible to calculate the remaining entries. For the "Desired" chemistry grade of A the "GRADE AVG (%) NEEDED" is:

$$\frac{\text{"desired"} \quad \text{"current"} \quad \text{fraction of grade already determined}}{(95\%) - (64\%)(2/5)} \\ \text{fraction of grade not yet determined} \\ (3/5)$$

This calculates to be 116%. (Since it's greater than 100%, it just CAN'T be done). The same calculation for the "Minimum Acceptable" grade, a B for this student, shows that a 99% average for the rest of the course will get him a "B". (That borders on the impossible, but CAN be done since the 85% that we used to represent a B does leave a little cushion.)

To calculate the "NEW STUDY TIME" for this course we assume that, with proper techniques, a *proportional* increase in study time *could* raise the grade. Thus:

$$\left[ (6 \text{ hrs} + 3 \text{ hrs}) \times \left( \frac{99\%}{64\%} \right) - (3 \text{ hrs}) \right] = 10.9 \text{ hrs}$$

This is a reasonable estimate of the *new* time requirement for this course if the student is to earn a "B". **IF** the extra time is available (about 11 hrs *vs* the former 6 hrs), **AND** the student "intuitively" feels that he *can* do it, he should "go for a B"! (Note that "credit hours" were included in the calculation of "new study time", since credit hours provide a rough approximation of the "class-time equivalent of study".)

In making your decisions, consider whether or not you could truly understand, remember, and apply the material satisfactorily in the planned study time. Consider also what help you can expect from the professor and other resources. Although increased study time, especially if it involves improved study techniques, *can* help your grade, there are limits. The reason for filling in the numbers in the chart is to help you avoid unreasonable expectations. The "intuitive factor", if honestly determined, will further help you make *good* decisions.

If the student in our example (Table 6.1) *must have* an A in chemistry and *must have* an A in math, he should drop them and start all over in another term. If you redo these calculations with the *modified goals* of a B in chemistry and a B in math, you will see that averages of 99 and 97 are required respectively. The factor for increased work would require 3-5 more hours per week for each class. Will the schedule allow an increase of study time by this much? Dropping history is obviously necessary and the freed time is almost half of the other needs. If the student's "intuition" suggests that raising his average in psychology enough to get a B is most unlikely, he should plan to settle for a C. The reason for doing the calculations is to use realistic numbers instead of wishful thinking in making the correct decisions.

One final word: Under the "intuitive factor", consider whether this is the key course that makes your academic life livable. (If it's in deep grade trouble, this is rarely the case.)

### 6.3 SHOULD I CHANGE MY MAJOR?

This is a *life-long* decision. Getting yourself sterilized is also a life-long decision. Having children is a life-long decision. None of these should be taken lightly. If you are simply running away from work (as too many students do), you will probably make a dreadful mistake.

What do *you* want to do with your life? If you chose your major on this basis, **ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES AND GO AFTER YOUR GOAL!** If the major you have is not *your* goal, you will probably not make it. If it is *your* decision, however, you probably will get there. Any goal worth having will involve considerable effort. If you have identified your "superstar" areas (see Chapter 3), you are progressing toward a mature choice of major.

Table 6.1. Analysis Chart

(FOR DECISION-MAKING NEAR "DROP DEADLINE" and IN PLANNING STUDY FOR FINAL EXAMS)

COURSE	DATA						CALCULATIONS						INTUITIVE FACTOR (What do you really think you can do if you honestly try?)
	CREDIT HOURS	GRADE			PRESENT AVG. STUDY TIME [hrs/wk]	FRACTION** OF GRADE ALREADY DETERMINED*	GRADE AVG. NEEDED*** ON REMAINING WORK FOR:			NEW STUDY TIME NECESSARY FOR:			
		Desired	Minimum Acceptable	Present			Desired Grade	Minimum Grade	Desired Grade	Minimum Grade	Desired Grade	Minimum Grade	
CHEMISTRY	3	A 95	B 85	D 64	2/5	6	(116)	99	X	10.9	X	10.9	"A" IS IMPOSSIBLE CAN GET B. INCREASE WORK!
CHEM LAB	1	A 95	B 85	A 93	7/12	2	98	74	2.2	1.4	2.2	1.4	CAN KEEP A.
ENGLISH	3	B 85	C 75	C 78	3/5	4	95	70	5.5	3.3	5.5	3.3	CAN GET B. INCREASE WORK TO 5 HRS/WK!
HISTORY	3	B 85	D 65	F 17	1/2	3	(153)	(113)	X	X	X	X	FORGET IT!
MATH	4	A 95	B 85	C 77	3/5	8	(130)	97	X	11.1	X	11.1	MIGHT GET B. INCREASE WORK TO 11 HRS/WK!
PSYCH	3	B 85	C 75	D 67	1/2	3	(103)	83	X	4.4	X	4.4	GO FOR C! TRY 4 HRS/WK.
PHYS. ED.	1	Pass	Pass	Pass	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

\* If in doubt, ask the PROF.

\*\* For example, number of "points" to date divided by total possible "points".

\*\*\* Calculate "GRADE AVG. NEEDED" by: 
$$\left[ \frac{\text{grade ("desired" or "minimum")} - (\text{present grade} \times \text{fraction det'd})}{(\text{fraction remaining})} \right]$$

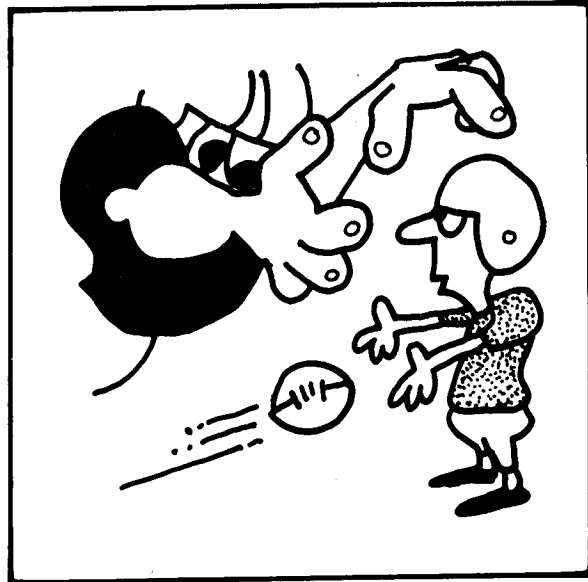
† NEW STUDY TIME = 
$$\left[ (\text{Present avg. study time} + \text{credit hours}) \times \left( \frac{\text{grade avg. needed}}{\text{present grade}} \right) - (\text{credit hours}) \right]$$

Drop date is the *worst* time to consider a change of major. Avoid the rush to “easier” majors. The job market there is flooded with too many people competing for low-paying and less challenging jobs.

#### 6.4 DECIDING ON A RUN INSTEAD OF A PUNT. (REASSESSMENT WITHOUT DROPPING COURSES)

If you considered dropping but have now decided to hang in there, there are some procedures to consider. Perhaps your efforts have not produced the results you expected. Of course, we believe that the most important procedures are those presented in the previous chapters. Before trying anything else, you should carefully check that you are *following* those suggestions. But if you have faithfully followed those suggestions, it may be time to try a bit of modification.

If your ability to remember does not seem up to par, try mixing questions and problems into the process a bit earlier. As soon as you have studied a section of material, identify a question or problem covering the material. After writing your answer, try going back over the material to see what you might have missed. Next, check your notes to be sure that your *cues* will guide you to remember *all* the material. As you review from your notes, try covering up *everything except* your cues. Can you recreate your notes from the cues only? A full rereading of textbook material is usually *not* an effective use of your time. Use a mixture of notes, outlines, and problems. Reread *important sections* of the text as needed.



If you seem to be studying the wrong material, try turning each chapter title and section heading into a question. Write these questions down before you study that section. These questions, and their answers, are most effective when used in your pre-guessing procedure. Be careful not to let a lot of details obscure the *major idea*. That is precisely why chapters are broken into sections, and sections into sub-sections, etc.

As an addition to the processes discussed previously, you might try “out loud” recitation as a way of both fixing ideas in your memory and self-testing how thoroughly you understand each section. This isn’t really new, but sometimes it’s easier to evaluate yourself if you can actually hear yourself. (If you have a tape recorder, try it in this process.)

Finally, try to find a personal interest in each of your courses. How does each course contribute to your *superstar* areas? How does it apply to your life beyond formal studies? If you can make it fun (or just less painful) you will also make it much easier.

GOOD LUCK IN THE SECOND HALF!