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Princeton University Faculty, Committee
on the Course of Study.

Report on The Proseminaries



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REPORT ON THE
PROSEMINARIES

FROM THE

Princeton University Faculty,
COMMITTEE ON THE COURSE OF STUDY

AS ADOPTED BY THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY

MARCH 4, 1907

GENTLEMEN :

It is generally true that our best students in their Senior year have reached a stage of development in which they study the subjects of their chosen departments with sufficient zeal and intensity to make it right to relieve them of one of the five courses of the regular curriculum, and that they are also ready to begin independent study. In any Department in which a Proseminary is instituted, those students of the Department who have shown themselves fit for the privilege are required to take only four courses, provided they connect themselves with the Proseminary of their Department. By so doing they are able to devote themselves more exclusively to the courses given in the Department, and also to increase their interest in those courses and in the general subject covered by the Department by beginning the independent study of some portion of that general subject.

The Proseminary should furnish each member of it an opportunity to work, for himself and by himself, under the regular guidance but not under the control of the Director, at some considerable portion of his main subject of study. Its procedure should be so regulated as to foster the student's independence even at the expense of an occasional unpunished lapse from diligence.

By a suitable assignment of subjects the Director can usually so arrange it that the subjects taken up by the members of the Proseminary are mutually supplementary, and that the reports made on any one of them will be intelligible and interesting to all.

It is to be expected that Seniors qualified for the privileges of a Proseminary will usually avail themselves of these privileges fully. No marking, grouping or ranking of the

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students in a Proseminary should be made or reported to the Registrar, but the Director should send the Registrar at the beginning of each term a list of all students enrolled in the Proseminary and at the end of each term a list of all students, stating in each case whether their work has been satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Any disciplinary regulations are as harmful as they are useless. Even in the event of the failure of a Senior to do the work of a Proseminary, no action is desirable or needed beyond his exclusion from the Proseminary.

It is in every way to be desired that each Department should conduct its Proseminary in a way suited to the judgment of that Department. Of course a Department has only one Proseminary and only one Director, even though the Proseminary may have several sections, each with a separate Instructor, and all students who are to enter any Proseminary should be sent to the Director for assignment. In case the Proseminary has several sections it should be the duty of the Director to assign each student to the section best suited to the student's desire and aptitudes. So far as may be practicable, it is also desirable that a Proseminary consisting of several sections should have a general round-up or joint session now and then,—perhaps once a month, perhaps twice a term, perhaps only once a term, but this should be left to the discretion of the Department. The less machinery that surrounds the Proseminaries, the better for their free and useful development.

The only regulations governing the Proseminaries are found on pages 103 and 249 of the current annual catalogue.

The first statement (p. 103) is brief announcement of the only general regulation governing the conduct of Proseminaries. It reads as follows:

THE PRO-SEMINARIES.

A pro-seminary will be established in some Departments for Seniors who are candidates for Final Special Honors.

Each pro-seminary will be in charge of one instructor, who shall conduct a session of the pro-seminary at least one hour each week during the term or year.

The sessions of each pro-seminary will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of work prepared by the individual members of the pro-seminary.

The second statement (p. 249) defines the eligibility of students. It reads as follows:

Final Special Honors are based on the work of the Junior and Senior years, as follows: a Junior who maintains a standing for the year not below the second group in each of the courses of his Department and a general standard not below the third general group, is entitled to be a candidate for Final Special Honors, and as such may substitute for one of the elective courses in his Senior year the Pro-seminary of his Department.

No important change needs to be made in these regulations. The following slight modifications, however, are advisable:

1. In the first regulation the words "one instructor" should be changed to "a Director."

2. A statement to the following effect should be added: "The Director shall have charge of the admission and assignment of qualified Seniors and of the work of the Proseminary generally."

"In case a pro-seminary is divided into sections, each section shall be conducted by an instructor, but the Director shall have general oversight of the Proseminary and preside at the joint sessions of the sections.

The second regulation apparently needs no amendment except the following:

3. For the words "a Junior who maintains a standing for the year not below second group in each of the courses of his Department" substitute "a Junior who maintains an

average standing for the year not below the second group in the courses of his Department."

This revision will make the two regulations read as follows:

I. A pro-seminary will be established in some Departments for Seniors who are candidates for Final Special Honors. Each pro-seminary will be in charge of a Director. A session of the pro-seminary shall be conducted at least one hour each week during the term or year.

The Director shall have charge of the admission and assignment of qualified Seniors and of the work of the pro-seminary generally. In case the pro-seminary is divided into sections, each section shall be conducted by an instructor, but the Director shall have general oversight of the pro-seminary and preside at the joint sessions of the sections.

The sessions of each pro-seminary will be devoted to the presentation and discussion of work prepared by the individual members of the pro-seminary.

II. Final Special Honors are based on the work of the Junior and Senior years, as follows: a Junior who maintains an average standing for the year not below the second group in the courses of his Department and a general standing not below the third general group, is entitled to be a candidate for Final Special Honors, and as such may substitute for one of the elective courses in his Senior year the pro-seminary of his Department.

No other modifications of our published statement seem necessary.

One other difficulty, however, has arisen which needs to be met. It occasionally happens that a Senior is eligible for the pro-seminary in either of two Departments and prefers the pro-seminary which lies outside the Department of his Senior courses. It also occasionally happens that a Senior has shown such unusual ability and special interest in some subject outside the one Department to which he is eligible under our rules for pro-seminaries, that he desires to pursue the pro-seminary in that particular outside subject. The cases are few, but are important, because they are always instances of Seniors of high ability and strong desires. But we do not need to alter our rules to handle these exceptional cases. No exceptions should be made except on special recommendation from the Department conducting the Pro-seminary to which admission is sought and the approval of the Committee on the Course of Study.

