Graduate Exceptions

The main purpose of an exception is to fulfill the requirements of the student’s degree plan along with the mission of the student’s program. Thus, there must be a compelling, valid reasoning for altering an approved Bulletin for an individual student. The "Comment" portion of a request should be authentic, accurate and well researched to support the request. Requests for exceptions that are not well founded (e.g. appear to have the purpose only of propelling the student forward in the program) are very likely to be denied. The graduate school can offer assistance, but that assistance will often be somewhat generic since it is the program, and not the graduate school, that has the detailed understanding of curricula required to initiate exception requests.

Note (i) that a student’s situation can be unique and therefore this primer is somewhat generic and (ii) the information in this primer is based on current policy which can change.

Types of exceptions

- **Allow Course Taken Prior to Admission to Count**
  - Used when a course was completed prior to the student’s matriculation term for the program. By default, Degree Works will exclude these courses from applying toward degree requirements
  - Time limits
    - Master - 6 years
    - Doctoral - 8 years
  - Grade expectation > C
  - Possible rationale
    - Course taken prior to acceptance into program, does not count towards another degree
    - Readmitted student
    - Change in degree program from PHD to MS
  - Be aware of time frame and if the course work is still relevant
  - Form: Substitution/Waiver

- **Waiver - Course**
  - Used when a course or requirement is officially not being required of the student and no other coursework will be used to fulfill the requirement
  - Does not change the minimum credit hours required for the degree
  - Possible rationale
    - Student completed similar course work for previous degree
    - Course completed at outside institution
    - Experiential waiver
    - Relevant material previously completed
    - Course no longer offered (removed from current bulletin)
  - Cannot waive a course based on the completion of another required course in the degree program. If this is an issue, please review bulletin and make appropriate changes.
  - Form: Substitution/Waiver
• **Waiver - Course Credits**
  o Waive a portion of credits specified for a requirement.
  o Does not change the minimum credit hours required for the degree
  o Possible rationale
    • Course fulfills requirement, waive remaining credits
  o Usually paired with a substitution (e.g. 2 credits substitute for 3 credit course)
  o Form: Substitution/Waiver

• **Waiver - Degree Credits**
  o Cannot be waived

• **Waiver - Degree Rule**
  o Cannot be waived

• **Substitution**
  o Used when one specific course is acceptable for use in place of another specific course or requirement.
  o Course numbers not necessarily a consideration, it is more important that the courses be similar
  o Course grading system *per se* (A/B/C, S/U/F, P/F) not relevant
  o Course grades are highly relevant. Courses graded A, B, S or P are fine generally for substitution. Courses graded C, D, U or F are unlikely to be eligible for substitution.
  o Except in rare circumstances, courses must be graded to be considered eligible for substitution
  o Possible rationale
    • Similar course
    • Equivalent course
    • Similar course content
    • Same curricular goals
  o *Courses must be truly similar to substitute. Review course catalog for additional information.*
  o *If you are making the same substitution consistently then the bulletin needs to be reviewed and updated.*
  o Form: Substitution/Waiver

**Degree Types** - [http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reghs/grad/degree-definitions/](http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reghs/grad/degree-definitions/)

**Transfer Credit** - [http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reghs/grad/transfer-credit/](http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-reghs/grad/transfer-credit/)
  • Form: Special Action

*all exception requests should be relevant to the degree program and will be reviewed by the Graduate School for validity*

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