The Graduation Appeals Committee (GAC) is a standing subcommittee of the Academic Standards and Curriculum Review Committee (ASCRC), which derives its authority from the By-laws of the Faculty Senate.

Section III. 3.c.1 of the Faculty Senate By-laws gives the GAC the authority to “grant exceptions to the faculty rules for graduation, admission, and readmission.” Its function is stated as: “Petitions for exceptions to the rules governing admission, graduation, retention, and readmission shall be reviewed and acted upon by the subcommittee.

The committee primarily deals with University requirements for graduation, including general education requirements, academic policies and procedures, minimum credits for graduation, and residency requirements. The academic policies and procedures have not changed significantly in six years (see appendix). Occasionally there are petitions to use earlier catalogues that must be dealt with on a case by case basis. The Associate Registrar will research and provide the applicable policies for review by the committee.

I. GENERAL PERSPECTIVES

Policies determining standards for admission, readmission, General Education Requirements, late withdrawal from classes and transfer credits are developed in various faculty and administration committees, and form the structure of the educational environment on campus. The Graduation Appeals Committee was formed to give the structure enough flexibility to adjust to exceptional circumstances, gaps, omissions, or vague language, and to mistakes made by the people implementing the policies.

The underlying operating assumption of the Graduation Appeals Committee is that the University policy governing the particular issue will be followed unless there are compelling reasons to set it aside. Students should understand that any petition that is submitted is a request for an exception to requirements that the rest of the student population has to fulfill. In fairness to students who
sometimes with substantial inconvenience) fulfill all requirements, exceptions will not be granted for reasons of simple inconvenience, student mistakes, or other weak reasons.

**General Education Designations or the lack thereof are not subject to appeal.**

Students who petition to be exempt from the Upper-Division Writing Proficiency Assessment must have the recommendation of the Director of the Writing Center in addition to their Advisor, Department Chair, and Dean's recommendations. The Director of the Writing Center will provide information regarding the efforts of the students to meet the requirement. It is expected that students will attempt remediation from the Writing Center and make every reasonable effort to achieve the expected standard of writing before a petition will be considered.

**II. PRECEDENTS**

The Graduation Appeals Committee is an equity court. Petitions that are approved have specialized and unique circumstances surrounding the particular situation. In every petition, GAC looks at a number of different factors, many of them specific to the individual student. Neither students nor faculty advisors should assume that simply because one petition was successful, another requesting the same exception is guaranteed success. If GAC notices a pattern in appeals, it may communicate to ASCRC or the Department involved regarding the possible need to seek a policy change through the appropriate channels.

**III. PETITIONS**

The Petition must be filled out completely, and all signatures (student’s advisor, department chair, and dean) obtained before the Committee will consider the request. The three levels of signatures serve as screening, not simply advocacy.

**IV. STANDARD**

The standards applied by the Graduation Appeals Committee consist of a fourfold test. Every petition is a request for an exception, and for each request GAC will ask whether the request is **exceptional**, **compelling**, **necessary** and **verifiable**.

A) Is it **exceptional**? While this cannot be defined completely (if it could, there would be no reason for a committee), a few common things that are not considered exceptional can be mentioned. First, **inconvenience** is not a strong enough reason to set aside University policy. For instance, a student in his or her last semester will not be excused from a general education requirement because the class time conflicts with his or her job. Other students have planned for the requirements and granting an exception to those who did not would be unjust. Second, **ignorance** of the requirement is no excuse. The Graduation Appeals Committee receives a number of petitions in which the student, in his or her final year, suddenly discovers that a class they assumed was a “W” class (because “I had to do a lot of writing’) isn’t, and then want it counted as one. It is the responsibility of the student to work out his or her own educational requirements. The Graduation Appeals Committee will not favor confusion and incompetence in its decision making.
B) Is it compelling? There can be exceptional circumstances that are not compelling enough to approve a petition. For example, a student attempted for three semesters to get into an upper-division “W” class, and it was full each time. As she approached her last semester, she had a time conflict with the class (which she could now get into because of the senior preference in registration). While there are somewhat exceptional circumstances here, there were several other classes she could take to fulfill the requirement. This leads to the third condition.

C) Is it necessary? Circumstances may be exceptional and compelling, but the requested exception may still not be necessary. For instance, a student was mistakenly informed that he or she had enough Perspective IV classes, but discovers upon filling out graduation forms that he or she does not, will not necessarily be granted an exemption. In this case, there is still an entire year in which the student can take a class that will fulfill the requirement. So while the circumstances are exceptional and compelling, the exception to University policy is still not necessary.

D) Finally, is it verifiable? Petitions need to be clearly written, the actual request clearly and succinctly stated, the circumstance clearly outlined, and documentation supporting the case supplied. If a student, for instance, claims he/she was misadvised, a letter from the advisor ought to be included. Students are responsible for building their case, and a petition filled with nothing but unsupported claims has very little chance of success.

V. THE REGISTRAR
The Registrar or Designee is the non-voting secretary of the Graduation Appeals Committee and the petitions are available in the Registrar’s Office. It is appropriate for the Registrar’s Office to review petitions and return them to students if they are incomplete, lacking essential information/verification, or do not have the required signatures.