

## Graduation and General Education Appeals Committee General Policies and Procedures

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The Graduation and General Education Appeals Committee (GGEAC) 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.

The Committee is established under Section III. A .3.c.1 of the Faculty Senate By-laws. As stated in the By-laws, the Committee has power to grant exceptions to the faculty rules for graduation, general education, admission, retention, and readmission. The Committee consists of three faculty members and one student: the current Chair and Chair-elect of the ASCRC (voting members), one student (voting member) and the immediate past chair of ASCRC (non-voting member). The Registrar or the Registrar's designee serves as non-voting recorder.

The Committee hears student petitions for exceptions to University requirements for graduation, including general education requirements, academic policies and procedures, minimum credits for graduation, and residency requirements. The Committee also reviews petitions to use earlier catalogues. The Associate Registrar will research and provide the applicable policies for review by the committee.

### I. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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 and General Education Appeals Committee serves to provide the structure for enough flexibility to adjust to exceptional, compelling, and verifiable circumstances when necessary. Appeals are of two sorts: a student who is nearing graduation may petition to set aside particular graduation requirements on exceptional, compelling, and verifiable grounds; students with disabilities who are registered with Disability Services for Students may petition at any time in their college career to request an accommodation in the form of substitutions for General Education requirements that their disability has prevented them from completing. (Note: substitutions for *major* and *minor* requirements for all students fall within the jurisdiction of major departments or programs).

- A. With regard to **graduation** appeals, the underlying operating assumption of the Graduation and General Education Appeals Committee is that the University policy governing the particular issue will be followed unless there are exceptional, compelling, and verifiable reasons to set it aside.

- Students should understand that any petition submitted is a request for an exception to requirements that other students must fulfill. Every year, students graduate having fulfilled all requirements, often with substantial effort in adverse circumstances. In fairness to those students, exceptions to graduation requirements will not be granted merely for reasons of inconvenience, ignorance, error, or confusion. Petitions for General Education substitutions should specify the course(s) proposed as a substitute so that the GGEAC may determine whether it constitutes a reasonable facsimile of the learning objectives of the original General Education course. The appeals process must not be a method to avoid rigorous classes or one that fails to provide the student with a general education in the spirit of the original requirements. Substitute courses should be in a cognate subject to the extent possible.
- B. Petitions for **general education substitutions** on the grounds of disability are handled much in the same way that other accommodation requests are processed. This process, then, necessarily begins with the student registering with the Office of Disability Equity (ODE).
- In the event a particular General Education group or course proves to be a barrier to a registered ODE student, the student may work with ODE and their academic advisor(s) to identify a possible substitution to complete the requirement. Students are encouraged to start this process early in their academic career. To begin the process the student should file a General Education Substitution petition. This petition may be filed well before graduation, and the student is encouraged to file as soon as they believe the requirements in Section IV B are met. Such petitions must demonstrate how the learning outcomes of the substitute course provide a reasonable modification to those of the General Education course or sequence in question.
  - A student registered with ODE should generate the request for an accommodation in consultation with Disability Services. Requests must be accompanied by a letter from ODE to verify the functional limitations of the student's disability and of the request for an accommodation. The student's request must establish a logical link between the disability's functional limitations and the accommodation requested.
  - The GGEAC will determine whether a proposed course substitution provides a reasonable facsimile for the learning objectives of the original General Education course. As in the case of other petitions for course substitutions, the process must not be a method to avoid rigorous classes or one that fails to provide the student with a general education in the spirit of the original requirements. Substitute courses should be in a cognate subject to the extent possible.

## II. PRECEDENTS

In the case of **graduation appeals**, the GGEAC functions as an equity court, neither following precedents nor establishing them, only "letting right be done" in exceptional, compelling, and verifiable situations where a strict application of policies, procedures, or rules would impose an undue and unjustifiable burden on a student. It follows, then, that neither students nor faculty nor advising staff should assume that an exception granted in one case will necessarily be granted in another case, no matter how similar the circumstances may appear.

In the matter of ODE based **substitutions for general education courses**, however, prior practice may provide useful examples of courses substituted for particular requirements. Nevertheless, petitions for General Education substitutions on the grounds of disability should demonstrate the appropriateness of the requested course substitute(s) for the individual case.

### III. PETITIONS

In most cases, **graduation appeals** are heard as a student nears graduation; **appeals for general education substitutions on disability grounds**, on the other hand, may and indeed should be submitted well in *advance* of a student applying for graduation. In either case, the petition must be filled out completely, and all signatures (student's departmental advisor, department chair, and dean) obtained before the Committee will consider the request. These signatures reflect that the signatories have reviewed the petition and ascertained that it is clearly worded and that all appropriate documentation is present. They are not intended to be endorsements of the petition, and will not be interpreted as such, although signatories may, if they choose, provide a separate supporting letter to be submitted with the petition. Neither the Dean nor the dean's designate may sign as the petitioner's advisor.

### IV. STANDARDS

- A. For **graduation appeals**, a threefold test will be applied. The petition should demonstrate that the case is exceptional, compelling, and verifiable. Every such petition is a request for an exception, and the petitioner must justify the exception by establishing (with appropriate documentation) three circumstances:
  - That the petitioner made an effort in good faith to satisfy graduation requirements as written.
  - That the failure of compliance with the requirement(s) in question was due to circumstances beyond the petitioner's control.
  - That obliging the petitioner to meet the requirement now would impose an unreasonable burden on them.
- B. Petitions for ODE based **general education substitutions** will be evaluated using the following criteria:
  - There must be a verified need for a substitution. The student should provide a verification letter from ODE stating that a substitution for the General Education course is reasonable in this specific case. The student's functional limitation should be relevant to the requested General Education substitution and there should not be another General Education course in the same group that a student with the given functional limitation could be reasonably expected to successfully complete.
  - The suggested substitution should meet as closely as possible the intended learning objectives of the original General Education course. The petition must demonstrate that the proposed substitution is reasonable with supporting documentation. The GGEAC will then determine whether the substitution is acceptable.

All petitions from both groups must be clearly written, the specific action requested stated plainly and succinctly, and supported with documentation. ODE based petitions must include a letter from Disability Services verifying their request for reasonable accommodations. Students are responsible for building their case; a petition with unsupported claims has little chance of success.

### V. THE REGISTRAR

The Registrar or Designee is the non-voting secretary of the Graduation and Curricular Appeals Committee and the petitions are available in the Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office will review petitions and return them to students if they are incomplete or unclear, or lack essential information or documentation, including the required signatures.

## **VI REPORTING**

The ASCRC Chair will provide ASCRC with a report of the appeals considered at the end of the year. The report will be appended to ASCRC's annual report. The report will include the number of appeals from each unit, the reason for the appeal, and whether successful, denied, or required further verification. The Committee should note whether there are issues that can be addressed by ASCRC to improve the student experience and remove the need for the appeal.