POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The following policies and procedures relate to graduate academics at Penn, and are organized by topic.

Most academic polices and procedures at Penn are school-based. University policies (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/) are also often administered through the schools. Students should consult with their school or graduate group with questions or for help in understanding academic policies and procedures.

Course Numbering and Academic Credit

Course Numbering

Courses are designated with a subject code and course number. The number assigned to a course generally denotes its level and may also indicate a course type.

- 0001-3999 Undergraduate courses
- 4000-4999 Mixed courses primarily for Undergraduate students
- 5000-5999 Mixed courses primarily for Graduate students
- 6000-9899 Graduate courses
- 9900-9999 Graduate individual study (thesis/dissertation) courses

Academic Credit at Penn

All of Penn's undergraduate programs and many of its graduate and professional programs use course units (CUs) as a general measure of academic work and progress toward a degree. Penn's use of CUs conforms to the practices of peer institutions that use a similar system of academic credit including Brown, Duke, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale. A CU is a general measure of academic work over a period of time, typically a term (semester or summer).

The Schools of Law, Dental Medicine, and Veterinary Medicine do not use CUs. The Law School uses credit hours in a way that is consistent with law schools in the United States. The Schools of Dental Medicine and Veterinary Medicine uses credit hours in ways that are consistent with professional education in those fields of study.

Definition of a Course Unit

A course unit (CU) is a general measure of academic work over a period of time, typically a term (semester or summer). A CU (or a fraction of a CU) represents different types of academic work across different types of academic programs and is the basic unit of progress toward a degree. One CU is usually converted to a four-semester-hour course. A degree from one of Penn's undergraduate programs requires the completion of 32 to 40 (or more) course units. Graduate and professional degrees vary in the number of years of study and the number of CUs required.

Assignment of Academic Credit

The course unit (CU) value of a course determined by the faculty reflects their judgment regarding the expected work of a student completing that course. Factors that may be considered when assigning academic credit for a course include scheduled class time, expected time outside of class, the difficulty and range of materials covered, and the mastery of specific knowledge through written reports, exams, and other evaluations.

The assignment of academic credit for a course is formally approved by the curriculum committee (or similar body) of the school when a course is first proposed. It is reviewed formally by the faculty of a program, department, or school through periodic program reviews or curriculum revisions. Additionally, it is reviewed by the faculty of a program, department, or school informally as part of ongoing assessments of curriculum and teaching effectiveness.

Transfer Credit

At the University of Pennsylvania, faculty in individual departments and schools make decisions about awarding credit for external courses (courses taken at a college or university other than Penn). Each school has policies and procedures for evaluating and awarding external credit. Judging both course content and student work, faculty determine whether external courses are equivalent to courses offered through their own departments and thus what credit, if any, to award. In awarding credit at Penn for external courses, faculty also determine how those credits may be used (e.g., whether they satisfy general education requirements or requirements in a major).

Undergraduate schools use a web-based, password protected application called the External Course Approval Tool, or (http://www.college.upenn.edu/xcat/) XCAT (https://www.college.upenn.edu/academics/academic-options/campus-options/xcat-external-credit-approval-tool/). When academic credit is awarded for courses taken at other institutions, typically courses worth 3, 4, or 5 semester hours or worth 5 quarter hours are awarded one course unit (CU) at Penn.

Incomplete Grades

School specific policies:

- The School of Engineering and Applied Science (https://grad.seas.upenn.edu/student-handbook/academic-requirements/)
- The School of Nursing (https://www.nursing.upenn.edu/students/handbooks-forms/msndnp-handbook/academic-regulations/#Incomplete%20Policy)
- The School of Social Policy and Practice (https://sp2.upenn.edu/masters-student-handbook/)
- The Weitzman School of Design (https://www.design.upenn.edu/student-handbook/academic-performance/)
- The Wharton School (MBA) (https://mba-inside.wharton.upenn.edu/wharton-mba-academic-policies/)

Leaves of Absence and Withdrawal

Leaves of Absence

Leaves of absence for PhD students are governed by University policy (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/phdstudentleaveofabsence/). PhD students are also eligible for Family Leave and New Parent Accommodation per University policy (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/family-friendly-policies-phd-students/). Leave of absence policies for professional students vary by school. Professional students should consult the policies in their schools and programs.

Academic Good Standing and Academic Withdrawal

The minimum standard for satisfactory work for the Graduate Faculties for PhD students is a B average in each academic year, but the graduate group may set additional requirements that determine advancement; these requirements may require a PhD student to withdraw despite a satisfactory grade average, if the quality of the PhD student's work is not at a level that predicts successful degree completion.

PhD students whose grades are not meeting minimum requirements or who are not satisfactorily meeting other graduate group requirements

will receive a communication at the end of the academic term or year regarding their academic probation, along with an outline for what actions need to be taken in order to return to academic good standing, and a timeline for doing so. PhD students receiving such a communication are responsible for working with their advisor and/or graduate group chair to improve academic performance. PhD students who do not return to academic good standing within the time frame outlined may be withdrawn by the graduate group.

School specific policies:

- Annenberg School for Communication (https://www.asc.upenn.edu/policies-resources/graduate-student-handbooks/)
- School of Arts and Sciences
- School of Design (https://www.design.upenn.edu/student-handbook/academic-performance/)
- Graduate School of Education (https://onepenn.gse.upenn.edu/student-services/policies/grading-policies/)
- School of Engineering and Applied Science (http://www.seas.upenn.edu/graduate/handbook/g-academic-requirements.php)
- Perelman School of Medicine (Biomedical Graduate Studies) (https://www.med.upenn.edu/bgs/academic-information/)
- School of Nursing (http://www.nursing.upenn.edu/student-services/resources/handbooks-forms-policies/phd-handbook/academic-regulations/)
- School of Social Policy & Practice (https://www.sp2.upenn.edu/resources/phd-student-handbook/academics/#GradesandAcademicSta)
- The Wharton School (https://doctoral-inside.wharton.upenn.edu/policies-procedures/)

Penn Book Policies

Academic Rules

- Academic Rules for PhD Programs (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/academic-rules-phd/)
- Academic Rules for Research Master's Programs (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/academic-rules-research-masters/)

Course and Exam Related Policies

- Rules Governing Final Examinations (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/final-examinations/)
- Policy on Secular and Religious Holidays (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/secular-religious-holidays/)

Teaching

- Evaluation and Certification of the English Fluency of Undergraduate Instructional Personnel (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/evaluation-certification-english-fluency-undergraduate-instructional-personnel/)
- Guide to Graduate Student Appointments (https://www.finance.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/Tax-Withholding-on-Graduate-Stipends.pdf)

Research

- Fairness of Authorship Credit in Collaborative Faculty-Student Publications for PhD, AM, and MS Students (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/fairness-authorship-credit-collaborative-faculty-student-publications-phd-am-ms-students/)
- Guidelines for Research in the Community (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/guidelines-research-community/)
- Guidelines for Student Protection in Sponsored Research Projects (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/protection-sponsored-research/)
- Patent and Tangible Research Property Policies and Procedures (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/patent-tangible-research-property-policies-procedures/)
- Policy Regarding Human Subject Research in the Sociobehavioral Sciences (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/human-subject-research/)
- Procedures Regarding Misconduct in Research for Nonfaculty members of the Research Community (https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/misconduct-non-faculty/)