

COURSE SUBSTITUTIONS & COURSE WAIVERS

I. Policy Section

7.0 Instruction

II. Policy Subsection

7.19 Course Substitutions and Course Waivers Policy

III. Policy Statement

Students are expected to complete their program curriculum outlined in the Grand Rapids Community College Catalog according to their plan of study and academic year. Programs are carefully organized and reviewed to ensure that the curriculum is staying abreast to our changing society. In some cases, a substitution or waiver can be used to assist students in overcoming barriers to complete a degree and/or certificate.

- Course substitutions are approved in the context of the program requirements and must maintain the integrity of the program as substituted courses must provide a learning experience that is significantly similar to the required course

- Course waivers are approved when the student has provided proof of their competencies/experiences for a particular course required for a program

- Students who are granted substitutions must still earn the total credit hours required for their academic program.

IV. Reason for the Policy

- Need for standards and criteria that are consistent across the College in order to ensure the integrity of GRCC degrees.
- Need to ensure that GRCC students, at the time of graduation, have the skills and knowledge they need for work or transfer.

V. Entities Affected by this Policy

GRCC Students
Department Heads/Program Directors
Academic Administration

Student Records/Registrar's Office
Academic Advising & Transfer Center
TRIO Student Support Services
Occupational Support Services
Disability Support Services
Faculty/Staff

VI. Who Should Read this Policy

GRCC Students
Department Heads/Program Directors
Academic Administration
Student Records/Registrar's Office
Academic Advising & Transfer Center
Faculty/Staff

VII. Related Documents

7.20 Graduation Requirements Policy
8.5 Catalog Year Policy
8.26 Multiple Degrees Policy
8.31 Minimum Institutional Credit Policy
GRCC Catalog
Petition for Exception to College Graduation Requirements
Course Substitutions and Course Waivers FAQs
Course Substitutions and Course Waivers Process Flow Charts

VIII. Contacts

Policy Owner: Registrar
Associate Deans
Department Head/Program Directors
Academic Advisors
Associate Provost of Instructional Support and Institutional Planning (ISIP)

IX. Definitions

Course Substitution - A course substitution allows students to use an alternative course to meet a program requirement.

Course Waiver - A course waiver allows students to graduate without completing a graduation requirement or a program requirement.

X. Procedures

A. Guidelines and Procedures for Course Substitutions

1. Students are encouraged to meet with their program faculty member/advisor regarding course substitution requests.

2. Course substitution requests are submitted using the Online Course Substitution and Waiver Form via the Online Student Center.
3. All institutional graduation requirement waivers must be approved by the Associate Provost of ISIP or their designee.
4. Department course substitutions are first approved by the DH/PD of the student's declared program. This approval is followed by the School Associate Dean's approval. If the request is for a general education course, then the Associate Provost of ISIP makes the final approval.
5. The Registrar or their designee will review the substitution(s) request for general education courses when a student has a Bachelor's degree on record and for substitutions involving the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA)
6. A course may only be used once as a substitution for each program.
7. Program requirements for minimum course grades must be met. If no program grade requirements are specified, a grade of C or higher will be required.
8. Substitutions can only be made if the program learning outcomes are maintained.
9. Substitutions can only be granted using GRCC courses or evaluated transfer courses.
10. If a substitution is requested for a particular general education distribution course, another course in that distribution category may be substituted if the program learning outcomes can still be achieved.
11. All course substitutions requested for articulated programs must also be approved by the articulated transfer institution in writing and is expected when the initial substitution is requested.
12. When advising, faculty members are encouraged to work with students to determine any impact regarding course transferability when requesting a course substitution.
13. The final deadline for substitution approvals is the last day of the semester in which the student plans to graduate.
14. One (1) course may be substituted per certificate. See
15. Three (3) courses may be substituted per degree; however, courses that meet GRCC or their home institution's General Education requirements, but do not have a direct equivalent at GRCC are not capped. One General Education credit must be taken at GRCC to receive the MTA indicator on the GRCC Official Transcript.
16. Requests for exceptions to the maximum number of course substitution(s) allowed per program as noted above can be submitted using the Petition for Exception to College Graduation Requirements form available from the Registrar's Office.

B. Guidelines and Procedures for Course Waivers

1. Students are encouraged to meet with their program faculty member/advisor regarding course waiver requests.
2. Course waiver requests are submitted using the Online Course

Substitution and Waiver Form via the Online Student Center.

3. All institutional graduation requirement waivers must be approved by the Associate Provost of ISIP or their designee.
4. Department course waivers are first approved by the DH/PD of the student's declared program. This approval is followed by the School Associate Dean's approval. If the request is for a general education course, then the Associate Provost of ISIP makes the final approval.
5. The Registrar or their designee will make approvals for waiver(s) of general education courses when a student has a Bachelor's degree on record.
6. Waivers cannot be used for the Michigan Transfer Agreement (MTA)
7. Waivers can only be made if the program learning outcomes are maintained.
8. All course waivers requested for articulated programs must also be approved by the articulated transfer institution in writing and is expected when the initial substitution is requested.
9. When advising, faculty members are encouraged to work with students to determine any impact regarding course transferability when requesting a course waiver.
10. The final deadline for waiver approvals is the last day of the semester in which the student plans to graduate.
11. One (1) course may be waived per certificate.
12. Three (3) courses may be waived per degree.
13. Requests for exceptions to the maximum number of course waiver(s) allowed per program as noted above can be submitted using the Petition for Exception to College Graduation Requirements form available from the Registrar's Office.

XI. Forms

Online Course Substitution and Waiver Form

XII. Effective Date

Start of Fall Semester 2025

XIII. Policy History

Approved at AGC on November 10, 2015; implemented start of Fall Semester 2016

Reviewed by AGC in 2020-21; updated policy approved on February 9, 2021; implemented Fall 2021

Reviewed by AGC in 2024-2025; updated policy approved on February 11, 2025; implemented Fall 2025

XIV. Next Review/Revision Date

2027-28 Academic Year