

Prelim Breadth Requirement: Opting Out

A student who has taken equivalent graduate level course(s) at another university may petition the GPC to "opt out" of breadth courses required toward the Preliminary Exam breadth component. A student wishing to opt out of course(s) must apply for the opt-out within his/her first semester.

- I. The request for opt-out should be sent as early as possible after the student joins our PhD program, but in any case should be sent no later than the end of the first semester. We strongly suggest that it should be initiated within the first four weeks of the student's arrival at UD.
- II. All communication with the GPC regarding the Prelims and the opt-out process should be done directly by the student in question and not by the student's advisor.
- III. The student should send a separate email to the GPC for each course for which opt-out is being requested. Attachments may be used if necessary, but the student should avoid sending multiple emails for the same course
- IV. The opt-out request must include the following information:
 - 1) Name and number of the Prelims breadth course at UD for which opt-out is requested.
 - 2) Name, number, and official course description, of a similar course taken by the student at another institution, as a basis for the opt-out request.
 - 3) Name of the institution where the course was taken.
 - 4) The language in which the course was taught. Also indicate what is the normal language of instruction for most courses at that institution.
 - 5) A copy of the student's transcript at that institution.
 - 6) The dates when the course was taken (including start & end dates), whether it was for a semester/quarter/trimester etc., number of credits, and the grade obtained in that course.
 - 7) The grading scheme at the institution where the course was taken, e.g., whether letter grades A, B, C, etc. are used, whether or not plus/minus grading (e.g. B+, B-) is used. A Web URL is sufficient if it points directly to the relevant information.
 - 8) The grading criterion used by the course instructor, if such criterion is made public by the instructor, e.g., if an A grade corresponds to a certain minimum percentage score (such as 95%) in the course, or if the grading is done on a curve.
 - 9) The textbook used in the course (if any) and a detailed syllabus for the course (a short paragraph description as found in the course catalog is not sufficient).

10) Any other relevant information that the student can provide about the course (such as the course web site, homework /exams /projects etc.) that would improve the student's case for opt out.

V. For a course to even be considered as a basis for an opt-out, certain MINIMUM requirements must be met:

1) The course at the other institution must be a graduate course.

2) The student must have obtained a minimum grade of A- (or equivalent to A-) in the course. While different institutions adopt different grading schemes, the GPC will make the final determination of whether the student's grade meets this criterion.

The requirements listed above are minimum requirements. Meeting them means the GPC will consider the opt-out request, but it does not imply that the opt-out request will be granted.

VI. The GPC will decide on the appropriate action for determining if the student can opt out of the course. In some cases, the GPC may decide to deny or grant the opt-out request outright. In most cases, the student will be asked to take an exam on the course material.

VII. If the GPC decides that the student must take an exam, the GPC will forward the request to a faculty member in the relevant area to administer the exam. Normally this will be the faculty member teaching the course in the current semester. If the course is not being taught in the current semester, or if the current course instructor is not available for some reason (e.g. is on sabbatical), the GPC may request another faculty member who has recently taught the course or who will teach it in the next semester. As far as possible, the GPC will avoid sending the request to the student's research advisor.

VIII. The GPC's request to the instructor asking for an evaluation of the student will include the student's transcript, all the course material and any other relevant course information provided by the student. The request will also include a copy of this document describing the evaluation process.

IX. The instructor asked to do the evaluation will meet with the student as early as possible and explain the testing process to the student. The instructor will give an exam to the student to evaluate whether the student's knowledge of the course material is equivalent to that reflected by a grade of B+ or above in the equivalent UD CISC course.

X. Below are the standard guidelines for the testing process:

1) The exam given to the student may be oral or written.

2) The exam is expected to test the student's knowledge of the entire course material. The exam may be the final exam in the breadth course given at the end of the current semester, or it may be a combination of mid-semester and final exams in the course, or similar in extent.

3) An oral exam may be given in situations where there is no final exam in the class, the final exam is not comprehensive, or other circumstances. The oral exam should be thorough enough to assess the student's knowledge of the entire course material.

XI. After the testing process is complete, the instructor will email the GPC with the result, indicating whether or not the evaluation result is equivalent to a grade of B+ or better in our course. The GPC will then issue its decision for the course, either opt-out granted or opt-out not granted, by email to the student

The GPC will decide on the appropriate action for determining if the student can opt out of the course. In some cases, the GPC may decide to deny or grant the opt-out request outright. In most cases, the student will be asked to take an exam on the course material. The exam may be oral or written and it will test the student's knowledge of the entire course material. Normally the GPC will refer the student to a faculty member in the relevant area to administer the exam. If the result of the exam corresponds to a grade of B+ or better on the course, then the GPC will grant the student an opt-out for the course.

The opt-out courses are not used in the breadth GPA computation. A student who has been granted opt out from a course will not be allowed to take the same course again as a part of their Prelims Exam course component.

A student who successfully opts out of all courses needed to fulfill the breadth requirement is deemed to have completed the requirements for the Preliminary Breadth Requirement component of the Preliminary Exam (even though there will be no GPA to compute).