

SOAR navigation instructions for substitution/exception forms: <https://www.usm.edu/advisement-center/dps-workflow.php>

A. INTRODUCTION

To earn a degree or minor, students are required to complete all requirements in the degree/program plan published in the Bulletin for their catalog year. SACSCOC accreditation requires accurate and truthful representation of the requirements to complete a program of study. These requirements are presented in the University Bulletins. It is prohibited to apply requirements differently across students by granting individual exceptions to publicized requirements.

level. More advanced courses in a discipline are often more specialized and narrower in scope and may not cover the breadth or range of topics in a 100/200 level course. For example, ENG 470 (Studies in

USMcourses

- ✓ "Due to under-enrollment, Course X was cancelled in fall. Course X is required without other options on the degree plan, it is only offered in the fall, and student is scheduled to graduate in the spring."

Note: While this may be a rationale for an individual student, it suggests a larger issue with the course-rotation schedule, or the number of sections offered based on demand. Programs need to schedule required courses, so they can be offered predictably.

- ✓ "Course X is no longer offered since Course Y has replaced this requirement effective since the 2018-2019. Bulletin. Teach-out plan (attached) specifies that students under older bulletins who cannot change their Bulletin year will substitute Course Y for Course X."

Note: If many students will be affected by this degree plan modification and the substitution is clearly specified on the teach-out plan, the program should request a standing substitution from the Director, through the Dean, to the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness.

INSUFFICIENT RATIONALES

- ✗ "This substitution is necessary for the student to graduate on time."

Note: Students must complete the degree plan requirements on time to "graduate on time." Helping a student to graduate by a certain semester in and of itself is not an appropriate rationale.

- ✗ "Substitute Course X for Course Y." / "Move course X from general electives to major elective."

Note: These are only directives that address neither equivalency nor rationale.

- ✗ "Program accepts this course as a substitute." / "Course X is an acceptable substitute for course Y."

Note: These neither address equivalency nor rationale. Statements must explain **why** the program considers the substitution to be acceptable, both in terms of equivalency and rationale.

- ✗ "Course Y is a designated WI at USM [although it is not the WI course required by the student's degree plan]"

Note: Being WI-designated (or SI-designated) demonstrates only equivalency for the GEC WI (or SI) category. A rationale must be provided for deviating from the course requirements of the student's degree plan. Programs should endeavor to allow more flexible degree requirements where possible by completing a degree plan modification through Academic Council.

5. Write the rationale in a manner understandable to potential external reviewers.

For both the equivalency and rationale statements, avoid program-specific abbreviations. Do not assume the reviewer is familiar with the course content or knows the degree plan for each catalog year. If justifications cite degree plan changes, the effective Bulletin year should be mentioned.

- ✓ "Course X is no longer offered since Course Y has replaced this requirement *effective since the 2018-2019. Bulletin*. Teach-out plan (see attached) specifies that students under older bulletins who cannot change their Bulletin year will substitute Course Y for Course X."

6. Keep justification brief and clear.

Avoid redundant and superfluous explanations in the equivalency and rationale boxes and limit attachments and supplemental information to what is relevant for the justification. For example, when the box is checked for "Transfer course from an accredited institution," that is a sufficient rationale and extra explanation is generally undesirable.

7. Take responsibility for misadvisement.

Substitution requests based on misadvisement may be considered with evidence. In the rare case that a student has been misadvised that the wrong course would satisfy the requirement in the student's degree plan, the substitution request should note this. For GEC courses, the request should also include evidence of how the student was misadvised. Advisors and schools need to take steps to ensure that such misadvisement is not repeated. Directors are responsible to correct systemic issues that contribute to advising errors.

