
Proposal to Allow Local Waiver of Course Prerequisites

Summary and Rationale. The proposed SR wording change (on next page) would allow the **local faculty body** responsible for a course (SR 3.2.3.3) **to waive**, on a student **case-by-case** basis and with the Instructor of Record's approval, some or all **course prerequisites** for that course (or delegate the same waiver authority to one or more program directors). In individual student cases, those local faculty bodies seem best able to decide the appropriateness of waiving Senate-approved prerequisites for courses under their responsibility and whether to delegate that waiver authority to one or more program directors. The Senate Rules currently do not provide any such general local authority.

Questions / Answers

- Aren't instructors currently allowed to waive prerequisites?

In general, no. Instructors are not allowed to waive any Senate-approved prerequisites. However, there are three narrow exceptions. First, instructors may waive prerequisite courses if the course description explicitly allows them to do so (e.g., "...or consent of instructor"). Second, SR 3.2.2.2 allows "seniors with superior ability or preparation" to be admitted to courses numbered 600 to 799 "upon approval of the instructor, the dean of the student's college and the dean of the Graduate School." Third, SR 4.2.1.3.2 allows non-degree-seeking students to enroll in a course without satisfying the course prerequisites if the student "obtain[s] the consent of the instructor."

If the Senate intended the general rule to be that instructors may waive course prerequisites (e.g., for all students and all courses), the Senate Rules need not have articulated a special rule for non-degree-seeking students. That rule's existence implies that no general allowance exists to waive course prerequisites.

- How do instructors waive a course prerequisite if none of the three narrow exceptions apply?

If not excepted otherwise, the only way to waive a Senate-approved course prerequisite is to get approval from the Senate Council or its Chair under SR 1.1.1.3.

- Why not allow instructors generally to waive prerequisites for their courses without oversight?

While a course instructor may be a good person to decide the merits of waiving a course prerequisite in an individual student case, the parent faculty body and/or program director (e.g., Director of Undergraduate Studies or Director of Graduate Studies) may not want instructors to make this decision without oversight. If so, it seems better for the Senate to delegate the faculty body with this authority and allow that faculty body, if it wishes, to further delegate that authority to one or more program directors.

- Why not just enforce the Senate-approved course prerequisites?

Course prerequisites serve purposes beyond just the need for students to have specific prior knowledge. **For example**, some course prerequisites are designed to signal—admittedly imperfectly—a need for general, not specific, prior learning. [STA 296](#) requires but does not use calculus; the calculus prerequisite mostly provides students with a useful—but imperfect—signal about what it takes to do well in STA 296. **Alternatively**, course prerequisites may also be used to impose—again, imperfectly—structure on programs that facilitate common cohort progression (e.g., sophomores take certain courses together, juniors take certain courses together, etc.).

Finally, strict enforcement of course prerequisites might prompt an unwanted wave of minor course change proposals to change the course prerequisite language (e.g., to add "...or consent of instructor"). Such proposals require activity in Curriculog and the approval of the Senate Council Chair.

- Why involve the college deans and Registrar?

This proposed rule would require all such course prerequisite waivers to route to the Registrar through the dean. The college dean “is responsible for the implementation of the curricula of the college” ([GR VII.F.2.c](#)). Deans can monitor that course prerequisite waivers are used appropriately (e.g., in specific student cases) and, if warranted, advise faculty to consider formally changing a course prerequisite if waivers become the norm for a course.

Proposed Rewording of Senate Rule

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3.2.2 COURSE NUMBERING SYSTEM

3.2.2.1 Standard numbering system

The number system reflects the level of course material and associated rigor. With the exception of upper graduate level and professional courses, any prerequisite restrictions limiting the level of a student accepted into a course shall be specified in a course’s prerequisites. [US: 11/14/2016] Courses shall be numbered as follows:

001-099	No credit, non-degree and/or developmental courses; [US: 9/10/2001]
100-199	Freshmen-level course; undergraduate credit only; [US: 11/14/2016]
200-299	Sophomore-level course; undergraduate credit only; [US: 11/14/2016]
300-399	Junior-level course; undergraduate credit only; [US: 11/14/2016]
400-499	Advanced junior- and senior-level course; undergraduate credit only;
400G-499G	Senior and first-year graduate-level course; graduate credit for non-majors only; [US: 11/14/2016]
500-599	First-year graduate-level course; undergraduate and graduate credit; [US: 11/14/2016]
600-799	Upper graduate-level course; open only to graduate students; [US: 11/14/2016]
800-999	Professional programs course; open only to students enrolled in professional degree programs (see SR 9.20). [US: 2/13/2012; 11/14/2016; 3/19/2018]

3.2.2.2 Exceptions

Exceptions to the requirements for admission to courses may be made as follows [US: 11/14/2016]:

3.2.2.2.1 Local Educational Policy Authority to Waive Course Prerequisites Upon Student Request

Instructors of Record may waive, on a student case-by-case basis, some or all course prerequisites for their courses, unless either a Senate Rule prescribes otherwise or the faculty body responsible for the course (SR 3.2.3.3) has reserved that authority to itself or its other designee(s). The respective dean for the educational unit (or unit equivalent SR 3.2.3.1) shall process such waivers through the Registrar.

3.2.2.2.2 Admission to Courses Numbered Between 600 and 799

Seniors with superior ability or preparation may be admitted to courses numbered between 600 and 799, upon approval of the instructor, the dean of the student’s college and the dean of the Graduate School.
