

Academic Requirements Committee

2021-2022 Annual Report

To: Executive Committee, Faculty Senate
 From: Kyle Whitehouse, Current Chair, Academic Requirements Committee (ARC)
 Date: July 15, 2021
 Re: Annual Report for 2021-2022

The Academic Requirements Committee meets weekly during the academic year, generally filling the scheduled two-hour meeting block with petition reviews. During summer term, meetings are held every two weeks to allow for vacation schedules but, because of a significant upward trend in the number of petitions received, this practice may need to be revisited in AY23. Committee meetings continue to be conducted using Zoom, which very nicely accommodates hybrid work schedules and minimizes the amount of time needed to participate. The Committee consists of faculty and staff from various campus units and departments as well as staff from the Office of the Registrar (OtR). Committee membership for AY22 is listed at the end of this report.

The Committee reviewed 1039 petitions in 2021-2022 of the 2293 petitions submitted to the OtR. The OtR pre-approved the remaining 1254 petitions per the Preapproved ARC Chart. The Committee does not see pre-approved petitions, so this data is not included in this report (see Appendix A to this report for preapproval data and Appendix B for preapproval chart).

Additionally, the Committee does not see petitions advanced by Equal Opportunity and Access (EOA) or Office of Student Life (OSL). In 2021-2022, EOA advanced 27 petitions and OSL advanced 2 petitions.

		2021-2022	2020-2021	2019-2020	Percent Change: Current year over last year*
Total Petitions		1039	797	714	+30.4%
	Approved ¹	613 (59%)	576 (72.3%)	377 (52.8%)	-13.3%
	Denied ²	339 (32.6%)	153 (19.2%)	287 (40.1%)	+13.4%
	Denied drop/Approved withdraw ³	75 (7.2%)	43 (5.4%)	42 (5.8%)	+1.8%
	Deferred ⁴	12 (1.2%)	25 (3.1%)	8 (1.1%)	-1.9%
Campus					
	Corvallis	642 (61.8%)	476 (59.7%)	504 (70.5%)	+2.1%
	Ecampus	357 (34.4%)	274 (34.4%)	186 (26%)	No Change
	Cascades	39 (3.7%)	39 (4.9%)	16 (2.2%)	-1.2%
	La Grande	1 (.1%)	1 (.1%)	2 (0.2%)	No Change
	PDX	0 (0%)	7 (.9%)	6 (.8%)	-.9%

*Percent in last column in **blue** rows represents the percentage change over the previous year based on the number of that petition type; Percent in last column in **white** rows compares percent of total petition type in the current year compared to the percent of same petition type in previous year

¹ Includes Approved by committee; Deferred by committee then approved

² Includes Denied by committee; Deferred by committee then denied

³ The committee may deny a drop and approve a withdrawal instead if the student's petition does not meet the drop guidelines but meets the withdraw guidelines. Includes denied drop, approve Withdraw; Deferred then denied drop, approve Withdraw

⁴ The committee defers petitions when there is important information missing, such as medical documentation or course activity records. (Deferred by committee)

International					
	Domestic	972 (93.5%)	724 (90.8%)	601 (84.1%)	+2.7%
	International	67 (6.5%)	73 (9.2%)	113 (15.9%)	-2.7%
Late Course Adds⁵	Total	15 (1.4%)	4 (.5%)	8 (1.1%)	+275%
	Approved	5 (66.6%)	3 (75%)	8 (100%)	-8.4%
	Denied	10 (33.4%)	1 (25%)	0 (0%)	+8.4%
	Deferred	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	No Change
Late Course Withdrawals	Total	272 (26.2%)	98 (12.3%)	199 (27.9%)	+109%
	Approved	155 (57%)	74 (75.5%)	106 (53.3%)	-18.5%
	Denied	116 (42.6%)	19 (19.4%)	90 (45.2%)	+23.2%
	Deferred	1 (.4%)	5 (5.1%)	3 (1.5%)	-4.7%
Late Course Drops⁵	Total	543 (52.3%)	468 (58.7%)	331 (46.4%)	+16%
	Approved	317 (58.4%)	330 (70.5%)	159 (48%)	-12.2%
	Denied	173 (31.9%)	90 (19.2%)	136 (41.1%)	+12.7%
	Deferred	2 (.3%)	14 (3%)	1 (.3%)	-2.7%
	Denied drop/approve withdraw	51 (9.4%)	34 (7.3%)	35 (10.6%)	+2.1%
Changing of grading basis	Total	68 (6.5%)	101 (12.7%)	71 (9.9%)	-32%
	Approved	47 (69.1%)	74 (73.2%)	43 (60.6%)	-4.4%
	Denied	18 (26.5%)	24 (23.8%)	26 (36.6%)	+2.7%
	Deferred	3 (4.4%)	3 (3%)	2 (2.8%)	+1.4%
Late Withdrawals from the university/term	Total	65 (6.3%)	34 (4.3%)	37 (5.2%)	+91%
	Approved	52 (80%)	29 (85.3%)	29 (78.4%)	-5.3%
	Denied	13 (20%)	5 (14.7%)	8 (21.6%)	+5.3%
	Deferred	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	No Change
Late Withdrawals from the university/term with drops⁵	Total	65 (6.3%)	70 (8.8%)	33 (4.6%)	-7%
	Approved	32 (49.3%)	52 (74.3%)	12 (36.4%)	-25%
	Denied	11 (16.9%)	7 (10%)	14 (42.4%)	+6.9%
	Denied drop, approve withdraw	22 (33.8%)	9 (12.9%)	7 (21.2%)	+20.9%
	Deferred	0 (0%)	2 (2.8%)	0 (0%)	-2.8%
Exception to graduation requirements	Total	7 (.7%)	6 (.7%)	9 (1.3%)	+16%
	Approved	1 (14.3%)	2 (33.3%)	1 (11.1%)	-19%
	Denied	6 (85.7%)	4 (66.7%)	8 (88.9%)	+19%
Misc. petitions ⁶		4 (.3%)	16 (2%)	26 (3.6%)	-75%

⁵ Not included are those petitions preapproved according to the Pre-Approval ARC chart

⁶ AR13, AR20, Section changes not pre-approved, Max hours

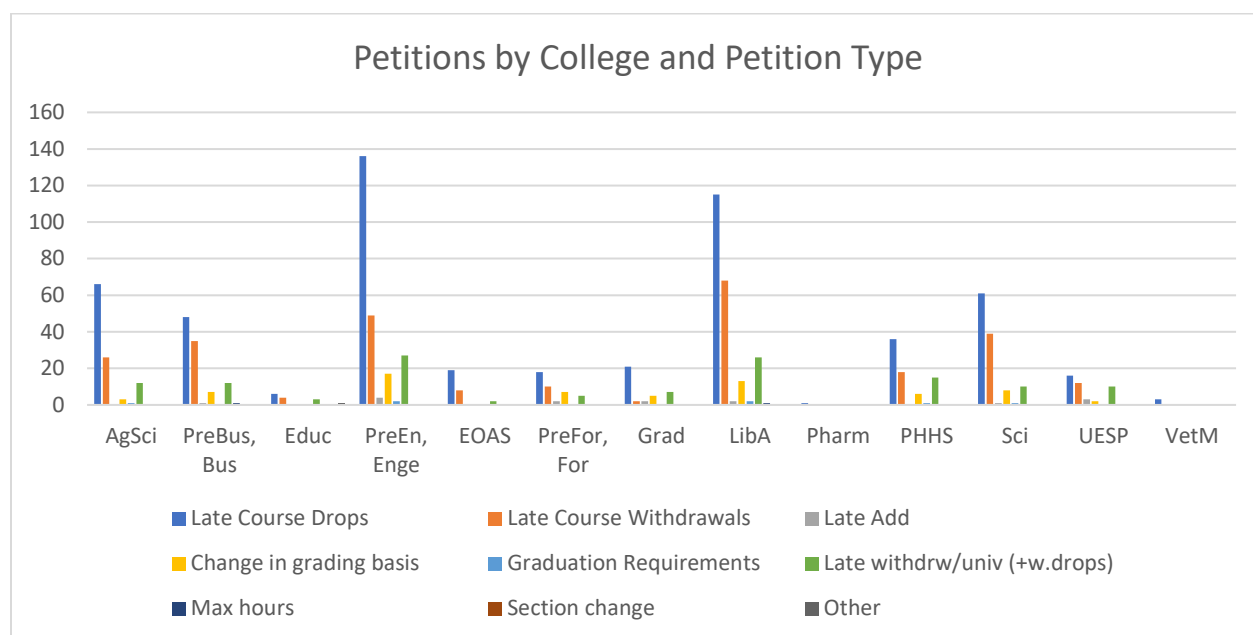
Undergraduate Petitions	No. of students submitting petitions ⁷	Late Course Drops	Late Course Withdrawals	Late Add	Change in grading basis	Graduation Requirements	Late withdraw/univ (+w.drops)	Other	TOTAL
Freshman	52	22	42	1	2	0	11	0	78
Sophomore	89	66	33	1	14	0	19	0	133
Junior	130	105	42	3	8	0	35	0	193
Senior	269	202	127	4	26	7	29	3	398
TOTAL	540	395	244	9	50	7	94	3	802

Student by Level ⁸	No. of students submitting petitions ⁷	Late Course Drops	Late Course Withdrawals	Late Add	Change in grading basis	Graduation Requirements	Late withdraw/univ (+w.drops)	Other	TOTAL
1 (Undergrad)	540	395	244	9	50	7	94	3	802
2 (MA, PhD)	90	62	17	4	12	0	16	1	112
3 (Post-Bacc)	61	59	6	0	0	0	7	0	72
4 (Non-degree)	45	24	5	2	6	0	13	0	50
5 (Professional students/ VetMed/Pharm)	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
6 (INTO)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	739	543	272	15	68	7	130	4	1039

⁷ De-duplicated list. This is individual students.

⁸ As defined in Banner

Petitions by College



By College	Late Course Drops	Late Course Withdrawals	Late Add	Change in grading basis	Graduation Requirements	Late withdraw/univ (+w.drops)	Max hours	Section change	Other	Total Approved	Total Denied/Deferred
AgSci	66	26	0	3	1	12	0	0	0	76	32
PreBus, Bus	48	35	1	7	0	12	1	0	0	65	39
Educ	6	4	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	9	5
PreEn, Enge	136	49	4	17	2	27	0	0	0	117	116
EOAS	19	8	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	21	8
PreFor, For	18	10	2	7	0	5	0	0	0	26	16
Grad	21	2	2	5	0	7	0	0	0	28	9
LibA	115	68	2	13	2	26	1	0	0	136	91
Pharm	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
PHHS	36	18	0	6	1	15	0	0	0	43	33
Sci	61	39	1	8	1	10	0	0	0	63	57
UESP	16	12	3	2		10	0	0	0	25	18
VetM	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0

Discussion

The total number of Academic Requirements Committee petitions submitted to the Registrar in academic year 2021-22 was 2041, an increase over the previous academic years. Of this total, nearly half the petitions were pre-approved by the OtR team (see footnote 5 above and a more complete depiction of those pre-approved petitions at the end of this report). The remaining petitions forwarded to and considered by the Committee increased substantially by 30.4% over the previous year. An increase was expected given the continued impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and other crises and, as the result of the introduction of the new online petition form and workflow, which will be discussed below. Of those reviewed by the Committee this year, the distribution of petition types was overwhelmingly for late course drops (52.3%) and late course withdrawals (26.2%) followed by change of grading basis (6.5%) and then late withdrawals

from the term (with withdraws and with drops matched at 6.3%). The percent of total petitions received more closely matches the distribution from years prior to academic year 2020-2021 when the greatest impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and other crises experienced. Student statements included a greater diversity of extenuating circumstances outside their control, but they also continued to note challenges returning to work, life and learning environments that each managed late-pandemic information in varying ways. Students are still facing issues that interrupt their academics and are managing physical and mental health challenges of their own and their families while navigating the uncertainty of changing guidelines in many areas of life.

Closer consideration of the total number of petitions shows the greatest increase appears to be for late course adds, however, the majority of those petitions were not supported by the instructor and were denied by the ARC. The number of petitions for late course withdraws more than doubled in AY22, and the decrease in approvals year-over-year represents extenuating circumstances which often occurred long after withdraw deadlines, were requested after the student completed the course and in many cases also completed the course final, and were less and less the result of direct COVID-related impacts as experienced over the previous year. Of the petitions received for late course drops, the most common petition submitted in AY22, more were approved than denied. 51 of the these denied petitions, however, met the requirements for a course withdraw given the timing of the extenuating circumstances, and in these cases the ARC denied the petition for late drop and approved late withdraws.

The demographic distribution of the students submitting petitions in AY22 is not significantly different than the previous academic year, other than one segment. Students with senior standing submitted more petitions than any other student level, and significantly more than the number of seniors in the previous year. It is possible that students with junior-level standing who submitted the greatest number of petitions in AY21 were simply more familiar with the petition process, but these data points do not track individual students year over year as a way of helping to understand this trend. Petition by campus is not significantly different in AY22 despite differences in growth in those respective populations. The number of petitions submitted by domestic and international students is also similar. The college distribution by petition type confirms that the leading petition types across campus are similar (late course drops and withdraws) and this number continues to be especially high in the College of Engineering and the College of Liberal Arts. Additionally, students in the College of Liberal Arts submitted more petitions for a change of grading basis and late withdraw from the term/university than those from other colleges.

The committee approved 59% of the total petitions while denying 32.6%. This ratio more closely matches years prior to AY21. While the committee maintains its commitment to compassion and sensitivity for students navigating pandemic impacts, members continued to honor the ARC's charge to deliberate petitions with careful and equitable consideration.

Accomplishments in AY22

1. Online petition form – the ARC is grateful to the OtR for moving a very complicated and important project forward that resulted in creating an online petition form and electronic workflow. This improvement made use of online tools to create a secure process and acknowledges that experience with these tools has changed for students and faculty/staff alike; being able to provide materials and signatures electronically improves access and equity. To assist with the new online process going live at the beginning of March 2022, members of the ARC assisted in drafting, mapping, and editing. With this update, a number of previous ARC recommendations were addressed, including:
 - Adding an updated and extensive guide to submitting supporting documentation
 - Improved access for online students and hybrid faculty/staff
 - Expanded input from the instructor

This first phase of offering an online petition process has been a success, and the ARC will continue to work closely with the OtR to find ways to make improvements, including

requesting data and reporting that may be more possible now. The process is much more efficient for students as evidenced by a more than 30% increase in petitions submitted to the ARC in AY22. This is both a positive outcome and a challenge for committee members who spent significantly more time reviewing petitions (2-3 hours a week previously to 4 – 5 hours in the busiest weeks) to prepare for weekly meetings. Recommendations for protecting the time required to review the growing meeting docket will be provided below.

2. Full committee membership – beginning July 2021, the committee filled two vacancies and operated as a full committee for the remainder of the year. The benefits were felt right away by allowing greater flexibility for occasional absences among voting members that still made meeting quorum possible as well as including more, diverse perspectives in the deliberations.
3. New Advisor Retreat training – the chair worked closely with Jeff Malone to update communication and training regarding ARC and the student petition process for all new academic advisors, faculty advisors and program leads, and academic counselors. This ensured changes were reflected as university process shifted from a paper to online form and workflow and resulted in a co-delivered presentations that will be provided every quarter in AY23 and beyond.

Issues and Recommendations for AY23

The following recommendations are offered with much consideration and with two goals in mind: improving committee efficiencies and improving the student experience. The consistent increase in petitions (12% increase in AY21, 30% increase in AY22) requires ARC voting members to spend 5-7 hours each week in service to the ARC by preparing for and attending weekly meetings. The following ideas have been identified to address consistent issues and will be shared with stakeholders who can assist with improvements that will ensure students will continue to receive the most efficient response and effective use of the petition processes.

1. Pilot a change to the review process for petitions for an exception to graduation requirements (AR 25)

Rationale: Petitions for an exception to graduation requirements face barriers to approval that need attention. First, according to ARC guidelines, the committee does not approve or deny these requests, but instead considers these petitions with much debate before forwarding a recommendation to the Vice Provost/designee for a final decision. Students are still afforded three attempts with the ARC, but because the ARC *does not recommend* requests to graduate with less than 180 credits or a 2.0 GPA, and it *rarely recommends* exceptions to other requirements outlined by AR 25 (see [ARC guidelines](#), page 4: Graduation Requirements), important time is lost for everyone involved. Students pursue an exception because they believe their circumstances are the result of university resources that failed them. Understandably, the issues are complex and deserve full consideration by those with authority to address the cause and potential solution. However, the ARC is limited. The primary reason students petition the ARC for an exception to graduation requirements is because they discover that they have fallen short of meeting 180 credits despite advising and My Degrees guidance. The reasons are varied, and in nearly every instance, the academic advisor and college support the student. In fact, often the college has oversight that might solve the student's issue before involving the ARC, and in these cases, focusing efforts at the program level may lead to quicker resolution. While the total number of petitions is relatively few compared to other petition types, the committee's power here is limited and the current process requires unnecessary energy, time, stress, and petition fees.

Proposal: During AY 23, test a new process for these petitions and evaluate outcomes at the end of spring term so that appropriate updates can be drafted for the ARC guidelines. For this pilot, petitions that address exceptions to graduation requirements (AR 25) will not be considered by the ARC but by a focused committee of stakeholders instead who have the authority to fully consider, take action, and/or make recommendations to the Vice Provost/designee. We recommend membership for this small committee that includes the Registrar/designee, College Head advisor/designee, and a representative from the graduation certification team. Members of this committee will have the information needed and a mandate to either act at the college/university level to address the student's concern or make a recommendation to the Vice Provost/designee directly. During the pilot, decisions made by the Vice Provost/designee will continue to be final and students will still have access to the same appeal process which includes submitting the petition with two opportunities to appeal. The ARC chair will work with the OtR to develop final plans for the pilot.

2. Incomplete petitions, in particular, those without supporting documentation, should not be added to the ARC docket until they are complete

Rationale: Students are required to include supporting documentation before submitting an online petition, although this doesn't always happen. It is not uncommon for 5 -10 incomplete petitions to make it to the docket (approximately 10-20%), requiring unnecessary time by committee members to review the petition and, often, a premature denial of the petition costing the student fewer steps in the appeal process. Guidance with examples of appropriate documentation has been added to the online petition, and this is a great improvement over the paper petition form that could be emphasized even more clearly. To create efficiencies and reduce the time on task by committee members and to improve equitable access to the petition and appeal process, the ARC recommends one or both of the following solutions:

Proposals:

- A. (Simple edit) Update the student certification statement on the petition with stronger language: *"I understand that my personal statement is necessary but not sufficient for committee review. Supporting documentation [see examples here: link] is required to help you demonstrate your case and make this process as efficient as possible. If it is determined that supporting documentation was not included, is not directly relevant to the timeline, or does not address the circumstances, I understand that my petition may be delayed, deferred, or denied."*
- B. (Requires more time and staff involvement) A member of the OTR records team reviews each petition, communicates with students when documentation is missing or does not meet the minimum requirements, and adds petitions when they are complete with supporting documentation that
 - Supports timeline of the extenuating circumstances
 - Addresses at least one issue mentioned in student statement
 - Includes a statement or letter of support from OSU affiliate in lieu of the above

3. Pre-denial chart for petition types that will not be approved by the ARC

Rationale: It seems there is no history of denying petitions before they reach the ARC. While students are entitled to the full petition and appeal process, there are a few, key examples of petitions that will not meet ARC guidelines for approval and could be addressed by the OtR rather than referred to the ARC for denial. These denials could be communicated without delay so that the student can quickly address the denial reason through appeal to the ARC, if the situation warrants it (an example might be getting faculty approval to add a course late). Delaying a decision by waiting for the next ARC meeting is not necessary in these cases and denying them expeditiously so the student can take appropriate action (appeal or move on) is in the student's best interest.

Proposal: Create a pre-denial chart for the following, limited petition types. The OtR team would take action that mirrors the pre-approval process with the option to forward these petitions if they determine for any reason that fuller consideration should be given by the ARC for these petition types:

- Audit/Add a course late, not supported by instructor (AR 30)
- Exceeds credit limit without college head advisor or major advisor support (AR 7)
 - this may require adding a check box to the petition form for the head advisor to indicate support/no support or to provide additional information
- Any petition submitted 90+ days after graduation conferral (per OtR)

4. Pre-approve undergraduate students petitioning for a course level change (500- to 400- level)

Rationale: ARC reviews petitions from students who discover they have inadvertently registered for the graduate level of a dual listed course (ex. 4xx/5xx). Registration tools do not prevent a student from registering incorrectly, and a mistake it is not easily detected by the student or instructor when the curriculum requirements are the same for both levels until a final graduate-level assignment is required of students enrolled at the 500-level. When these petitions are supported by the instructor, they should be pre-approved and not forward to the ARC. These petitions are pre-approved for graduate students in current and past terms.

Proposal: Update the pre-approval guidelines (see Appendix B in this report), adding undergraduate students to level changes in the current term (not to be pre-approved for undergraduates petitioning a level change in a previous term).

5. Additional requests based on previous ARC annual report recommendations and continuing opportunities for improvement:

Rationale: The following issues have been identified by the committee as opportunities for improvement to the petition review process over the previous 2-3 years. These have been outlined in more detail in previous ARC annual reports and remain recommendations this year:

- a. Revisit the language on the ARC petition for that describes the petition as a “one-time exception”. Determine with the OtR what the intent of this phrase has been and what capacity there is to monitor and uphold this expectation. If there is no rationale or means for enforcing, this phrase should be addressed.
- b. Ensure annual training and data are available on an annual basis that can inform ARC processes and decision making from both DEI and trauma-informed perspectives.
- c. Update language in the petition denial letters students receive so that it is user-friendly and communicates denial reasons in plain language (such as ‘selectivity’ and ‘course engagement/exposure to the curriculum’). This will improve the student’s understanding and ability to take appropriate action and overall communication processes.
- d. Provide instructor/advisor guidance that mirrors ARC guidelines and petition practices to improve understanding of terms and concepts such as selectivity, course engagement/exposure to the curriculum, and in particular clarifies the university’s definition and timelines for a course drop vs. course withdraw.

Proposal: Meet with the OtR staff during AY22 to discuss a road map for addressing reasonable solutions.

It has once again been my pleasure to serve as chair for the ARC during a year that continued to be difficult for many and a priority for the busy, dedicated, and compassionate members of our committee. Reading students’ stories about the personal trials and crises they are

managing outside the classroom is difficult work, and I have such deep respect for the vulnerability required to both prepare and deliberate these petitions. The ARC members are especially grateful for the support of our hard-working colleagues across Oregon State who work directly with these students and who supported and informed our work this year. I respectfully submit this year's as possible solutions for protect the time, effort, and emotional energy that the following 12 colleagues volunteer each term to the carry out our charge.

2021-22 Academic Requirements Committee Members

Name	Unit
Kyle Whitehouse (Chair)	Ecampus Student Success
Michelle Donaghy Cannon	College of Agricultural Sciences, Fisheries and Wildlife (fulfilled term)
Valtcho Jeliakov	College of Agricultural Sciences, Crop and Soil Sciences (fulfilled term)
Joan Stueve	College of Engineering, Nuclear Science and Engineering
Sara Clark	College of Science, Mathematics
Michael Trevathan	College of Liberal Arts, School of Public Policy
Autumn VanderLinden	College of Forestry, Natural Resources
No Student Members (2)	

Ex-Officio, Office of the Registrar: varies by term

OtR Support Staff: varies by week

Ex-Officio, Disability Access Services: varies by term

Ex-Officio, Graduate School: varies by term

Ex-Officio, Office of International Services: varies by term

Appendix A: Pre-approved petitions⁹

Pre-approved petitions	Total	
	Late Add	480
	Late Drop	336
	Change in course credit	120
	Late Withdraw/Univ	3
	Late Withdraw/Univ w/ drops	9
	Section change	49
	Other	6

⁹ Chart does not include petitions advanced by EOA or OSL, which totaled 22 for 2020-2021

Appendix B: PREAPPROVED ARC CHART

Petition Action	Current Term	Past Term
Change in Course Credit	Pre-approved	Pre-approved
Extension of I	Pre-approved	Pre-approved
Exam for Credit	Pre-approved	N/A
Graduate Students: change of registration to maintain full-time status.	Pre-approved	Pre-approved
Level Change (i.e. 400 to 500, etc.)	Pre-approved for Grad students only if have instructor, department, and grad school approvals	Pre-approved for Grad students only if have instructor, department, and grad school approvals
Course Add*	Pre-approved for all students if have instructor, department, and head advisor/grad school approvals	Pre-approved for all students if have instructor, department, and head advisor/grad school approvals
Section Changes – see definitions below	Pre-approved for all students if have instructor, department, and head advisor/grad school approvals	Pre-approved for all students if have instructor, department, and head advisor/grad school approvals. *See below for independent learning courses.
Withdraw from the Term	ARC after W/T deadline	ARC

Course Drop	Pre-approved to end of 10 th week (if instructor indicates no attendance) ARC (if instructor indicates attendance of any period of time)	Pre-approved within three years from original term (if instructor indicates no attendance) ARC (if instructor indicates attendance of any period of time)
Audit	ARC	ARC
Change of Grading Basis	ARC	ARC
Course Withdrawal	ARC	ARC
Graduation Requirement	ARC	ARC
Max Credit Overload (25+)	ARC	ARC

* If student has taken the OtR survey to withdraw for the term and wishes to re-add all the courses affected by having taken the survey, the student must submit a complete add petition with instructor, department, and college head advisor approval for each course. If this is done, petitions are pre-approved. If any courses affected by having taken the survey are not included, all petitions submitted must go to ARC.

Section Changes – to get automatic approval for a section change at least one of the following conditions must be met.

- Section change for the exact same course (e.g. drop MTH 251 sec 01 and add MTH 251 sec 02).
- Different campus of the exact same course (e.g., drop MTH 251 Corvallis campus section and add MTH 251 online)
- Cross listed or equivalent courses (e.g., dropping PHL 206 and adding cross-listed REL 206), switching the regular section of a course for the Honor's College section of the same course
- Independent Learning courses (e.g., thesis/research to reflect the type of independent work). *For past term petitions, this condition applies only to graduate students.

