

# AP.5 UNDERGRADUATE POLICIES

## AP.5 Undergraduate Policies

### AP.5.1 Student Classification

Admitted undergraduates are classified as follows:

- **Freshman**, 0–29 credits completed
- **Sophomore**, 30–59 credits completed
- **Junior**, 60–89 credits completed
- **Senior**, 90 or more credits completed

Full-time undergraduates are classified as those students enrolled in 12 or more credits per semester. Completed hours are defined as a combination of all credits earned at the university plus credits transferred from other institutions or obtained by testing. Please note that different criteria for full-time status may apply for tuition, verification, and financial aid purposes. For more information, contact the offices of Student Accounts (<http://studentaccounts.gmu.edu>), University Registrar (<http://registrar.gmu.edu>), and Student Financial Aid (<https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/financial-aid>), respectively.

### AP.5.2 Academic Standing

The following system of academic progress became effective in fall 2004 and applies to all undergraduate degree and nondegree students at Mason.

Academic retention is based solely on the cumulative GPA. The cumulative GPA required for retention varies according to the credit level or attempted credit hours, which is a combination of all credits attempted at the university plus credits transferred from other institutions or obtained by testing.

#### AP.5.2.1 Academic Period

Academic period refers to fall semester, spring semester, or summer term. For determining the duration of academic warning, probation, and suspension, an academic period is defined as follows:

Each academic period begins on the 15th day following the last scheduled day of final exams for the previous period. Each academic period ends on the 14th day after the last scheduled day of final exams. For example, assume that the last scheduled day of final exams for a semester is Monday, December 23. That period then ends on Monday, January 6. The next period begins on Tuesday, January 7.

#### AP.5.2.2 Good Academic Standing

Students are in good academic standing unless they are academically dismissed, suspended, or on probation. Students on academic warning are still considered to be in good academic standing.

#### AP.5.2.3 Student Retention Categories

Students with at least 7 attempted credits and a cumulative GPA of less than 2.00 fall into one of three categories: warning, probation, and suspension. All notations of academic standing are included in a student's permanent record. The cumulative GPA range that defines each of the categories varies according to the credit level, as noted below:

Credit Level	Warning	Probation	Suspension
Attempted Credit Hours:	Cumulative GPA Range:	Cumulative GPA Range:	Cumulative GPA Range:
7-16	0.00-1.99	---	----
17-29	1.75-1.99	1.00-1.74	0.00-0.99

30-59	1.85-1.99	1.25-1.84	0.00-1.24
60-89	1.95-1.99	1.55-1.94	0.00-1.54
90+	---	1.85-1.99	0.00-1.84

#### Exception for Freshmen and Transfer Students

Freshmen and transfer students in their first semester of study at Mason will receive probation as the strongest academic sanction. GPA retention levels, as stated above, will apply in all subsequent semesters. Students in this category should be on notice that they must improve their academic record to avoid suspension in future semesters; in particular they should consult their advisors and consider repeating courses to achieve academic good standing.

#### AP.5.2.4 Termination from the Major

Undergraduate students in any retention category may be reviewed for possible termination by their dean according to the published policy approved by the major program. Termination from a major—or from all majors in a college—may be imposed as a result of excessive repeating of required courses without achieving the minimum standard, and for other evidence of continued failure to make adequate progress toward completion of the major. Students must be informed a semester in advance and given a chance to meet the standard or appeal according to published college procedures. Once a termination decision has been made, a letter of termination is sent to the student by the dean and notification of termination from the major is affixed to the student's academic record. Students who are terminated are no longer eligible to pursue that major, but may declare a different major within the university to complete their undergraduate degree.

#### AP.5.2.5 Academic Suspension

Students in degree status who incur a first suspension following a spring semester or summer term serve a period of suspension through the next fall semester. Students who incur a first suspension following a fall semester serve a period of suspension through the next summer term. A second suspension is for one calendar year: two semesters and a summer term. Students returning from suspension are on probation for one academic period. Course credits earned at other colleges during the period of suspension from Mason (for academic or nonacademic reasons) are not accepted for the degree program.

Nondegree undergraduate students placed on suspension have no specified rights of return to the university. Nondegree students who have been suspended and wish to resume their studies after a period of absence must qualify for readmission through the Office of Admissions (<https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid>).

#### AP.5.2.6 Academic Dismissal

A third suspension results in academic dismissal, a status that is usually permanent. In exceptional cases, students who have been dismissed may apply for readmission after a minimum absence of three calendar years from the university, but only if they meet one or more of the following conditions after having been dismissed:

- Demonstrate academic success (2.50 GPA or better) in at least 18 credits of classes taken during the period of dismissal at an accredited two- or four-year college or university. Such credits may be considered for transfer back to Mason, but there is no guarantee of acceptance of the credit.
- Provide other evidence of a renewed ability to achieve academic success.

- Provide evidence that all degree requirements will be met once an additional 12 or fewer credits are complete.

Meeting the above requirements does not guarantee a return. The Office of Admissions and the appropriate school or college dean will make individual decisions in the best academic interests of the student and the university. For students seeking readmission to a new school or college, the new dean will make the decision in consultation with the former dean and the Office of Admissions (<https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid>). For more information, see AP.5.2.9 Academic Clemency.

### AP.5.2.7 Academic Performance and Credit Limit

Undergraduate students on warning, probation, or returning from suspension are limited to a maximum of 13 credits for following semesters until they achieve good standing. Students registered for 14 or more credits are responsible for seeking academic advisement and adjusting their enrollment to a maximum of 13 credits.

### AP.5.2.8 Academic Standing and Student Activities

Only students in good academic standing are eligible to hold or run for elective or appointive office in any organization or activity associated with Mason, compete in any athletic or other activity representing Mason on either an intercollegiate or a club level, or serve as a working staff member of any student organization. Note that students on warning are considered to be in good standing. Some organizations and activities may impose stricter academic criteria for participation.

A student whose eligibility for an activity requires the completion of a semester will have fulfilled that requirement when the student's publicly scheduled exams are over, unless continued eligibility depends on the grades received. In the latter case, the student will not become eligible until the end of the semester as defined in AP.5.2.1 Academic Period.

### AP.5.2.9 Academic Clemency

Undergraduate students returning to Mason after a separation of a minimum of three calendar years may petition their academic dean to have up to 16 previous credits earned at Mason removed from the calculation of their cumulative GPA. Courses and grades so removed will not count toward graduation requirements. Note that the courses, with their original grades and the notation "Academic Clemency," will remain listed on the student's transcript permanently. The petition for clemency must be filed within 12 months starting from the first day of the re-enrollment semester at Mason; approval may depend on successful completion of that semester. Approval of the request is neither automatic nor guaranteed.

## AP.5.3 Requirements for Undergraduate Programs

### AP.5.3.1 Declaration of Major

To plan a sound academic program, undergraduates should select a degree and major as soon as it is practical but no later than four weeks before the end of the sophomore year. To declare a major, students should confer with the appropriate advisor in the new major program. Students approaching the recommended point for declaring a major, but still uncertain of their choice, should consult:

Student Academic Affairs - Advising, Retention, and Transitions  
Student Union Building I, Room 3600  
[advisor@gmu.edu](mailto:advisor@gmu.edu)

Note that all degree components including Mason Core, majors and concentrations must be contained in a single catalog year. See AP.4.2.2 Catalog Requirements for Degrees for exception regarding minors.

### AP.5.3.2 Requirements for Bachelor's Degrees

- **Admission.** Candidates must have been officially admitted into degree-seeking status.
- **Residency.** At least one-fourth of the total credits applied to the degree must be completed at Mason and include at least 12 upper-level credits (courses numbered 300 or above) in the major program. A maximum of 30 credits earned in non-degree status at Mason can be applied toward a bachelor's degree.
- **Credit Hours.** Students must complete at least 120 credits that count toward graduation and fulfill all degree requirements. A few programs require more than the minimum 120 credits.
- **Quality.** Candidates must achieve a cumulative GPA of 2.00 or higher, and must meet all higher standards for grades allowable in majors, minors, or certificates. The Mason cumulative GPA does not include transfer courses.
- **Upper Level.** Students seeking a bachelor's degree must apply at least 45 credits of upper-level courses (numbered 300 or above) toward graduation requirements.
- **Mason Core** (formerly University General Education). Candidates must complete categories of general education courses and writing requirements as described for their catalog year. This includes satisfying the requirement of two semesters of English composition (ENGH 101 Composition (Mason Core) and ENGH 302 Advanced Composition (Mason Core)) with a grade of C or better. Additionally, as part of the university's commitment to student writers in all undergraduate programs, at least one upper-division course in each major has been designated as fulfilling the writing-intensive (WI) requirement.
- **College/Department General Education.** Students must satisfy additional general education requirements for specific degree programs, as described on each individual college page.
- **Major.** Students must satisfy all requirements for their major and degree program, as described on each individual college page, and as detailed in the degree evaluation for their catalog year.

#### AP.5.3.2.1 English Composition Requirement

Mason requires students to complete at least two semesters of English composition. Students who complete the Honors curriculum complete the English composition requirement through coursework in those programs. Equivalent credit may be granted through course transfer or external exam. Exemption (but not credit) may be granted through a proficiency exam administered by the English department. All other students must enroll in ENGH 101 Composition (Mason Core) (or ENGH 100 Composition for Multilingual Writers (Mason Core)) upon admission and, after meeting its prerequisites, ENGH 302 Advanced Composition (Mason Core). Students must attain a minimum grade of C in composition courses to fulfill degree requirements.

#### AP.5.3.2.2 Writing-Intensive Course Requirement

As part of the university's commitment to student writers in all undergraduate programs, at least one upper-division course in each major has been designated as fulfilling the "writing-intensive" (WI) requirement. While other courses in the major may require written projects, teachers of the designated WI courses will devote class time to instruction on how to complete assignments successfully, assign and grade a minimum of 3500 words, provide constructive feedback on drafts, and allow revision of at least one graded assignment. See the description of each major for the specific course or courses that fulfill the WI requirement. For a complete list of approved courses, see Writing Intensive courses.

### AP.5.3.3 Second Bachelor's Degree

A second bachelor's degree may be earned, either concurrently or sequentially. To graduate with two degrees, students must present at least 30 Mason credits beyond those required by either degree alone. For sequential awarding of degrees, students must be readmitted for the second degree through the Office of Admissions and complete a minimum of 30 credit hours after that point to have fulfilled the residency requirement for that degree.

Students who are concurrently pursuing two bachelor's degrees at Mason must present a detailed program of study for both degrees and obtain authorizing signatures from the chair or director of each degree program and the dean or director, if required by the college, school, or institute. Students may declare the second concurrent degree by completing the Declaration of Second Bachelor's Degree section of the Change/Declaration of Academic Program Form. Both degrees must be declared the semester before the student intends to graduate. Students pursuing concurrent degrees should apply to graduate when both degrees are complete, or be prepared to meet the requirements noted above for sequential awarding of degrees.

### AP.5.3.4 Minors

Students may elect minor programs of study in addition to major fields by submitting a completed Minor Declaration (Undergraduate) form to the Office of the University Registrar. Minors usually require between 15 and 21 credits of study, at least 8 of which must be applied only to that minor and may not be used to fulfill requirements of the student's major, concentration, an undergraduate certificate, or another minor. Students must complete at least 6 credits in their minor at Mason and achieve a minimum 2.00 GPA in courses applied to the minor. Students interested in a minor should consult the appropriate departmental sections in this catalog. Note that these are university minimum requirements; individual programs may have higher standards and/or more restrictive requirements.

### AP.5.3.5 Undergraduate Certificates

Students may elect undergraduate certificate programs of study in addition to major fields by submitting a completed Change/Declaration of Academic Program form to the Office of the University Registrar. Students pursuing undergraduate certificates must be admitted to Mason in degree-seeking status. Undergraduate certificate programs must have 15 unique credits that cannot also be used to fulfill the requirements of a major, a concentration, a minor, or another undergraduate certificate. More than half of the credit hours for an undergraduate certificate must be taken at Mason, and more than half must be taken in degree-seeking status. Students must achieve at least a 2.00 GPA in courses applied to the certificate.

Students with a previous bachelor's degree, who are admitted to an undergraduate certificate program alone, have four years to complete certificate requirements. Such students who are given permission to re-enroll following an absence from Mason may not count the four-year time limit as beginning on the date of re-enrollment. International students attending in F-1 or J-1 status have a more restrictive time limit; contact the Office of International Programs and Services for information. Students who will not meet the published time limit because of circumstances beyond their control may petition their dean for an extension. Failure to meet the time limit or to secure approval of an extension request may result in termination from the program.

A completed undergraduate certificate may be posted to the transcript only after completion of a bachelor's degree. Note that these are

university minimum requirements; individual programs may have higher standards and/or more restrictive requirements.

### AP.5.3.6 Change of Academic Program

Students considering a change in their academic program (major or degree) are encouraged to see an advisor in the Academic Advising and Transfer Center or a faculty advisor in their prospective discipline. Departmental sections of this catalog describe requirements for acceptance. Students not meeting the requirements may appeal to the department chair for an exception.

Once a student has completed 60 credits, a change of major requires a meeting with an advisor in the new major before the change is complete. To file a change of major, signatures of advisor or designate in the new major program must be obtained on the Undergraduate Change/Declaration of Academic Program form (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms>).

### AP.5.3.7 Credit for More than One Undergraduate Major

Students seeking to graduate with a BA or BS degree in two or more subjects must meet departmental requirements for the major in each field. For each major, at least 18 credits used to fulfill its requirements cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of another major, a concentration, a minor, or an undergraduate certificate.

Students pursuing two or more concurrent majors must complete the Second Major section of the Undergraduate Change/Declaration of Academic Program form (<http://registrar.gmu.edu/forms>). The applicant must present a detailed program of study for both majors and obtain the authorizing signature from the chair or director of the second program and from the dean or director, if required by the college, school, or institute. When required by a specific academic unit, department chairs and deans or directors must also approve all changes to the programs of study. Students may begin a program at any time that permits completion before the anticipated graduation date.

## AP.5.4 University Honors

A student graduates with distinction from the University when at least 60 undergraduate institutional credits applied toward graduation are earned at Mason, and the student's cumulative GPA is at least equal to one of three values:

- 3.90, summa cum laude
- 3.70, magna cum laude
- 3.50, cum laude

A student graduates with recognition from the university when between 45 and 59 (inclusive) credits applied toward graduation are earned at Mason, and the student's cumulative GPA is at least 3.80.

In addition, high achieving students may qualify for membership in one of the many recognized university honor societies. In 2011, George Mason University was awarded a chapter in Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest all-disciplinary honor society. In 2012, Mason was awarded a chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, the nation's oldest and most prestigious honor society dedicated to the liberal arts. Membership is by invitation only to both of these honor societies.

## AP.5.5 Dean's List

Students in degree status who take at least 6 credits in a semester and earn a semester GPA of 3.50 or higher merit placement on the Dean's List. Courses subsequently repeated and excluded will not retroactively

affect Dean's List status. This notation will be placed on the individual's permanent record.