

Advising FAQs Sheet

Q: Do advisors really have to sign a student's registration sheet?

Yes! Registration sheets serve as verification of consultation with your advisor and provide a key back up in case of computer system errors. Please drop your sheets off with Asst. Dean Judge on the day you register for classes. Students who do not turn in their sheets by the end of the registration period will have their registration cancelled.

Q: What is the minimum number of hours a student has to take in a semester to be eligible for merit financial awards? (for need-based financial aid? for student health insurance? in their last semester?)

For Merit-Based Scholarships:

Full-time students = minimum of 12 credit hours each fall and spring term; 3 credit hours in summer

Part-time students = minimum of 6 credit hours each fall and spring term; 3 credit hours in summer

For Need-Based Federal Aid (loans):

Full-time students = minimum of 6 credit hours each fall, spring, *and summer term (if enrolled)*

Part-time students = minimum of 6 credit hours each fall, spring, *and summer term (if enrolled)*

For Student Health Insurance:

Minimum of 4 credit hours each fall and spring term

For Students in their final semester of study:

3 credit hours for Divinity scholarship; 6 for federal aid; 4 for student health insurance

Q: Can students take courses outside of the Divinity School?

Yes, but only graduate level courses. MTS students are allowed to take 9 hours and MDiv students are allowed to take 12 hours. Courses that are cross-listed with the Divinity school do not count against these outside hours.

Courses that are not graduate level are not covered by Divinity merit scholarship funds. An exception may be made for elementary Latin provided the student's prior transcripts indicate no previous work in the language.

Q: May students "double count" Common Courses for Concentration requirements?

No. So for example, a course in Womanist Ethics that you count for your Ethics requirement cannot towards your concentration in Black Religion and Cultural Studies.

Q: May students "double count" a course for two concentrations?

Yes. For example, if you enroll in Ancient Goddesses, this course could count for concentrations in Religion, Gender, and Sexuality *and* for Mediterranean & Ancient Near Eastern Cultures.

Q: How does a student request a course be designated for a Concentration?

If a course is not designated for a concentration, the student must contact the Concentration Convener and the Instructor of the course *before* the first day of class to receive permission for the student to tailor the course to the concentration. The approval of *both* parties is then forwarded to the Asst. Dean for Academic Affairs.

Q: By when do students have to declare a concentration?

- MTS students must declare their concentration with Asst. Dean Judge during registration for classes in their second semester (or by the time they register for courses beyond 24 hours).
- MDiv students must declare their concentration with Asst. Dean Judge during registration for classes in their third semester (or by the time they register for courses beyond 36 hours)

Q: Can I switch my concentration once I've declared it?

Yes. But you must meet with Asst. Dean Judge to do a degree audit.

Q: Will my concentration appear on my transcript?

No. Vanderbilt is quite strict on what can appear on the official transcript. Certificates (which require additional coursework and a project), however, do appear on the transcript.

Q: Does every MTS student have to do a thesis/project?

No. Students in the MTS General Plan of Study may choose between doing a portfolio or a thesis/project. All MTS

Concentration Plan students must do a thesis/project.

Q: At what point in their program may MTS students take thesis hours? How do they choose a first and second reader?

- MTS students may take up to three thesis hours at any point in their degree. However, the Divinity school encourages students to take those hours in the last semester of their program.
- Before registering for the course, the student should secure a first reader to direct the thesis. The thesis receives a letter grade and is calculated into the student's grade point average.

Q: Can students take reading courses with professors?

Faculty members are generally reluctant to offer reading courses, as they are uncompensated additions to their full teaching load. With that said, MDiv students may take up to two reading courses (6 hours) and MTS students may take one (3 hours). Students should download the appropriate form under the VDS Portal tab on the VDS website. Upon completion of the form and accompanying documentation, the student submits this petition to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for approval. Approval for reading courses will not be given after the drop/add period for a semester has closed.

Q: A student took a similar religion course as an undergraduate, how does the student "waive" a Common Course requirement?

- 1) Students may download and complete the form from the website under "VDS Portal." The signature of the student's advisor and, ideally, the area director responsible for the Common Course is required. Syllabi submission is greatly encouraged.
- 2) The student then submits this form to the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs Victor Judge to review the student transcript and documentation.
- 3) The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs then makes a final decision and informs the student and advisor.

Students "waiving" courses are required to take a higher-level course of equivalent hours to satisfy the requirement.

Q: How do transfer students know which courses from other institutions count for which courses at Vanderbilt?

Transfer students should meet with Assistant Dean Judge upon matriculation. At the end of the first full semester at Vanderbilt, Asst. Dean Judge will finalize the transfer credits with the approval of the Associate Dean. A copy of this agreement will be placed in the student's file.

Q: How does a student transfer between degree programs?

- 1) A student should first speak with the student's advisor about the student's reasons for seeking a degree transfer.
- 2) After that discernment conversation, the student should meet with Asst. Dean Judge to request a degree audit to determine the viability and timeline for the transfer.
- 3) Finally, the student should download and complete the request for degree transfer form under "VDS Portal" on the website and schedule a meeting with the Associate Dean for final approval.

Q: What should a student do if they want to withdraw from a course?

If a student wishes to no longer be enrolled in a course after the drop/add period has expired, the student will need to speak to the Asst. Dean Judge to "withdraw" from a course. A "W" with the date withdrawn will appear on the student's transcript, but the course will not be calculated into the student's GPA.

As the Divinity catalogue states, students are required to be enrolled for 12 hours each semester to maintain their merit tuition scholarship. Dropping below 12 hours, places the student at part-time status and limits their maximum merit tuition scholarship to 50% of tuition. The Divinity School allows – without penalty – one "grace period" for students who have to drop below full-time status in the middle of a term, with the recognition that their awards will be adjusted based on future enrollment status from that point forward. Future occurrences will entail dropping overall scholarship support (if they are at 50% or higher) to part-time eligibility levels for all classes that semester and for future semesters, no matter the subsequent number of enrollment hours.