

Advising FAQs Sheet

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 in the administrative Suite, Office 115 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.

How many hours do I need to take each semester to graduate in 2 yrs (MTS- 51 hours) or 3 yrs (MDiv- 84 hours)?

MTS students could take 3 twelve-hour semesters and 1 fifteen-hour semester. MDiv could take 2 twelve-hour semesters and 4 fifteen-hour semesters. But most students choose to take summer courses to reduce the load during the fall and spring semesters—often 6 hours during the summer. Students also regularly extend their program by one or two semesters for a lighter course load.

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?)

Fall and spring semesters:	9 hours for Div tuition scholarships; 5 hours for need-based federal aid and student health insurance
Summer semester:	3 for Div tuition; 5 for federal aid/student health
In the last semester:	1 for Div tuition; 5 for outside aid/student health

May students "double dip" on curriculum requirements?

No. Students must take a different course to satisfy each requirement in the curriculum. For example, a "Sexuality in the Ancient Near East" could count toward a Hebrew bible elective or a gender and sexuality cluster requirement, not both at the same time.

Can students take courses outside of the Divinity School?

Yes, but only graduate level courses. MTS students are allowed to take 6 hours of graduate level courses 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 transcripts of the student's prior degrees indicate no previous work in the language.

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 and second reader to direct the thesis. The thesis receives a letter grade and is calculated into the student's grade point average.

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.

A student took a similar religion course as an undergraduate, how does the student “waive” a foundational 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 foundation 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.

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.

How does a student transfer 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.

What should a student do if s/he wants 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 registrar 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. Withdrawal from a course does not nullify a student’s merit tuition award for subsequent semesters. But a withdrawal will likely affect the student’s time to degree. Students should refer to the schedule in the catalogue to calculate the exact percentage of tuition that will be refunded after the withdrawal.