

9 March 2023

TO: Faculty Senate

FROM: Amy Lubitow, Chair, Graduate Council

RE: Proposal to Eliminate the Validation Process for Expired Graduate Coursework

Current Bulletin Language:

Validation of out-of-date graduate credit

A PSU course more than seven years old at the time of graduation, but no more than ten years old at the time of graduation, may be used toward master's degree requirements after a successful validation exam (for example, a course taken in fall 2012 may be validated for a graduation term no later than fall 2022). A separate validation examination must be given for each course, in accordance with the full requirements listed on the GO-15 form. Departments are expected to limit validation examinations to those courses that are current and relevant in the discipline and meet the current requirements of the master's degree program. Validated courses are limited to one third of the program requirements (e.g., 15 credits total in a 45-credit program). Each examination attempted, regardless of result, has a fee of \$50.00, which will be credited to the department giving the exam. Payment must be arranged in advance of the exam through the Graduate School and Cashiers.

In very unusual cases, with the specific agreement of both the student's department and the department most equivalent to the original course department, a student may validate a graduate course from another regionally accredited institution, in accordance with the full requirements listed on the GO-15 form.

Proposed Bulletin Language:

~~Validation of out-of-date graduate credit~~

~~A PSU course more than seven years old at the time of graduation, but no more than ten years old at the time of graduation, may be used toward master's degree requirements after a successful validation exam (for example, a course taken in fall 2012 may be validated for a graduation term no later than fall 2022). A separate validation examination must be given for each course, in accordance with the full requirements listed on the GO-15 form. Departments are expected to limit validation examinations to those courses that are current and relevant in the discipline and meet the current requirements of the master's degree program. Validated courses are limited to one third of the program requirements (e.g., 15 credits total in a 45-credit program). Each examination attempted, regardless of result, has a fee of \$50.00, which will be credited to the department giving the exam. Payment must be arranged in advance of the exam through the Graduate School and Cashiers.~~

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Rationale:

Coursework applied to a master's degree can be no more than seven years old at the point of graduation. **Validation** is the established process for courses that have passed this mark and are expired. Students take an examination (typically a take-home paper) to demonstrate they still have mastery of the course material; if they pass, the course is **validated** and can be used for another three years, i.e., can be up to ten years old at the point of graduation. This proposal seeks to eliminate the validation process altogether; students would instead use the graduate petition process to request use of expired coursework. The impetus to eliminate the validation policy is due to recent comments from Graduate Council members expressing doubts about the value of the validation process.

- In the Graduate School, we were already aware that validation is an unusual policy and that most universities deal with expired coursework via a petition process. In a recent review of twelve comparator institutions, we found only two with a validation process similar to ours; the other ten allow requests for use of expired courses only via a petition process.
- Despite validation being the process specifically established for use of expired courses, students and graduate programs routinely circumvent validation and submit graduate petitions requesting to use expired courses without validating them. A review of expired courses approved for use in master's degrees at PSU over the last five years shows 77% were approved via a graduate petition while only 23% were approved using the established validation process.
- There are inequity concerns with two different mechanisms being used to address the same issue. A few departments use the established validation process by default, but most departments circumvent the validation process and use the graduate petition process by default. This practice is unfair to the students forced to validate while most others are allowed to simply petition. Additionally, there is a \$50 fee for each validation examination attempted which is inequitable for students who are forced to use the validation process versus those who are allowed to petition at no cost.

If approved, the change would be effective immediately; however, students who have already made plans to validate expired courses for winter, spring, and summer 2023 graduation would be allowed to do so if they choose. Beginning fall 2023, a graduate petition will be the only mechanism available to request use of expired coursework.