

# GENERAL REGISTRATION POLICIES

## Curriculum Requirements

Students are required to complete the curriculum requirements in place at the time of their admission/readmission to the degree or certificate program.

If a student's program curriculum changes during their enrollment at SPS, the student may petition to change to the new curriculum by completing a Student Affairs Petition (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/login.php>). Students should meet with their academic adviser (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/student-services/advising.php>) prior to requesting such a change in order to fully understand the academic ramifications of switching curriculum.

## Course Registration

Students should consult the program course listings for the most up-to-date information. Course descriptions, instructor information, day/time and campus information, term start and end dates and course prerequisites are listed.

Students may register for all courses through CAESAR (<https://www.caesar.northwestern.edu>) with the exception of the below courses.

- Independent Studies (499)
- Practicums (579/580)
- Thesis Research (589/590)
- Courses outside one's program

Course room assignments are posted one week prior to the beginning of the quarter.

**\*Please Note: Students will not earn credit for courses in which they are not officially registered, nor should they attend courses where they are not officially registered.**

## Course Registration Deadlines

Students may register for courses from the time registration opens (approximately six to eight weeks before the quarter starts) until the end of the registration period (the Friday of the first week of classes). Exact dates for these events are found on the graduate calendar (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/sps/academic-calendar/#graduatetext>).

Students are responsible for adhering to registration deadlines. It is the student's responsibility to register and, if necessary, drop classes by the posted deadlines. No one will complete this for the student, except in cases where a class is cancelled.

SPS encourages students to register for courses at the earliest possible date. Early registration helps SPS serve its students more effectively. Some courses fill up quickly, and early registration will let SPS staff know whether an additional section (where possible) is needed. Students who delay registration may find that an under-enrolled course has been cancelled.

If registration questions or problems arise, students may contact the SPS Registrar's Office at [onlinereg@northwestern.edu](mailto:onlinereg@northwestern.edu) or 312-503-6951.

## Continuous Enrollment Requirement

Students who do not register for courses during the registration period for three consecutive quarters are considered to have "discontinued" their study at SPS. Upon the 3rd quarter of non-enrollment, students will be discontinued/withdrawn from their program at the end of the registration period and deactivated by the CAESAR (<https://www.caesar.northwestern.edu>) system. In order to be reactivated and take courses again, students must submit the SPS Request for Readmission (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>). If readmitted, students must follow curriculum that is current at the time of their readmission, which could mean additional units of credit are required for the degree.

## Time Away From Studies at SPS

If students need to take time off from their program, they should register for the placeholder course, SPS 512-0 Continuous Registration, in order to maintain active student status and avoid discontinuation. More information on SPS 512-0 Continuous Registration may be found below.

### SPS 512

SPS 512-0 Continuous Registration is a placeholder registration course for graduate students to use in order to maintain continuous enrollment in their program in a quarter where they do not enroll in any credit-bearing courses (e.g. during continued work on a thesis project).

SPS 512-0 Continuous Registration may not be taken as the first course in program. SPS 512-0 Continuous Registration may only apply after completing a course and may only be taken at a maximum of four consecutive times.

Registration in SPS 512-0 Continuous Registration will allow students to:

- Maintain an active Net ID and email account.
- Access University facilities including university libraries Access, SPS resources and Learning Studios (online tutorials)
- Avoid readmission requirement for leaves of 3 or more terms.

Students register for SPS 512-0 Continuous Registration in exactly the same way that they would for any other course, via CAESAR (<https://www.caesar.northwestern.edu>).

There is no cost to register for SPS 512-0 Continuous Registration.

SPS 512-0 Continuous Registration does not carry any units of credit, so it cannot be used to establish eligibility for financial aid programs, defer loans or maintain international residency requirements.

## Readmission Policies

Students who do not register for three consecutive quarters are considered to have "discontinued" their study at SPS and are withdrawn from their program and deactivated by the CAESAR (<https://www.caesar.northwestern.edu>) system. In order to be reactivated and take courses again, students have been discontinued less than 5 years (20 quarters) prior to their desired readmission quarter, and must submit the SPS Request for Readmission (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>). Students who have been discontinued for 5 years (20 quarters) or more must submit a new application to SPS. Please adhere to the school's application deadlines. If readmitted, students are subject to the readmission fee and the following policies:

- Students will be readmitted into the curriculum that is current at the time of their readmission, which could mean additional units of credit are required for the degree.
- If a readmitted student wishes to remain in the original curriculum in which they started, they may submit a Student Affairs petition (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>) to request this accommodation.

## Deferring Entry into the Program

Students in part-time programs have the option to delay the start of their degree program or certificate by one to four quarters.

Students in part-time programs may defer by sending an email to the SPS Registrar's office from their NU email account.

Students admitted to full-time accelerated programs have the option to defer the start of their cohort degree program to the following fall quarter. Students in full-time accelerated programs should consult their admission letter for information on requesting deferral of their start date.

### Important Information and Policies on Deferred Entry

- Students may defer a maximum of four quarters from their term of admission. For example, a student admitted for a fall quarter may defer fall, winter, spring and summer quarters but must start the certificate of advanced graduate study or degree program by the following fall term.
- International students admitted to a full-time on-campus program that has just one start term may defer to the following academic year. For example, a student admitted for a fall quarter may defer until the following fall term.
- Students who do not start their certificate or degree program within this time must apply for readmission.

## Taking More than Two Courses in a Quarter

Most SPS graduate programs are designed to be completed part-time to accommodate the busy schedules of working adults. If a student's schedule allows, they may take up to four courses in a quarter pending advisor approval; however, as programs are designed for part-time study, SPS cannot guarantee the scheduling of courses to accommodate the equivalent of full-time study.

CAESAR (<https://www.caesar.northwestern.edu>) limits self-service registration to two courses. To register for more than two courses, students must contact the SPS Registrar to request that their enrollment capacity be lifted. This request must be made before students attempt course registration on CAESAR (<https://www.caesar.northwestern.edu>) or they will have to register for their third and fourth classes by submitting a change of registration form.

Please note, the following programs are designed to be completed full-time, therefore the two-course per term limit does not apply: Accelerated Master in Public Policy and Administration, Accelerated Data Science, and Accelerated Information Systems.

## Prerequisites

Prerequisites are courses required prior to taking any other course. Prerequisites indicate the expected background for a course. If no prerequisite is noted, none is required. Students are responsible for discussing course requirements with their academic advisers. They

should look carefully at the requirements for each program or certificate and plan early how to schedule courses to take care of prerequisites.

## Course Cancellation

The University reserves the right to cancel classes when necessary, including those for which registration is not sufficient. Students will be notified by their academic program once the course has been cancelled and will be dropped from those courses by the Registrar's office.

## Dropping Courses

Dropping a course refers to the students removing themselves from the course. Students who drop all their courses for a given quarter are sometimes referred to as "withdrawing" from the academic quarter. At SPS, this simply indicates that an active student is not enrolled for that quarter, not that the individual is no longer a student.

### How to Drop a Course During the Registration Period

Students can drop a course via self-service in CAESAR until the end of the registration period for the term (until the last day of the first week of the term, exact dates found on the SPS Graduate Academic Calendar (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/sps/academic-calendar/#graduatetext>)). Classes dropped during this time will not appear on the student's official transcript but are subject to Refund Policy.

After the end of the registration period, students may request to drop a course until the drop deadline (roughly at sixth week of the term, exact dates found on the SPS Graduate Academic Calendar (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/sps/academic-calendar/#graduatetext>)). In this period of the term, students must submit a Change of Registration form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>) to the SPS Registrar's Office in order to drop from the course. The SPS Registrar's Office will accept this form by email at [onlinereg@northwestern.edu](mailto:onlinereg@northwestern.edu), providing it is sent from the student's Northwestern email account. Dropped classes during this period will not appear on the student's official transcript.

### Administrative Drop Policy

It is the student's responsibility to officially drop/withdraw from classes.

Students who fail to participate in their course(s) during the first two weeks of the quarter without contacting the faculty may be administratively dropped from the course(s). Administratively dropped courses will not appear on the student record and will receive a full tuition refund.

Logging into Canvas does not constitute participation. Non-participation is defined as the following:

- No posts in graded discussion in Canvas
- No graded quizzes submitted in Canvas
- No graded assignment files uploaded to Canvas  
And/or
- Zero participation in the course as determined by the faculty member

Students may also be administratively dropped at any time from a course due to the following:

- Student has not met the course prerequisite, co-requisite, or registration restrictions/requirements
- Failing course requirements
- Course cancellations

- Student registration hold lifted at time of payment, and payment subsequently cannot be processed.

Financial aid recipients who drop from a course but remain enrolled in at least one other unit-bearing course for the same academic term may be required to return a portion of their federal financial aid (federal loans and/or grants), state assistance, outside scholarships, and/or institutional financial aid for that term. This return of funding may impact the balance or refund available on your Northwestern student account. The Office of Financial Aid will review your financial aid enrollment to determine if a return of financial aid would be required.

Dropping a course may influence your eligibility for federal and state financial aid in future terms due to the requirements outlined in the Satisfactory Academic Progress policy (<https://chicagofinancialaid.northwestern.edu/how-it-works/maintaining-satisfactory-academic-progress/>) for your program. For more information on the impact of dropping a course on financial aid, contact the Chicago Office of Financial Aid (<https://chicagofinancialaid.northwestern.edu/help/contact/>) or visit their website (<https://chicagofinancialaid.northwestern.edu/how-it-works/enrollment-changes-and-withdrawals/enrollment-changes.html>).

## Requesting to Be Withdrawn From a Class After the Drop Deadline

In rare cases, a student may request to be removed from a course after the drop deadline. Requests to be removed from a class after the drop deadline is considered a withdrawal. Students may initiate a request for withdrawal by submitting the Change of Registration form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>) to the SPS Registrar's Office until the withdrawal deadline (roughly at the ninth week of the term, exact date found on the SPS Graduate Academic Calendar (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/sps/academic-calendar/#graduatetext>)). The SPS Registrar's Office will accept this form by email at [onlinereg@northwestern.edu](mailto:onlinereg@northwestern.edu) providing it is sent from the student's Northwestern email account.

All withdrawals after the drop deadline will result in a "W" (withdrawal) grade being posted to the student's official transcript. Graduate program students may have up to two W's on their SPS transcript. Requests for withdrawals that exceed this limit will be denied.

## Additional Policies Regarding Dropping a Course

- If a student needs to drop a course, they must officially drop through CAESAR or through Change of Registration form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>) submitted to the SPS Registrar; it is not sufficient to simply notify the instructor, speak with one's adviser, or cease attending class.
- After the registration period has ended, students may still drop a course without academic penalty until the drop deadline (check the SPS Graduate Academic Calendar (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/sps/academic-calendar/#graduatetext>) for drop deadline dates). Courses dropped during this time will not appear on the student's transcript; however, students will only be eligible for a partial course refund if dropping in the given quarter. For specific information on refunds, contact Student Financial Services (<https://www.northwestern.edu/sfs/>).
- CAESAR will not allow a student to drop all of their classes in a given term. If a student would like to drop all classes in a given term, they should use the Change of Registration form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>) to request that the SPS Registrar make this change on their behalf.

- Students who feel that extenuating circumstances may merit an exception to any of the above should submit a Student Affairs Petition (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>) outlining the reasoning and attach any relevant supporting documentation.

## Independent Study

The purpose of an Independent Study is to investigate topics not covered by regular courses offered in the curriculum. An independent study is a customized course of study undertaken by a single student under the guidance of an approved instructor. Denoted by the course number 499, independent studies are comparable in their demands to other graduate-level courses.

To register for Independent Study, a student must:

- a. Identify an SPS faculty member to supervise the independent study. To ensure compliance with Northwestern academic policies and standards, all independent study instructors must be approved by SPS administration. Students with questions or concerns about choosing an independent study instructor should contact their academic adviser (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/student-services/advising.php>).
- b. Develop a syllabus, in consultation with their instructor that includes a list of readings, assignments, assignment deadlines and assessment criteria as well as a breakdown of how the grade will be calculated. Please note, Independent Study courses cannot duplicate regular courses offered by SPS Academic Programs.
- c. Submit a completed Independent Study Application form with syllabus, unofficial transcripts, and an email from the supervising faculty member approving the submitted syllabus by the deadline given in the SPS Graduate Calendar (three weeks prior to the start of the quarter) (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/sps/academic-calendar/#graduatetext>). Once registration is approved, the SPS registrar will register the student.

## Additional Policies on Independent Studies

- Only one independent study course is allowed in SPS master programs, except for the MA Literature, MA Liberal Studies, MA in Writing, and the MFA in Prose and Poetry programs which allow two.
- An independent study can only be undertaken if an equivalent course is not offered by SPS once within four consecutive quarters. Required courses in a program's curriculum may not be taken as independent study courses. Students should contact their academic adviser (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/student-services/advising.php>) for guidance on the independent study approval process.

## SPS Identity Verification Policy

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation process requires an institution verify the identity of students enrolled in online courses or programs. Methods of verifying identification must be reasonable and include appropriate safeguards to protect a student's privacy. The following institutional practices are identified by the HLC as acceptable practices for verifying student identity:

- A secure login and pass code
- Proctored examinations and assessment design
- New or other technologies and practices, including audio/visual identification

**SPS will implement the following processes to verify student identity in online programs:**

**Secure Login and Pass Code**

In addition to requiring a secure login (NetID) and passcode for enrollment in each course and all associated online coursework (Canvas), students also must sign up for multi-factor authentication (MFA) (<https://services.northwestern.edu/TDClient/30/Portal/KB/ArticleDet/?ID=1901>) which provides an extra layer of security before logging into an online service. This ensures that the Net ID holder is the only person who can access their account, even if a password is stolen.

**Proctored Examinations and Assessment Design**

Proctored examinations are used in select courses, requiring students to confirm their identity prior to taking an exam. While proctored exams will be a part of the strategy (utilizing NU's approved software and/or internal procedures), alternative strategies will include:

- Question banks for exams
- Reflection and analysis after submission of an assignment
- Assignment-design centered around making unique arguments utilizing the student's own rationale.
- Changing the assignment prompt details frequently
- Video presentations or video assignment/discussion submissions

**New or Other Technologies and Practices: Audio/Visual identification**

SPS has instituted additional methods of identity verification utilizing visual identification in at least half of the required courses for a student to complete their online degree program.

All students will be required to obtain a student ID card (Wildcard). The picture submitted for a student's Wildcard populates the student's Caesar profile and will be utilized by the faculty member for identity verification.

A selection of online courses will include assignments requiring video submission (such as presentations, proctored exams, and video discussion boards) in which the faculty will compare the student's official University photo (Wildcard photo) with the person completing the video or proctored assignment. Any potential issues of discrepancy will be reported to the program staff member and the issue will be handled through the academic integrity process. If a student does not have a Wildcard at the start of the term in one of these courses, the student will have a registration hold placed on their account preventing them from enrolling in any future terms until the student obtains a Wildcard.

## Internships

Internships can provide a great opportunity for students to gain paid or unpaid workplace experience. While SPS does not actively place students in internships, the school encourages students to seek out internship opportunities, either as a supplement to their graduate program or as part of an independent study (499).

Students in the MA and MFA Programs in Creative Writing interested in registering for a practicum should contact their academic adviser (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/student-services/advising.php>).

- a. Students should check with their academic adviser (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/student-services/advising.php>) for guidance regarding any internship requirements.
- b. Students should write a detailed proposal, articulating specifically what they will be doing, what resources they will have access to

at the internship and who will be supervising the internship. This proposal will need to be approved by the Assistant Director for Graduate Programs. The student's academic adviser (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/student-services/advising.php>) can help guide the student through this process.

- c. Near the close of the internship, the internship supervisor should email a written evaluation of the student's performance to the instructor. This evaluation should be based on clearly defined tasks and will factor into the student's final grade.

While an internship alone cannot be directly counted for credit towards one's degree, a student can take advantage of the internship's experience and resources as the foundation of an independent study. To incorporate an internship into an independent study, students should follow the independent study registration procedures and additional policies listed above.

## Capstone Classes and Independent Thesis Research Projects

In all programs, students must complete a culminating project: a capstone or thesis. For all programs this can be achieved by undertaking an independent thesis research project (590), and in some programs this may be achieved by completing a capstone class (498). Students should check their curriculum requirements to see whether 498 is an option available in their program.

Students in the MFA program should see program-specific policies section for thesis policies and processes unique to that program.

Students in the MSGH program should see program-specific policies regarding registration in the 590 practicum course.

The table below outlines the differences in very broad terms. Individual programs may have specific policies regarding each of these.

Question	498 Capstone Course	590 Thesis
What work is required?	A student will work individually and in some programs may also be required to participate in a group project or case study.	Individually, a student will work independently under the guidance of a thesis advisor on an original project.
How long does it take?	10-week class.	Students register for 590 once only with the exception of MFA and have one year to complete the thesis research project.
When can a student register?	A student registers for 498 during or after their last quarter of classes.	A student registers for 590 during or after their last quarter of classes.
How does a student register?	Students register themselves in CAESAR.	Students must receive approval of a proposal and submit a Thesis Registration form. The process in full is outlined on the Thesis Intent to Register Form.

How will the final project be assessed?	A student is individually assessed and graded throughout the duration of the class and is given a final course grade that is factored into their cumulative GPA.	Multiple drafts of the thesis are submitted until the thesis meets both Thesis Advisor and Final Reader approval, at which time a grade of P (pass) is given. Does not affect cumulative GPA.
How much is tuition?	Tuition is the cost of one unit of graduate credit.	Tuition is the cost of one unit of graduate credit.

## Registering for the Capstone Class or Individual Thesis

Students may register for 498 or 590 courses in the same quarter as their last remaining course but not before. Students must have a cumulative GPA of 3.0, and no outstanding incomplete grades (Y grade) on their SPS graduate record, to be eligible to enroll in the 498 capstone class or 590 thesis research. Students who hold a cumulative GPA below 3.0 after completing 498 must contact their academic adviser immediately. The student will be required to take an additional course, and the graduation date will be adjusted.

## Thesis Registration Process

For more information on the thesis process, please see the Thesis Student Guide sheet attached on the SPS Forms page (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/login.php>).

Students are responsible for submitting a Thesis Registration Form along with the following:

- A proposal approved by the faculty member whom you have identified;
- The faculty member's e-mail acceptance to serve as a Thesis Advisor; and
- A completed degree audit by your academic adviser

All of these documents must be submitted at least two weeks prior to the start of the academic term in which you wish to register for the Thesis course. The student will be notified as to whether or not their proposal has been approved.

## Taking Additional Courses Beyond Those Required by the Curriculum

Additional courses are elective courses that are not required for a student's degree completion. Students who wish to take additional courses beyond their necessary degree requirements are encouraged to continue their studies at SPS in a graduate certificate or certificate of advanced graduate study program after completion of their degree program.

SPS recommends that students contact their academic adviser (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/student-services/advising.php>) to discuss applying for a certificate of advanced graduate study or before registering for additional courses as a degree student.

## Additional Policies and Information Relating to Additional Courses

- If a student takes additional courses, the grades will count towards the student's degree grade point average and cumulative grade point average.
- For more information on grade requirements, see the section on grade requirements and academic progress.
- Financial aid or loans may not cover the cost of any classes that do not count as progress toward the student's declared degree or declared certificate of advanced graduate study.

## Double Specializations

Only one specialization can be taken with each degree. Students interested in completing two specialization requirements should consider pursuing a graduate certificate (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/program-search/certificates.php>) following graduation from their program.

## Course Waivers

In rare situations, if a student's prior academic experience is assessed as equivalent to the mastery of the course content, and addresses the same learning objectives of the course the student wishes to waive, a course waiver may be granted.

*\*Please note that receiving a course waiver does not reduce the number of course units a student must earn to receive their graduate degree.*

## Applying for a Waiver

To apply for a waiver, a student must consult with their academic adviser and submit a course waiver request form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>). This request must include the following supporting documentation:

- Course description and syllabus of the previously completed course(s).
- Transcripts from previous coursework.
- Additional Policies and Information Relating to Course Waivers.
  - Waivers are granted for equivalent credit-bearing graduate coursework completed at an accredited university.
  - Limited exceptions for undergraduate work may apply, please see your academic adviser for details.
- Waivers will only be considered for credit-bearing courses taken within the last 10 years in which the student earned a grade of B or better.
- Student's cannot waive out of more than three courses in the student's masters program or one in the student's certificate program.
- In situations where a course waiver is granted, the student should consult with their graduate academic adviser to course plan.

## Substituting Courses (Core/Specialization Courses)

A course substitution allows a student to substitute a required core or specialization course within the student's curriculum with a Northwestern course outside of the student's program that has similar learning outcomes that the student wishes to take. If a course is not listed in the student's program curriculum requirements or designated as an elective for that program in the course description, then it is considered outside of the program.

In some unique circumstances students may request to substitute a course with a course outside of their program to replace a designated elective\* in their curriculum. Taking a course outside of a student's curriculum may impact the student's ability to declare a specialization. Please see [Taking Courses Outside of a Student's Program \(Electives\)](#).

Students may not take more than 50% of their required courses outside of their SPS program.

\*Students in the Humanities may be able to replace certain core courses with classes outside their program, please see your academic adviser for more information.

## **Getting Approval and Registering for a Course Substitution**

To substitute a required core or specialization course within the student's curriculum with a Northwestern course that has similar learning outcomes that the student wishes to take, the student must complete the following process to determine whether or not the course will be counted towards their degree:

- Students are required to consult with their SPS academic adviser about selection of any courses outside of their program degree requirements.
- Students will then need to submit a Course Waiver Request Form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>) at least two weeks prior to the start of the term including a course description and syllabus of the desired course that shows similar learning outcomes of the course the student wishes to substitute.
  - If the Course Substitution is approved, the student will be notified and must submit a Change of Registration Form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/login.php>) for the term in which the request was made for.
  - Students taking courses outside their program will be charged tuition at the same rate as if they were taking courses in their degree program.
  - Financial aid or loans may not cover the cost of any classes that do not count as progress toward the student's declared degree.
  - Students may incur additional fees associated with taking a class in another program.
  - SPS does not guarantee enrollment in courses outside of a student's program.
  - Only students in MALS, MALIT, or MA Writing certificates of advanced graduate studies are permitted to seek course substitution waiver opportunities per the above policies.

If a student wishes to take a course outside of SPS at another Northwestern School, please see the [Taking Courses Outside of SPS \(Cross-Registration\)](#).

## **Taking Elective Courses Outside of a Student's Program**

If a course is not listed in the student's program curriculum requirements or designated as an elective for that program in the course description, then it is considered outside of the program. Students who have been admitted to a SPS master's degree program and wish to pursue academic interests not available in their SPS program have the option to enroll in graduate-level courses at other SPS programs as availability and program restrictions allow. A student may be able to substitute a designated elective\* in their curriculum with a course outside of their program. The

following policies and procedures apply to all SPS students seeking such enrollment:

- SPS does not guarantee enrollment in courses outside of a student's program. Not all programs or courses will allow outside students to enroll.
- Students are required to consult with their SPS academic adviser about selection of any courses outside of their program degree requirements.
- A student will then need to submit a Course Waiver Request Form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/login.php>) at least two weeks prior to the start of the term including the following:
  - Course description and syllabus of the desired course.
  - A rationale for why taking the specific course outside of the student's program will be beneficial to the student's course of study and career goals.
- \*Students in the Humanities may be able to replace certain core courses with classes outside their program, please see your academic adviser for more information.
- If the Course Substitution is approved, the student will be notified and must submit a Change of Registration Form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/login.php>) for the term in which the request was made for.
- All request are subject to departmental approval through the review process after submission. Not all programs or courses will allow outside students to enroll.
- Students taking courses outside their program will be charged tuition at the same rate as if they were taking courses in their degree program.
- Financial aid or loans may not cover the cost of any classes that do not count as progress toward the student's declared degree.
- Students may incur additional fees associated with taking a class in another program.

If a student wishes to take a course outside of SPS at another Northwestern School, please see the [Taking Courses Outside of SPS \(Cross-Registration\)](#).

## **Taking Courses Outside of SPS (Cross-Registration)**

Students who have been admitted to a SPS master's degree program and wish to pursue academic interests not available in SPS have the option to enroll in graduate-level courses at other Northwestern schools as availability and program restrictions allow. A student may be able to substitute a designated elective\* in their curriculum with a course outside of SPS. The following policies and procedures apply to all SPS students seeking such enrollment:

- Students need to have taken at least two courses in their SPS program and have at least a 3.5 CUM GPA.
- SPS does not guarantee enrollment in courses outside of a student's program. Not all programs or courses will allow outside students to enroll.
- Students are required to consult with their SPS academic adviser about selection of any courses outside of their program degree requirements.
- Students will need to receive documented permission from the applicable department offering the course as well as permission from the instructor teaching the course.

- A student will then need to submit a Course Waiver Request Form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/login.php>) at least two weeks prior to the start of the term including the following:
  - Course description and syllabus of the desired course.
  - Documentation of permission from the instructor and the department where the course resides (e-mail is sufficient).
  - A rationale for why taking the specific course outside of the student's program will be beneficial to the student's course of study and career goals.
- \*Students in the Humanities may be able to replace certain core courses with classes outside their program, please see your academic adviser for more information.
- If the Course Substitution is approved, the student will be notified and must submit a Change of Registration Form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/login.php>) for the term in which the request was made for.
- Students taking courses outside their program will be charged tuition at the same rate as if they were taking courses in their degree program.
- Financial aid or loans may not cover the cost of any classes that do not count as progress toward the student's declared degree.
- Students may incur additional fees associated with taking a class in another program.
- SPS students may take a maximum of three courses outside of SPS.
- For students in our MALS and MALit programs only: Students may not take more than 50% of their required courses outside of regularly scheduled SPS classes, i.e. classes offered through the Graduate School (TGS). There may be other stipulations that apply, so please be sure to check with your program-specific policies and consult with your academic adviser.
- For students in our MA in Writing program only: Students may not take more than two (2) of their required courses outside of regularly scheduled SPS classes, i.e. classes offered through the Graduate School (TGS). There may be other stipulations that apply, so please be sure to check with your program-specific policies and consult with your academic adviser.
- For students in our MFA in Prose and Poetry programs only: Students may not take more than three (3) of their required courses outside of regularly scheduled SPS classes, i.e. classes offered through the Graduate School (TGS) – and no more than two (2) in a single year. There may be other stipulations that apply, so please be sure to check with your program-specific policies and consult with your academic adviser.

*\*Please note: Whether a course is taken in another school to meet SPS program degree requirements or not, the course grade will be factored into the student's cumulative GPA.*

## Transferring to a New Program Within SPS

To apply to transfer from one SPS graduate program to another, students must submit the following to SPS Admissions by the admission deadline (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/masters/important-dates.php>):

- Application for Program Transfer form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>)
- Most recent SPS transcript
- Transcripts from any institution that a student attended since admission to his or her SPS program

- New statement of purpose
- Updated resume/CV
- Updated letters of recommendation
- Possible writing samples and other materials (please check the admissions requirements for the respective programs)

Transfers between programs are reviewed by the admissions committee during the application period. Students who transfer will have their coursework evaluated to see if any classes can count toward the new program requirements. Students should check the Course Substitution section for eligibility.

Students may not transfer from a degree program into a certificate program. Students who wish to transfer from a certificate program into a degree program must complete a new application for the desired program.

Students may not transfer from a part-time program into a full-time accelerated program.

## Stackable Graduate Certificates

Students who want to apply to a master's program before completing a stackable graduate certificate must complete a new application and be admitted to the desired program. Completed courses will count toward the applicable master's degree, but there will be no certificate conferred.

Students who successfully complete an SPS graduate certificate that stacks into an applicable master's program can apply certificate course credits to the master's degree if they choose to apply to the master's program and are admitted. To apply to the master's program after successful graduate certificate completion, students must submit the following to SPS Admissions by the admission deadline (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/masters/important-dates.php>):

- Application form
- Most recent SPS transcript with certificate conferral
- Revised statement of purpose
- Updated resume/CV
- One additional letter of recommendation, preferably from an SPS faculty member from the certificate program
- Possible writing samples and other materials (please check the admissions requirements for the respective programs)

*\*Please note: Students in a master's degree program cannot transfer into a related graduate certificate program once they have enrolled in a course in the master's program. Certificates of Advanced Graduate Study do not stack into a master's degree program.*

## Calculation Impact on Cumulative GPA

Please be aware that *all* graduate course grades affect the student's degree grade point average and cumulative grade point average, including graduate courses taken outside the degree or certificate program.

Transferring to a different SPS program does not reset a student's cumulative GPA.

## Changing Program Status

Any of the following are considered changes in a student's program status:

- Changing declared degree specialization or track to another within same degree program.
- Changing to a new curriculum within the student's existing program.

## Follow the Steps Below for a Change in Program Status

- SPS students who wish to transfer programs within SPS must complete the Application for Program Transfer form (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/forms-and-documents.php>).
  - The transfer application must include a student's unofficial SPS transcript and a brief statement as to why the transfer is being requested.
- SPS students who wish to change their degree specialization should contact their academic adviser (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/student-services/advising.php>).
- Students who wish to change to an updated curriculum must complete a Student Affairs Petition (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/main/login.php>).
  - Students should consult with their academic adviser prior to requesting such a change in order to fully understand the academic ramifications of switching curriculums.

## Policies on Changing Program Status

- Any allowable course substitution will be determined at the time of admission. Students should check the Course Substitution section for eligibility.
- Please note that any courses taken as a visiting scholar or certificate student will not transfer to degree programs.

*\*Please note: If you are in a degree seeking or certificate program within SPS, you cannot pursue any other for-credit program or certificate within Northwestern or SPS until you have completed your current program.*

## Transferring From Northwestern Graduate Programs to SPS

Northwestern students who wish to transfer into a graduate program within SPS must apply to the SPS program as a new applicant and submit all application materials, including the application form and fee, outlined on the admissions pages of each graduate program (<https://sps.northwestern.edu/masters/>) of the SPS website.

## Transfer Credit

*Please note: For on-campus accelerated programs, applying transfer credits may affect students' full-time status and/or limit available courses. Students are strongly encouraged to speak with an adviser about the impact of any applied transfer credits*

Admitted students may apply for up to two (2) units (two courses) of graduate work to be accepted as transfer credit for SPS master's degree programs. SPS graduate certificates may accept no more than one (1) unit of transfer credit. The student's prior academic experience (proposed transfer course(s)) will be assessed to determine if it is equivalent to the mastery of the current course content and subject matter and addresses similar learning objectives of a course in the master's program they are entering at Northwestern SPS. Not all SPS courses are eligible for transfer credit.

Additional Information regarding transfer credit:

- Proposed transfer courses must have been completed while the student was previously enrolled in another graduate-level for-credit

- credential program leading to a degree but was not used towards a previously completed credential at another university.
- Only graduate courses completed prior to enrollment at SPS may be considered for transfer credit.
- Transfer credit will only be accepted for courses completed with a grade of a B (3.0) or better.
- Transfer credits will only be considered for credit-bearing courses from regionally accredited institutions taken within the last ten (10) years from the time the transfer credit form is submitted. Courses completed at international institutions of higher education require an official course-by-course evaluation from a NACES member.
- Audited courses are not eligible for transfer credit.
- Courses which earned a satisfactory/non satisfactory (Pass/No Pass) grade are not eligible for transfer credit.
- Courses counted towards and/or listed on an undergraduate degree transcript, will not be considered for graduate transfer credit.
- Please note that while a course credit may transfer in, the course grade does not transfer, and credit transfers do not impact a student's SPS GPA.
- The graduate program faculty and the Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs make the final determination as to which credits are acceptable for transfer credit. This decision is final and not subject to appeal.

*Please note: Certificates of Advanced Graduate Study do not stack into a master's degree program.*