

BBS Course Waiver and Course Substitution Requests

Course Substitution Policy

Harvard Medical School and the Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences do not accept transfer credits from other academic institutions. However, students who have taken graduate-level equivalent courses at another institution in a relevant science program may petition to substitute up to but no more than two required BBS core courses (Gen201, BCMP200, CB201, BBS230A/B).

Course Substitution Process

The student must demonstrate to the Course Faculty Director(s) that they meet the content knowledge of the core course(s). In consultation with the Course Faculty Director(s) the student will need to:

- review past coursework;
- share the elective course the student would like to take in the core course's place;
- demonstrate proper content knowledge orally; and
- pass a short quiz,

Then the student can substitute the core course with an elective course that meets the student's needs and interests. BBS students interested in petitioning should, in consultation with their Program Advisor, complete the course substitution form. If a student receives approval for a substitution, the student will still need to take 8 courses to meet the BBS program requirements.

Course substitution forms should be completed by the second Monday of the fall semester.

Course Waiver Policy for Students with a Previous Master's Degree

Harvard Medical School and the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences do not accept transfer credits from other academic institutions. However, students who have received a master's degree and taken equivalent courses at another graduate institution in a relevant science program may petition to waive up to two required BBS courses. BBS students interested in petitioning should, in consultation with their Program Advisor and/or BBS Faculty Director, complete the course waiver form to have up to two courses of the required eight courses waived. Normally, the courses that will be waived are elective courses and not one of the four required core content courses unless the student can demonstrate to the Core Course Faculty Directors that they meet the content knowledge of those courses. In total, the student will be taking 6 of 8 required BBS courses to meet the program requirements.

Course waiver forms should be completed by the second Monday of the fall semester.

Course Waiver Policy for Students with Previous Doctoral Coursework

Harvard Medical School and the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences do not accept transfer credits from other academic institutions. However, students who have completed equivalent courses at another graduate institution while pursuing a PhD in a relevant science program may petition to waive up to two required BBS courses. BBS students interested in petitioning should, in consultation with their Program

Advisor and/or BBS Faculty Director, complete the course waiver form to have up to two courses of the required eight courses waived. Normally, the courses that will be waived are elective courses and not one of the four required core content courses unless the student can demonstrate to the Core Course Faculty Directors that they meet the content knowledge of those courses. In total, the student will be taking 6 of 8 required BBS courses to meet the program requirements.

Course waiver forms should be completed by the second Monday of the fall semester.

MD-PhD and DMD-PhD Course Waiver Policy

All MDP and DMD-PhD BBS in BBS are required to take BBS 230A in the fall of their first BBS (G1) year. In addition, MDP students must take one of the three core content courses in year 1: GEN201 Principles of Genetics (fall); BCMP200 Principles of Molecular Biology (fall), or CB201 Principles of Cell Biology (spring).

In addition to BBS 230A and the chosen core content course, MDPs and DMD-PhDs will build an individualized program of study that includes an additional 2 full-semester equivalents for HST MDP students and 4 full-semester equivalents for Pathway MDP students.

Overall, the total number of course credits required for completion of the Ph.D. will remain unchanged from prior years at 6 full-semester equivalents for BBS MDP Pathway or DMD-PhD students and 4 for BBS MDP HST students. It's important to note that the 2022 BBS 230A course provides only a half-semester (quarter course) credit; we will not require MDPs to take the BBS 230B spring course, but we encourage you to consider this or other courses that focus on experimental design.

BBS HST MDP students

Total 4 full-semester (half course) equivalents

BBS 230A Analysis of the Biological Literature

1 Core Content course

(GEN 201, BCMP 200, or CB 201)

2 full-semester equivalents*

(*This may include the other Core Content courses or specialized courses in the form of full-semester, quarter, or nano-courses. The maximum number of nanocourses allowable towards degree is 6.)

BBS Pathway MDP/DMD-PhD students

Total 6 full-semester (half course) equivalents

BBS 230 Analysis of the Biological Literature

1 Core Content course

(GEN 201, BCMP 200, or CB 201)

4 full-semester equivalents*

Should an MDP student harbor great scholarship already in all of the core course content and skill areas (Genetics, Molecular Biology, and/or Cell Biology) such that no single core content course makes sense for them, they may request an opt-out upon review of course content with each core course director (see course waiver policy).

BBS 330 Critical Thinking and Research Proposal Writing is an optional course offered in the fall, taken by students wanting extended training in proposal writing before the PQE. MDPs already in their thesis lab may take BBS 330 in the fall of their G1 year as helpful preparation for a PQE exam in the late G1 spring.