



INFORMATION SYSTEMS • PUBLIC POLICY • MANAGEMENT

2026-27

Master's Student Handbook

Degree Programs Covered by this Handbook:

Master of Arts Management (MAM)

Master of Entertainment Industry Management (MEIM)

Master of Medical Management (MMM)

Master of Information Systems Management (MISM)

Master of Science in Health Care Analytics and Information Technology (MSHCAIT)

Master of Public Management (MPM)

Master of Science in Advanced Analytics and AI Systems (MSA3IS)

Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence Systems Management (AIM)

Master of Science in Information Security Policy Management (MSISPM)

Master of Science in Public Policy and Management (MSPPM)

Master of Science in Information Technology (MSIT)

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1. Welcome to Heinz College

Welcome to Heinz College at Carnegie Mellon University. We are delighted that you have joined our community of scholars, innovators, and future leaders. Whether you are beginning your first semester or returning for another year of study, this handbook is designed to help you navigate your academic journey. It serves as a guide to college policies, academic expectations, and the many resources available to support your success. We encourage you to refer to it often and to reach out to faculty and staff whenever you have questions.

Technology is impacting everything we do, from the way we live our lives to the way we do business, connect with one another, and understand the world around us.

Policy defines priorities and guides action. The creation, deployment, and re-visioning of smart policies through rigorous inquiry and evidence-based decision-making has always been a key component of human innovation and progress.

Policy and technology have historically been separate domains, but more and more the lines between the two—and the demands they place on each other—are blurring. And of critical interest is how this impacts people.

The next generation of leaders must deeply understand this critical point of intersection:

People, policy, and technology. The connections among the three define our time and will continue to shape the future of humankind.

At the Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy, we've understood this since our founding. Our first dean, William W. Cooper, had a vision of educating students for intelligent action, and this is still our primary objective.

The unique co-location of our two schools, Heinz College's School of Public Policy and Management and Heinz College's School of Information Systems and Management offers opportunities for collaboration that simply cannot be duplicated elsewhere. We also offer two groundbreaking joint degree programs with the Carnegie Mellon University College of Fine Arts. Our faculty and students know that exciting things happen when disciplines intersect and differing perspectives come into contact with one another.

While this handbook is specific to your academic experience in Heinz College, it is just one element of the Graduate Student Handbook Suite. There are several other resources within the suite that you should consult when needed:

- [Your Specific Program Handbook Addendum](#)
- [University-Wide Graduate Student Handbook](#) (Office of Graduate & Postdoctoral Affairs)
- [Carnegie Mellon Student Handbook](#)

Students who are physically present at our California location should reference their program catalogs that comply with California regulations.

2. Degrees Offered

2.1. Heinz College's School of Public Policy and Management

Master of Science in Health Care Analytics and Information Technology (MSHCAIT)

Master of Science in Public Policy & Management (MSPPM)

Master of Science in Public Policy & Management Data Analytics (MSPPM-DA)

Master of Science in Public Policy & Management Washington, D. C. (MSPPM-DC)

Master of Public Management (MPM)

2.2. Heinz College's School of Information Systems and Management

Master of Information Systems Management (MISM)

Master of Information Systems Management: Business Intelligence & Data Analytics (MISM-BIDA)

Master of Science in Advanced Analytics and AI Systems (MSA3IS)

Master of Science in Artificial Intelligence Systems Management (AIM)

Master of Science in Information Security Policy Management (MSISPM)

Master of Science in Information Technology: IT Management (MSIT-ITM)

Master of Science in Information Technology: Business Intelligence & Data Analytics (MSIT-BIDA)

Master of Science in Information Technology: Information Security & Assurance (MSIT-ISA)

2.3. Heinz College's Joint Programs with the College of Fine Arts

Master of Entertainment Industry Management (MEIM)

Master of Arts Management (MAM)

3. Carnegie Mellon University Statement of Assurance

The CMU Statement of Assurance can be found in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

4. The Carnegie Mellon Code

The Carnegie Mellon Code can be found in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

5. University Policies & Expectations

It is the responsibility of each member of the Carnegie Mellon community to be familiar with university policies and guidelines. In addition to this departmental graduate student handbook the following resources are available to assist you in understanding community expectations:

- [Carnegie Mellon Student Handbook](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [University-Wide Policies](#)
- [Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs](#)

6. Heinz College Academic Calendar

The [Heinz College Academic Calendar](#) provides information, dates, and deadlines to the Heinz College Community. This includes registration dates, class start dates, add/drop deadlines, exam dates and more.

All graduate level Heinz College courses follow the Heinz College Academic Calendar. Courses taken outside of Heinz College will follow that department's corresponding calendar. Academic calendars for other CMU departments can be found [here](#).

7. Educational Planning

7.1. Program Handbook Addendum

Each degree program publishes a supplemental handbook addendum which outlines specific curricular and program requirements. It is important that you familiarize yourself

with both your program handbook as well as this College handbook.

7.2. Advisor

Each program in Heinz College has an assigned academic advisor and program director. Your advisor can help you select courses and resolve academic questions and issues. You should plan to meet with your advisor at least twice per semester, but feel free to reach out to your advisor at any time.

7.3. Student Responsibility

Heinz College's faculty and staff will provide guidance and resources to help you successfully complete your program. However, it is your ultimate responsibility to ensure that you meet all your program's requirements.

7.4. Changes to Requirements

This handbook is intended to summarize the policies of Heinz College. The policies and requirements outlined in this handbook may change. Heinz College will make a serious effort to see that all students are informed of any relevant changes in policy or operations. In general, when such revisions and additions increase requirements, only the next entering class will be bound by them.

7.5. Course Materials

Students are responsible for obtaining all required course materials - including textbooks, articles, case studies, online readings, software, and any other resources identified by instructors. Students are expected to secure these materials in a timely manner to support full engagement in coursework.

All materials must be acquired and used in compliance with applicable copyright laws and institutional policies. This includes obtaining authorized copies of textbooks and digital resources, and refraining from the unauthorized sharing, reproduction, or distribution of copyrighted content.

7.6. Use of Lockdown Browser

Heinz College utilizes Lockdown Browser from Respondus and it integrates seamlessly with Canvas, the learning management system the school uses. Assessments are displayed

full-screen and cannot be minimized. It prevents access to other applications including messaging, screen-sharing, virtual machines, and network monitoring applications.

8. Program Committee

8.1. Program Committee Composition and Duties

Each degree has a Program Committee that oversees the program and advises the dean and faculty on program matters and student issues. The Program Committee, which meets periodically each semester, consists of faculty members appointed by the dean, the Associate Dean, the Senior Program Director and the Director of the program.

The Committee has final authority on a limited range of matters, such as student petitions to waive requirements. Students may appeal any Committee decision to the faculty or to the dean. For certain other petition types, the Committee has delegated decision-making authority to the senior director or associate dean. On matters such as academic standing, the Committee presents findings and recommendations to the faculty and implements the faculty's resulting decisions.

8.2. Process for Petition to the Program Committee

You may petition the Program Committee for permission to waive or modify your program's requirements. The Program Director, Senior Director, or Associate Dean will make decisions on petitions concerning the add and drop deadlines, course and credit loads, allowable units of Independent Study, late grade changes, late withdrawals, deferring of core courses and extension of incompletes. Most other petitions will be heard directly by the Program Committee.

Your petition for modification of any program requirements should be in the form of a memo to the Program Director, and should include a clearly written statement of the issue, the suggested remedy or proposed plan, and supportive evidence, if relevant. A statement of support from your advisor is especially helpful.

When submitting a petition, it is essential that you follow a reasonable and timely procedure. In most cases, this means that the petition should be submitted prior to the beginning of the semester for which you are requesting an action. For example, you generally will not be allowed to waive a required course if you have already missed three weeks of the class. Generally, you should allow at least two weeks for review and action on a petition.

You may appeal any decision by the Program Director, Senior Director, or Associate Dean

to the Program Committee. You may appeal any Program Committee ruling in writing to the Dean. Notify the Program Director or Associate Dean of any appeals so that the appropriate information can be forwarded to the Program Committee or Dean's Office

9. Teaching

Quality teaching is an important element of Heinz College's programs. Heinz College solicits student evaluations of all courses, provides Teaching Assistants in many required courses, and works with the University's Teaching Center to enhance the quality of teaching.

9.1. Instructor Responsibility

Instructors must provide a detailed syllabus identifying course objectives, content, procedures, and clear grading standards. The syllabus should also describe any TA responsibilities, how grades are assigned, how students can appeal a grade, and what forms of collaboration are prohibited. If any course policies are unclear, ask during the first class meeting. It is your responsibility to understand all course requirements and policies.

Instructors will ensure fair and confidential grading. To ensure confidentiality, instructors who use teaching assistants may ask you to identify homework, exams, and papers by your student ID instead of your name. In the syllabus, an instructor will describe how grades are assigned, what part a TA plays in the grading process, and how you can appeal a grade.

Heinz College is committed to keeping students informed of their academic progress and performance. Faculty are expected to provide grades and timely feedback for all assignments, exams, papers, presentations, and projects that factor into the final course grade. Communicating grades and providing timely feedback on assignments helps students improve and better master course content.

9.2. Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistant (TA) positions are given to master's or Ph.D. students who have demonstrated both an understanding of the course material and the ability to help others learn this information. Teaching Assistants are an important part of the success of Heinz College's programs. They assist the instructor by conducting review sessions; tutoring students, either individually or in small groups; and grading homework and examinations under the supervision of the instructor.

9.2.1. Selection of Students to Serve as Teaching Assistants

Teaching Assistants (TAs) are selected each semester for the following semester through an online process. Students indicate the courses for which they would like to TA and faculty and staff identify the best candidates. Not all courses have TAs and core courses are prioritized. Only some electives (typically high-enrollment ones) are assigned a TA.

In general, the higher your grades, the better your chances of becoming a TA. You will be considered for a teaching assistantship if you:

- Are in good academic standing with no academic integrity infractions.
- Express interest in a TA position by submitting an application in the online system.
- Received a minimum grade of B+, with an A- or higher as the preferred result, in the course for which you are being considered. You may also be eligible to TA a course that you have exempted. We do not advise being at TA until after you have completed your first semester.
- The course instructor accepts you as a TA.

Although TA positions primarily serve educational purposes, they also represent a means of financial support for students.

It should be noted that faculty preference plays an important role in the selection of a TA. It is appropriate to make your interest in being a TA for a particular course known to the instructor. This is particularly important for students exempting courses for which they wish to be a TA.

Students who have violated Heinz College's academic integrity policies will NOT be eligible to hold positions as a Teaching Assistant.

9.3. Heinz College Teaching Training Program

A TA is required to complete the Teaching Assistant Training Program. This program was developed jointly by Heinz College and the Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and is held at the start of the fall and spring semesters. As a TA, you will learn strategies for grading, tutoring, holding review sessions, and maintaining professional standards in the classroom.

9.4. Supervision of Teaching Assistants

TA responsibilities are defined in consultation with the instructor. Instructors must develop written job descriptions for the TA and meet with the TA on a regular basis to review course plans, go over work assignments, and address any problems.

If you feel that a TA in one of your courses is not performing effectively, it is important that you make the College aware of the problem. First, speak to the course instructor, and if you are not satisfied with the instructor's response, contact the Heinz College Director of Academic Services. A TA who is performing inadequately will be warned; a TA will be replaced if they do not improve. A TA who does not remain in good academic standing will not be re-appointed.

9.5. ITA Language Certification for Non-Native Speaking Students

Language Support in the Student Academic Success Center is a support service offering both credit and non-credit classes, workshops, and individual appointments designed to equip non-native English speakers (international students as well as international students who attended high school and/or undergraduate programs in the U.S.) with the skills needed to succeed in academic programs at Carnegie Mellon. In addition to developing academic literacy skills such as speaking, reading and writing, students can learn more about the culture and customs of the U.S. classroom. Language Support in the Student Academic Success Center also helps international teaching assistants (ITAs) who are non-native English speakers develop fluency and cultural understanding to teach successfully at Carnegie Mellon and provides ITA testing, required testing indicating a non-native speaking student has a language proficiency required before being allowed to work with undergraduates in classes, labs or individual meetings.

Both university policy and PA law require that all non-native English speaking students, undergraduate as well as graduate, have their language skills assessed before working as teaching assistants who meet with students.

Students in master programs can request an ITA Certification only when they have a job offer for a specific class, even if it is just a tentative job assignment. Students can satisfy the requirement in one of two ways: using your TOEFL speaking score, or taking the ITA test.

If you have been offered a TA position and require ITA certification, please apply for language certification with Language Support in the Student Academic Success Center.

9.6. Research Assistants

Research Assistant (RA) positions are given to master's students and Ph.D. students who have demonstrated both an understanding of the course material and the ability to help faculty further their research.

9.7. Selection of Students to Serve as Research Assistants

Research Assistant (RA) positions may be advertised on Handshake, or by working directly with a faculty member who is looking to hire an RA.

In general, the higher your grades, the better your chances of becoming a RA. You will be considered for a research assistantship if you:

- Are in good academic standing with no academic integrity infractions.
- The faculty member accepts you as an RA.

Students who have violated the College's academic integrity policies will NOT be eligible to hold positions as a Research Assistant.

Please review the CMU [Graduate Student Handbook](#) regarding employment eligibility.

9.8. Evaluation and Recognition of Teaching Performance and Heinz College Students

You will be asked to evaluate your courses and instructors at the end of each mini or semester. Evaluations are conducted online and are anonymous. The results will not be available to instructors until after the final grading period. Final evaluations are posted on the website: <http://www.cmu.edu/hub/fce/index.html>.

On the course evaluation, you are encouraged to numerically rank performance and to give comments. Comments are extremely helpful in explaining low or high ratings, so be sure to take the time to provide constructive comments that can help the faculty and administration build a better program.

At the end of the academic year, a committee of students, staff and faculty select an instructor to receive the annual Teaching Award, and a teaching assistant from each school to receive the Teaching Assistant of the Year Awards. The selections are based on student nominations, which are solicited in the spring. Students will also be asked to nominate a classmate to receive the following awards:

9.8.1. Barbara Jenkins Award

Awarded annually in memory of Barbara Jenkins (MSPPM '87) to a graduating student who has demonstrated service to the Heinz College community and made significant contributions to the quality of life for residents in the Pittsburgh region.

9.8.2. Otto A. Davis Award

Awarded annually in honor of Otto A. Davis, second dean of the Heinz College, to an individual who exemplifies the College's commitment to racial and social justice.

9.8.3. Student Leadership Award

Awarded annually to a graduating student from each school who best exemplifies leadership. The award recognizes an individual who has distinguished themselves across several dimensions, including:

- Demonstrated leadership role among peers (supportive, articulate spokesperson for peers, inspires and motivates others, helps bring about improvements/change)
- Demonstrated leadership and initiative in other arenas (with faculty, student organizations, across campus, in interaction with corporate representatives)
- Innovative approach or exceptional academic rigor (takes a problem/issue to a new level, demonstrates a novel approach to an issue, exceeds basic requirements)
- Strong communication skills (interpersonal, written, oral, etc.)
- Shows exceptional promise for future success (within an existing company or as an entrepreneur)

The recipients of each award are announced in May at the Heinz College Diploma Ceremony.

10. Master's Degree Completion and Certification

Information regarding the Statute of Limitations, Master's Degree Completion and Certification, and Early or Extended Completion of degrees is found in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

11. Master's Degree Requirements and Related Policies/Protocols

11.1. Length and Intensity of Courses

A full-semester course carries 12 units of credit and is generally expected to require an average of 12 hours per week of time, including time spent in and out of the classroom. "Mini" courses are those that are half a semester in length; they generally carry 6 units of credit, and also require approximately 12 hours per week of time. "Micro-Mini" courses are those that are usually 2-4 days in length; and they generally carry 3 units of credit.

Required classes are generally scheduled to meet for 80 minutes, two to three times a week during the day (on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; or Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday). Frequently, instructors make Friday an optional review session; if so, the instructor may require more out-of-class work so that the time commitment to the course is similar to a course which meets formally three times a week.

Elective classes are generally scheduled to meet for 80 minutes two times a week during the day or for two hours and 50 minutes one time per week during the evening.

11.2. Course Attendance

Students must attend the courses and sections for which they are registered. Failure to do so may impact room occupancy guidelines, as well as limit seats for students who are correctly registered for a particular course. If you need to make changes to your schedule to accommodate any limitations, please do so in Student Information Online (SIO) or speak with an Academic Services staff member.

11.3. Course Modality

Students must register for courses in the expected [course modality](#) for their program. If a course of study is full-time and in-person, students should register for sections that are delivered in-person. Remote or asynchronous courses are limited and seats will prioritize students in distance-learning programs.

11.4. Course Loads

The number of units a student takes in any semester depends upon the program and enrollment status. Additionally, individual circumstances may dictate a heavier or lighter

course load in a given semester.

11.5. Full-Time Course Load

Depending upon the degree program, full-time students generally register for 48-60 units of course work per semester in order to meet graduation requirements and may carry no more than 60 course units per semester. Academic program per semester unit maximums can be found in your degree program handbook. You may petition your Program Director or Associate Dean to take more than the maximum units if you feel you can handle the extra workload. You will not receive credit toward your degree for coursework taken in excess of 60 units, unless you obtain prior approval from your Program Director or Program Committee before the end of the drop/add period for that semester.

In addition, you must pay for all full-time semesters of Heinz College tuition that your program requires (i.e., three semesters of tuition for MISM, MS3, and AIM) and four semesters of tuition for AIM-16, MSISPM, MSPPM (2 year track, DA track, and DC track), MSHCA, MAM (2 year track) and MEIM, and either three or four semesters for MPM, even if you can complete all degree requirements in a shorter period of time.

Similarly, you can petition to take fewer than 48 units if there are reasons why you cannot carry a heavier load, and if you will be able to return to a normal course load the following semester. In some cases, this may delay your graduation date.

11.6. Part-Time Course Load

Part-time students typically take 12-30 units per semester, depending upon their individual circumstances and professional obligations. Students pay tuition on a per unit basis. Under special circumstances, you might be admitted into a typically full-time program as a part-time student. In this case, you must submit a plan to the Program Committee indicating which courses you will take each semester before you register. International students should reference the [University-Wide Graduate Student Handbook](#) regarding your ability to register as a part-time student.

11.7. Registering for Courses Outside of Heinz College

Heinz College values interdisciplinary learning and recognizes that graduate students benefit from exploring coursework across Carnegie Mellon University. To support this, students may take up to 36 units of general elective coursework outside of Heinz College

that complements their academic and professional goals.

All non-Heinz elective courses will be reviewed by the student's Academic Advisor. If any of these courses are not clearly aligned with their degree program's goals, the student will be asked to request approval through a general petition form. This approval process ensures that chosen electives align with the student's academic plan and contribute meaningfully to their overall learning experience.

Approved graduate-level courses taken at Carnegie Mellon University in which a student earns a passing grade (C- or better) will count toward Heinz College elective credit. These grades will also be included in the calculation of the student's Heinz College grade point average (GPA), further reflecting the student's academic achievements across disciplines.

In some cases, students may be permitted to take additional non-Heinz coursework that does not count toward the 36-unit elective limit. These opportunities are reviewed individually and should be discussed in advance with the Academic Advisor or Program Director to determine eligibility and alignment with program goals.

Students on Academic Probation are encouraged to prioritize their core coursework and academic recovery. During this time, students must obtain approval from their Academic Advisor or Program Director before enrolling in non-Heinz courses to ensure their academic plan remains focused and well-supported.

11.8. Pittsburgh Council on Higher Education (PCHE)

Information related to PCHE registration is found in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

Heinz College will count both the units AND the grade for any class taken at a PCHE University. Any graduate courses taken via PCHE for which you receive a passing grade — a grade of C- or better — count toward Heinz College elective credit, and the grades will be used in the computation of your Heinz College grade point average. These classes will appear with units and grades on your Carnegie Mellon transcript and will factor into your Heinz units and QPA. While CMU records a standard 3-credit external class as 9 units on your official transcript, Heinz College will credit you with 12 units toward your degree requirements.

Outgoing CMU students must register for and maintain at least 36 CMU units throughout the semester to take a PCHE course. PCHE courses do not count toward your full-time status.

If you drop below 36 CMU units at any point, you will be automatically dropped from your

PCHE courses. No exceptions will be made unless you are enrolled in an approved joint program.

NOTE: Suspended students may take courses elsewhere; however, they may receive transfer credit only if their college's and department's policies allow this. This is subject to the approval of your Program Director.

11.9. Undergraduate Courses Counting Toward Degree

11.9.1. Heinz College School of Information Systems and Management

MISM, MSISPM, AIM, and MSIT students may count no more than 12 units of undergraduate coursework as general electives towards the degree requirements. Undergraduate units will count against the 36 unit cap of courses taken outside Heinz College. Students who wish to take an undergraduate elective class **MUST** submit a general petition to their Academic Advisor and receive approval for the course to count towards the degree prior to the start of the class.

Generally, only upper division classes will be considered. If the student receives a grade of B or better, the units will count toward the degree, but the grade will not be factored into the student's Heinz College quality point average (QPA).

Please be aware that even with approval to count an undergraduate course for the degree, on the official CMU transcript undergraduate courses will not count towards the units earned or the QPA. If a course is cross-listed as both an undergraduate and graduate course, make sure to enroll in the graduate course to receive credit towards your degree requirements.

11.9.2. Heinz College School of Public Policy and Management | Heinz/CFA Joint Programs

Undergraduate courses can be identified by the course number: XX-100 - 500 are undergraduate courses and XX-600 can be either a graduate or undergraduate course depending on the College. Students who wish to take an undergraduate elective class **MUST** submit a petition to their Academic Advisor and receive approval for the course to count towards the degree prior to the start of the class. Generally, only upper division classes will be considered. If the student receives a grade of B or better, the units will count toward the degree, but the grade will not be factored into the student's Heinz quality point average (QPA). Please be aware that

even with approval to count the course for the degree, on the official CMU transcript undergraduate courses will not count towards the units earned or the QPA. Students may count no more than 12 units of undergraduate classes toward their Heinz degree.

11.10. Auditing Courses

An audited course will be counted toward the student's maximum allowable units per semester, even though it will not count toward the satisfaction of any degree requirement. Units are not earned for courses you audit. Students wishing to audit a course need to submit the Petition to Audit a Heinz College Course by the tenth day of the semester for a full-semester course and the fifth day of the mini for a mini course.

Students who audit a course may not retake the same course for units towards their degree completion or for a grade.

11.11. Adding and Dropping Courses

Heinz College's deadline for adding and dropping full-semester courses is the tenth business day of the semester. The deadline for mini courses is the fifth business day of the mini. Once you have met with your advisor, you can add/drop a course by using Carnegie Mellon's Online Registration up until the official add/drop deadline for the semester or mini. All Heinz courses for which you have registered will appear on your transcript and will be counted toward your QPA, even if you don't complete the course. **Therefore, if you do not drop a course on time, the grade (including a failing grade) will still count. Conversely, if you do not register properly for a course, you will not receive a grade, regardless of the amount or quality of your work in the course.**

In order to add or drop a course after the deadline, students must submit a petition to their Academic Advisor. You should note that permission to late add or drop a course is granted only when exceptional circumstances beyond your control have prevented you from submitting a timely course change.

11.12. Heinz College Policy on Withdrawing from a Course

Graduate students in Heinz College may not use the university-wide course withdrawal form per Heinz College academic policy. Students should contact their academic advisor to discuss options to drop or remove a course from their schedule after the published drop deadline.

11.13. Voucher Process

To help students manage challenges with workload, stress, and work-life balance, the University implemented a late voucher process in 2020. Each Masters student receives one voucher for each 12-month year of the program. The voucher allows a student to drop a course or request the pass/no pass option for a course up until the last day of classes. The student and their academic advisor must complete the voucher request form which includes the reason why the student wishes to use the voucher for that class. The student can use only one voucher in any academic year. Students do not need to use the vouchers; they are there as a safety net to ensure students can still explore and challenge themselves and not be penalized for taking academic and intellectual risks.

Please note, late drop vouchers are not to be used for core courses. Also, in order for a late drop voucher to be approved, a full-time student's course load may not drop below the minimum full-time unit load of 36 units.

At the discretion of their Program Director, students who face family, health or other personal crises that require changes to their schedule will be considered on an individual basis and may not be required to use a voucher for such emergencies.

For more information on the university's voucher system, please visit:

<https://www.cmu.edu/hub/registrar/course-changes/index.html>

11.14. Exemption of Core Courses

You are strongly encouraged to apply for exemption of a required course if you have already acquired all or most of the skills taught in that course outside of the College. In general, you will not be granted an exemption from a project course requirement.

To receive an exemption, you must either take a qualifying exam, or when there is no exam offered, petition a specified faculty or staff member—the process is detailed during your orientation. Exemption exams are given prior to or at the beginning of the semester for which the course is offered. Exemption exams for courses offered in multiple semesters must be taken prior to the fall semester. If you have some background in the material of a core course, it is in your interest to take the exemption exam. Three scenarios may occur as a result of taking the exemption exam: 1) you fully exempt the course; 2) you take the exam, but do not pass and need to take the course; 3) you demonstrate strong aptitude, but not mastery and are placed into a higher level course.

To petition to exempt a course that is not covered by an exam you should:

- Submit the Petition for Course Exemption form from the College website.
- Complete this form, and attach an official course description or syllabus from the prior course(s) you took, including the professor's name, textbooks used, and particular chapters covered. Also include a copy of your transcript that shows the grade you received in the class.
- Obtain the approval of a specified faculty or staff member.
- File the petition with your Program Director.

Be aware that if your petition is granted, you may need to learn some particular skills taught in an exempted course on your own time. No units will be awarded for courses that are exempted.

Your attempt to exempt a degree requirement may result in a conditional exemption. This indicates that you have accomplished some level of proficiency in the subject matter but may still need additional coursework to master it. When a conditional exemption is granted, the course that satisfies the condition must be taken in the same year that was expected for the core course it is replacing.

Course exemption requests should be submitted before registration for the applicable semester (i.e. if you intend to exempt a course normally offered in the spring semester, your petition should be submitted prior to spring registration opening). This ensures that the designated faculty or staff member has time to review your request prior to the start of the course. You should not first attend a course before deciding to request an exemption.

Some students fear that if they exempt a course instead of taking it and getting a high grade, their grade point average might be lower, and might fall below the minimum threshold for graduation. To prevent this problem and to encourage you to apply for exemptions, the College Committee uses a "shadow" grade of A- (3.67 points) for an exempted course when determining if you 1) meet the grade point requirements for graduation, 2) should be suspended or 3) should be dropped from the program. In other words, the Program Committee assumes that if you had taken the course, you would have received an A- grade, and if your grade point average would have been above 3.0 with that grade, the Committee will not suspend or drop you from the College. This grade will not appear on your transcript, it will not be included in your official QPA, and it is not used to determine whether to place you on probation or to send a letter of warning or congratulations. Further, a shadow grade is not used in the calculation for graduation with honors. Only one exemption receives a shadow grade; you are encouraged to exempt multiple courses if you can, but you will receive a shadow grade of A- for at most 12 units of coursework.

11.15. Certification of Degree

Certification of Degree information is found in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

11.16. Leave of Absence

Leave of Absence information is found in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

11.17. Withdrawal from CMU

Withdrawal of Degree information is found in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

11.18. Graduate Student Appeal and Grievance Procedures

Graduate students are encouraged to discuss their concerns with their Program Director, Senior Director, or Associate Dean. The Dean is also available for discussions at any stage of the process.

The University's policies and procedures for filing a grievance are outlined [here](#).

12. Grading and Evaluation

12.1. Heinz Grading Scale

Heinz College operates on a 4-point grading scale as follows:

Letter Grade	Interpretation	Points	Credit Toward Graduation?
A+	Exceptional	4.33	Yes
A	Excellent	4.00	Yes
A-	Very Good	3.67	Yes
B+	Good	3.33	Yes
B	Acceptable	3.00	Yes
B-	Fair	2.67	Yes
C+	Poor	2.33	Yes

C	Very Poor	2.00	Yes
C-	Minimal Passing	1.67	Yes
D, R	Failing	0	No
I	Incomplete	0	No
P	Pass	Non-factorable	Yes
N	No Pass	Non-factorable	No

12.2. Heinz Policy on Grades for Retaking a Course

You cannot take the same course twice and receive credit for both toward your degree. If the course content has changed significantly, you may petition your Program Committee for permission to get credit for both courses. You may retake any course in which you receive a grade of B- or lower in order to raise your cumulative QPA. You must register for the repeat course as you would any other. Your new grade will replace the original grade in evaluations of academic standing, but the earlier grade will remain on your official transcript and you will only earn units for the course once. You must petition the Program Director, Senior Director, or Associate Dean prior to the beginning of the semester if you want to retake a course in which you received a B- or lower.

If you earn a passing grade in a course taken as pass/no pass, you are not permitted to retake the course for a letter grade.

If a student fails a course because of an academic integrity violation and then retakes the course, both the failing grade and the new grade will be used in evaluations of academic standing and the calculation of the student's QPA.

Students who audit a course may not retake the same course for units towards their degree completion or for a grade.

12.3. Pass/No Pass Grades

Heinz College is committed to fostering a learning environment that encourages exploration, growth, and academic confidence. To support intellectual curiosity and reduce the pressure of graded performance in certain contexts, students have the option to take up to 12 units of elective (non-core) coursework on a Pass/No Pass basis. Additionally, students may take up to 6 more units of instructor-designated Pass/No Pass courses (e.g.,

micro-minis), bringing the total potential Pass/No Pass units to 18.

This flexible grading option allows students to engage with new subjects or challenging material outside of their primary focus area while still progressing toward their degree.

Students are encouraged to verify whether a course may be taken Pass/No Pass by reviewing the instructor's grading policy, typically available on the course syllabus or Canvas. If no information is provided for a Heinz Course, students should reach out to Academic Services for guidance.

To request the Pass/No Pass option, students must submit the Pass/No Pass Form—available on the Heinz College Current Students Forms webpage—by the add/drop deadline: the tenth day of class for a full semester or the fifth day of class for mini semesters. If the deadline has passed, students may submit a late voucher request.

Pass/No Pass courses contribute to the total units required for graduation but are not factored into the grade point average (GPA). All courses elected as Pass/No Pass—whether through standard petition or late voucher—count toward the overall Pass/No Pass unit limits.

12.4. Independent Study

Independent study and directed reading courses allow for one-on-one interaction between a professor and a student. These courses allow you the flexibility to direct your own coursework. It is a faculty member's discretion whether to take on an independent study or not, therefore independent studies generally are built upon mutual interests of the student and faculty member. You and the professor should agree in advance on a program of study and a method of evaluation. The number of course units should equal the expected number of hours per week required during the semester.

To receive approval for an independent study course, you must submit an [Independent Study Contract](#) to the faculty advisor accompanied by a memorandum which describes the plan for this independent study or directed reading course and includes the number of units to be earned, the outcome of the independent study (i.e., a paper or series of papers, etc.). The faculty advisor must sign the petition and the memorandum. These should be submitted to the Program Director prior to beginning your study; without this memo, you will not receive credit for this course. Independent study courses may only be directed by full-time faculty at Heinz College unless permission is received in advance from the Program Director.

Once submitted, Heinz Academic Services will register you for the course. This process must be completed by the end of the [Heinz College add/drop period](#).

You may not count independent study or directed reading courses toward fulfilling requirements in the Common Core or towards completion of your degree without approval from your Program Director. If you wish to take more than 12 units of such courses, you must submit a petition to the Associate Dean no later than one week prior to the add/drop deadline for the mini or semester.

12.5. Incomplete Grades

You are expected to finish all required work in a course by the established deadlines. If you fail to do so, the instructor will give you the grade you deserve, based on the work you have completed. Under exceptional circumstances, the instructor may agree to assign a grade of "I" (Incomplete). Individual instructors establish specific policies concerning incomplete grades. In general, however, you can expect to receive grade penalties if the incomplete is granted for reasons other than illness or other uncontrollable circumstances.

In order to receive an incomplete grade, you must request it from the instructor and agree to a Contract for Completion of Incomplete Coursework indicating what you must still finish and when you will turn it in. The maximum time allowed is one semester past the end of the course. This online form is available on Heinz College Current Students website and must be filed by the Last Day of Classes for that course. Without this contract, you will automatically receive a grade of R (failure). If the contract expires before you turn in the work you will receive the default grade specified in the contract.

12.6. Process for Appealing Final Grades

The Process for Appealing Final grades is found in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

12.7. Heinz Policy on Grades for Transfer Courses

Students may apply to receive transfer credit from other universities by submitting a [Transfer Credit form](#) found on the Heinz College website. An original transcript or e-transcript from the other University is required when submitting the Transcript Credit form. Heinz College limits the number of units which will be permitted to be transferred.

Note: Not all programs accept transfer credit. Students should obtain approval from their Program Director before submitting the [Transfer Credit Form](#). Approved transfer credit courses will be recorded on the student's transcript, indicating the institution where the

course was completed, but no grade will be assigned or included. Transfer credit courses are not included in QPA calculations and are not considered in academic actions or the determination of academic honors. (Note: Students who are suspended may take courses at another institution while suspended; however, transfer credit will be awarded only if permitted under their program's and Heinz College's transfer credit policies.

Students can find additional information in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

12.8. GPA Requirements and QPA Requirements for Graduation

Grade point averages are computed by translating all letter grades into quality point numeric values, weighting these values by the number of units in each course, summing the resulting numbers, and dividing by the total number of units.

You must maintain a cumulative grade point average (QPA) of 3.0 or greater in all courses for which you will receive grade credit. This includes all courses taken outside of Heinz College for which you have been given approval to count towards your degree.

For the purpose of satisfying the minimum QPA requirements for graduation, you can count any combination of units that meet all of the requirements for graduation. For example, suppose that you have taken 210 units at the College, you have met all your core and required classes and you have a QPA of 2.9. Your degree requires 198 units to graduate, but you took one more elective course than you needed, and so have 12 more units than are required to graduate. If, by dropping the elective from the QPA calculation you would have a QPA of 3.0 or greater, you will be deemed to meet the requirement for graduation. In addition, your QPA will be recalculated using "shadow grades" for up to 12 units of exemptions for purposes of determining your ability to graduate. An exception is if you retaken a class that you had failed because of cheating. In that case, both grades for the course in question are included in calculations of QPA and no shadow grades will be applied.

Your official Carnegie Mellon transcript, however, will reflect all of your coursework and the resulting QPA (from which undergraduate courses are excluded), even though it may be below 3.0. Furthermore, the Heinz College will use all of your coursework when determining eligibility for academic honors or other decisions that are based on the QPA.

13. Academic Standing

The Program Committee both monitors the progress of students according to the standards of the College and makes suggestions to the faculty and the Dean for academic actions based on its evaluation of student performance. Since the College is a professional school with ethical obligations to the public regarding the students it certifies, grades are not the only factors involved in assessing academic standing.

13.1. Good Standing

When your cumulative QPA equals or exceeds 3.0, you are deemed to be in good academic standing and can pursue the normal course of study.

13.2. Academic Congratulations

Each semester, the faculty and the Program Committee review the academic progress of all the program's students and send a letter of congratulations to those students who demonstrate superior academic performance, based on a cumulative QPA of 3.85 or greater.

13.3. Academic Warning

If you receive a warning, it is because the faculty is concerned about your progress at Heinz College and your ability to successfully complete the program. You can expect to receive a warning if your cumulative QPA falls below 3.1 or if your semester QPA falls below 3.0. If you are issued a warning, you will receive a detailed letter that clarifies the circumstances around your academic standing, and will outline the necessary steps to return to good academic standing.

13.4. Academic Probation and Recovery

The Academic Probation process is an intentional opportunity for students to reflect on their academic journey, leverage their strengths, and connect deeply with the support systems and resources designed to help them reach their full potential. Entering this phase of review signals Heinz College's steadfast commitment to walking alongside students as they realign with their academic goals and regain good standing.

When a student's cumulative Quality Point Average (QPA) moves below 3.0, the Academic

Actions Committee may initiate an Academic Probation period. Students are notified at the close of the semester so they can prepare to utilize these support structures during the following active term.

To maintain momentum toward graduation, students on Academic Recovery aim to earn a minimum semester QPA of 3.0. This benchmark reflects our confidence in every student's capacity for growth and academic achievement. If progress toward restoring a cumulative 3.0 QPA within the degree timeline requires additional evaluation, the Academic Actions Committee works to determine the most supportive next steps for the student's educational journey.

To ensure tailored, collaborative support, students partner closely with their academic advisor:

- Initial Planning Session: At the start of the semester, the student and advisor co-create a personalized Academic Recovery Plan, establishing a clear road map and scheduling regular check-ins throughout the term.
- Registration & Progress Check: Prior to enrolling in upcoming classes, students must meet with their advisor to review progress and confirm that upcoming coursework aligns with their goals, at which point registration holds are lifted.

To keep focus centered on core degree milestones, enrolling in courses outside of Heinz College will be prohibited during this period unless prior approval is received from their academic advisor to ensure every course directly advances the student's personalized recovery plan.

13.5. Academic Suspension or Drop from Program

In general, you will be dropped from your program only if you have been on probation during the previous semester. However, under extraordinary circumstances as determined by the faculty, you may be suspended or dropped without previously having been placed on probation. The Program Committee will recommend that you be dropped if, at the end of the semester of probation, your semester QPA falls below 3.0, or if your cumulative QPA is such that it is unlikely that you will be able to complete the program in the normal period of time. The Program Committee may recommend that you be suspended from the program for up to one year if your performance in the program is unsatisfactory, even if you have not previously been placed on probation. Suspension is, in effect, a temporary drop. If you are suspended, you cannot register for or take classes at Heinz College for a specified period of time, usually a year. The faculty views a suspension as a time to make

up deficiencies, to develop a mature approach to the program, or to give more thought to future career goals. If you are suspended, you may enroll in your Program again after the specified period and the faculty will indicate the conditions of your re-enrollment in your original suspension letter.

The decision of the faculty to suspend or drop a student is final. If you wish to appeal the decision, you can speak to the Dean; however, the Dean will only determine whether the Program Committee and the faculty followed due process and considered all relevant information over a sufficient time period.

If you are suspended or dropped from your program, you will receive a detailed letter to clarify the circumstances of your academic standing. If you are suspended, the letter will outline any necessary steps surrounding your return to the program.

Students who want to appeal an academic disciplinary action must notify the Heinz College Dean in writing of their intent to appeal within one week of the date of decision. A complete written appeal, including any supporting documentation, must be submitted no later than two weeks after the date of the decision.

13.6. Awards

Those students with exemplary academic records throughout their careers at Heinz College will be considered for graduation with “distinction” or “highest distinction”. Graduation with “highest distinction” requires an overall QPA of 3.85 or greater. Distinction is awarded to those students with a cumulative QPA of at least 3.75 but less than 3.85.

Heinz College awards will not be listed on your university diploma. This honor will be awarded to you with a certificate signed by the Dean of Heinz College.

All College courses count toward determining the QPA for distinction and no shadow grades will be used for exempted courses. If you retook a course, the original grade will count in the computation.

Students who have violated Heinz College’s academic standards cannot graduate with “distinction” or “highest distinction.”

14. Ethics and Discipline

Heinz College is a professional school designed to prepare students for responsible positions requiring the trust and confidence of the public. Therefore, Heinz College must demand the highest ethical standards of its students. The two cornerstones of these ethical standards are

honesty and concern for others. Heinz College will not tolerate plagiarism, false representation of the extent of individual contributions to joint efforts, cheating, or falsification of records. It also will not tolerate disruptive behavior, ethnic intimidation, sexual harassment, or illegal activities. Any of these actions can carry severe penalties up to and including expulsion from the university.

14.1. Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity information (including definitions and consequences) are found in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

14.2. The Community Standards Violation Process

As members of the university community, Carnegie Mellon students are expected to respect the rights of all students, faculty and staff and adhere to the policies outlined in the [Carnegie Mellon Student Handbook](#).

If a student has observed a violation of university policy, or feels that his/her rights have been violated in some way, he/she should file a report with a College Liaison, the Office of Community Standards and Integrity, the Student Affairs Office, or University Police.

For more information on the community standards violation process, please explore the [Community Standards and Procedures website](#). This document is a reference to provide insight into community standards processes at Carnegie Mellon.

14.3. Academic Integrity Role of Teaching Assistants

Since some of the responsibility for grading falls on Teaching Assistants (TAs), and since they are sometimes the classmates of those whose work they grade, TAs are in a special ethical position. If you are a TA, you have an obligation to maintain Heinz College's standards of honesty, and if you are not a TA, you should respect the TA's unique position. Violation of the trust and responsibility given to TAs is viewed as a serious violation by all who are involved.

14.4. Other Violations

Students who engage in disruptive behavior, criminal activities, ethnic intimidation, sexual harassment, moral turpitude, violations of The Heinz College procedures, or violations of Carnegie Mellon regulations will be subject to disciplinary action, including possible

expulsion.

14.5. Statement Regarding Consensual Relationships

It is of critical importance to the University's mission that the integrity of academic and professional relationships between students and those in positions of authority over them is maintained. These members of the University community are entrusted with authority to support the intellectual, professional, and personal growth of our students.

Intimate relations (even if consensual) between students and those in a position of authority over them compromise the integrity of their academic and professional relationship.

Consensual intimate relationships and actions intended to solicit such relationships are prohibited between students and those who are in a position of authority over the student, such as senior administrators, faculty, academic instructional staff, post docs, and University staff. This also includes situations where one student is in a position of authority over another, such as those serving as teaching assistants, tutors, research supervisors, graders, resident assistants, community advisors, supervisors in a student employment role, or mentors designated by the university (such as orientation student leaders).

<https://www.cmu.edu/policies/student-and-student-life/consensual-relationships.html>

This policy addresses circumstances in which romantic or sexual relationships or interactions with undergraduate students, even if consensual, are inappropriate and prohibited. The purpose of this policy is to maintain appropriate professional boundaries and protect the integrity of the educational environment. This policy is not intended to discourage consensual intimate relationships unless one individual has, or may reasonably be perceived to have, authority or influence over the other as defined in this policy.

15. Safeguarding Educational Equity

Information about Safeguarding Educational Equity is found in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#). This includes information about Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities, Sexual Misconduct Policy, Gestational and Parental Accommodations, and the Consensual Intimate Relationship Policy Regarding Undergraduate Students.

15.1. Professional Conduct

Students in Heinz College's graduate programs are preparing for professional careers in

positions of leadership. Consistent with the standards of our programs, such positions carry with them expectations for integrity, ethical bearing and behaviors that are acceptable in the workplace. Students who undertake class projects, serve as interns or apprentices, or complete their work-study assignments in organizations outside the College must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the standards of the professional workplace. Likewise, students are expected to exhibit professional conduct in the classroom and other University learning environments and to serve as productive, positive forces in our academic community. Students who engage in behaviors that are dishonest, unethical, abusive, violate University and workplace rules on the use of drugs and alcohol, or otherwise undermine classroom learning or the environment of their workplace assignment or the College will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including being dropped from your program.

16. Additional Department and University Policies and Protocols

16.1. Verification of Enrollment

Verification of Enrollment information is found in the [Graduate Student Handbook](#).

16.2. Computing Services Resources

[Computing Services](#) offers services to students, faculty, and staff. Please reference their website for details and resources. For support or questions, please contact it-help@cmu.edu.

Students who use Carnegie Mellon University computing resources or networks to misrepresent themselves as another individual or University entity violate the University's standards of ethical conduct. Impersonating another person to send messages or otherwise communicate with individuals within or outside the University is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

Details of the University's Computing policies can be found at:
<https://www.cmu.edu/policies/information-technology/computing.html>

All Heinz College students are expected to comply with these policies.

Additional information regarding Carnegie Mellon University's computing policies is available at:

<https://www.cmu.edu/policies/information-technology/computing.html>

All Heinz College students are expected to comply with these policies.