

GER Exceptions (AI-generated; human-refined)

Attached is a list of common exceptions to APCC General Education policies that are currently being applied by individual schools and colleges, often through advising decisions. We are sharing this information to support discussion. The APCC can determine whether these exceptions warrant formal policy consideration or whether no action is necessary.

The exceptions overwhelmingly fall into a small number of recognized justification categories. Most are not ad hoc but recur consistently with similar reasoning, documentation, and approval pathways.

At a high level, exceptions were granted to:

- Honor prior rules, pathways, and historical policies
- Correct advising, administrative, or system errors
- Recognize equivalent learning (especially transfer credit)
- Accommodate documented disabilities or extraordinary circumstances
- Prevent undue credit inflation or delayed graduation
- Respect approved departmental or committee authority
- Account for second degrees, dual degrees, or prior bachelor's degrees

Common Patterns and Justifications

1. Historical Policy and “Grandfathering” Exceptions

Very common

These exceptions waive requirements because the student began higher education under earlier degree rules.

Patterns

- Started college before Sept. 1986, Fall 1999, or Fall 2013
- Entered before foreign language, OWCB, QL-B, or GER lab requirements existed
- Returning students or re-entry students

Typical language

- “Student started prior to...”
- “Predates requirement...”
- “Historical allowance...”

Most affected areas

- Foreign language
- GER labs
- OWCB

- QL-B
- Arts/Humanities GERs

2. **Advisor Error/University Error**

Extremely common and well-accepted

Exceptions granted to avoid penalizing students for institutional mistakes.

Patterns

- Advisor turnover or departure
- Incorrect degree plans
- Requirements marked satisfied incorrectly in PAWS/Stellic/PeopleSoft
- Students advised a course would meet a GER when it did not

Typical outcomes

- Waivers granted “based on intent”
- Requirements waived to allow on-time graduation
- Partial-credit waivers (.33, .5, 1 credit)

Key principle

Students should not be harmed by incorrect or incomplete advising.

3. **Transfer Credit Equivalency and Course Substitutions**

Largest single category

Exceptions recognize substantially equivalent coursework.

Patterns

- Course content aligns with UWM GER outcomes
- Course satisfied GER at sending institution
- Syllabi reviewed and approved
- Credit amount differs (2.0, 2.5, 2.67 instead of 3.0)

Common substitutions

- Arts (Art, Music, Photography, Theater)
- Natural Science (especially Bio Sci 202)
- Humanities
- OWC-A / OWC-B
- QL-A / QL-B

Key principle

Outcome-based equivalency is valued over course numbering.

4. **Partial Credit, Credit Rounding, and Credit Inflation Relief**

Very frequent

Exceptions adjust credit discrepancies, not missing learning.

Patterns

- Accepting 2.5 or 2.67 credits as equivalent to 3
- Waiving .33, .5, or 1 credit to complete a requirement
- Recognizing accelerated or variable-credit courses

Rationale

- Student has met learning objectives
- Prevents unnecessary excess credits
- Reflects historic transfer agreements

5. Depth and Breadth Already Demonstrated

Common in Sciences, Math, and Arts

Students completed advanced or multiple related courses.

Patterns

- Upper-level math used to waive QL-A
- Bio Sci 202 used repeatedly to satisfy NS or NS+Lab
- Multiple arts courses substituting for a single GER category

Underlying logic

Advanced or extensive coursework implies mastery of foundational outcomes.

6. Disability, Accommodation, and Medical Documentation

Smaller volume, strong justification

Exceptions approved through ARC, CCEP, or medical documentation.

Patterns

- Cognitive or neurophysical learning disabilities
- Foreign language waivers
- Extraordinary accommodations formally approved

Key safeguards

- Documentation on file
- Committee or dean approval
- Consistency with ADA principles

7. Second Degree, Dual Degree, and 3+2 Programs

Very consistent and clean rationale

Patterns

- Students already earned a bachelor's degree
- GERs waived entirely or partially

- Articulation agreements honored (Carroll, UW-Eau Claire, etc.)

Key principle

GERs are not re-assessed once degree-level breadth is demonstrated.

8. System, Audit, or Coding Errors

Quiet but frequent

Examples

- Courses not clearing due to Flex/UGRD conflicts
- GER tags not recognized in Stellic
- Milestones missing or misapplied

Action taken

- Manual exception to reflect actual status
- “Clearing audit” language appears frequently

9. Language Proficiency and Multilingual Backgrounds

Common and consistent

Patterns

- Native speakers
- Placement into upper-level language
- ASL counted as foreign language
- Pre-requirement ESL contexts

Key reasoning

Functional proficiency matters more than seat time.