

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Student Handbook

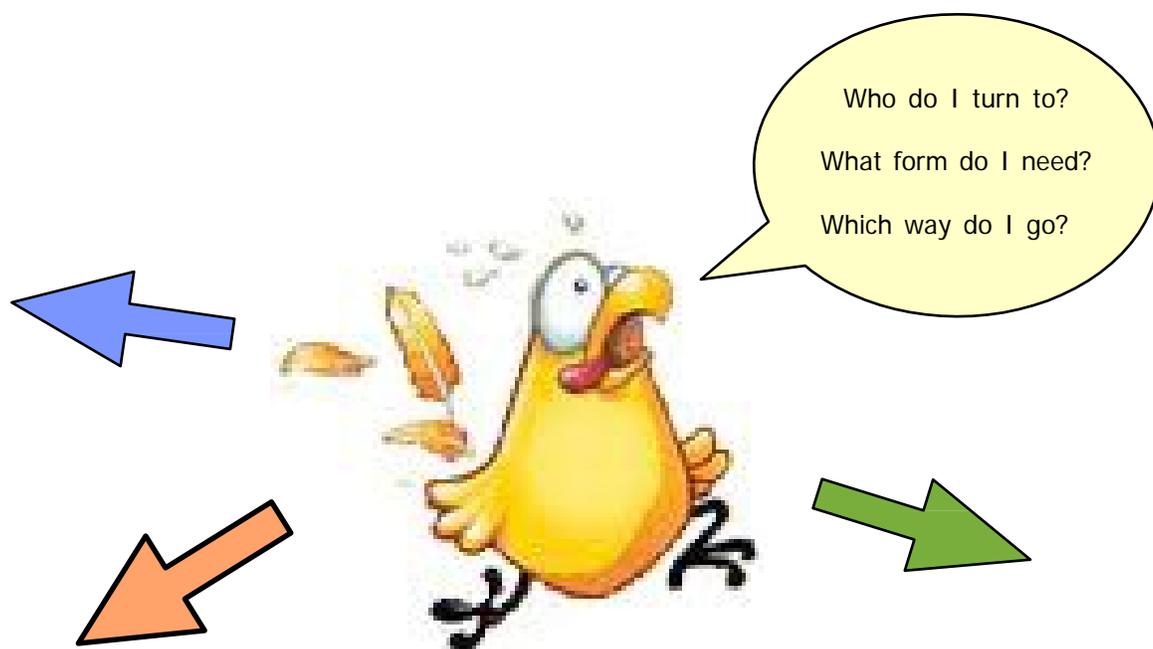


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College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Student Handbook

Welcome to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

This student handbook is meant to be a resource for you as you navigate your way to graduation. You can consider it to be a map you can turn to when you are unsure of what direction to take at certain points in your path. Your advisor is your college GPS who will be able to assist and guide you with your roadmap to graduation. **But the reality of college is that you are at the driver's wheel.** It is up to you to get yourself to graduation within the policies and appropriate procedures of the university, the college, and the department.



Also remember that the road to graduation is as varied as the routes that can be taken to get from Virginia to California, so how you choose to get there is completely up to you. The route needs to work for **YOU** - not your parents, not your boy/girlfriend, and not your best friend.

Use this handbook as a supplement to the Undergraduate Catalog, <http://www.registrar.vt.edu> to help minimize the speed bumps you may encounter.



ADVISING AT VIRGINIA TECH

DEFINITION

Advising at Virginia Tech is a collaborative process between student and advisor leading to the exchange of information that encourages the individual student to make responsible academic and career decisions.

PHILOSOPHY

Virginia Tech demonstrates a commitment to advising through recognizing and supporting the needs of students and advisors. Each undergraduate student at the university is provided information and assistance, which aids the individual student in making responsible academic and career decisions. Each advisor is provided the necessary tools to respond to student needs and the opportunity to be recognized and rewarded for exemplary advising. Virginia Tech, in support of this philosophy, will provide student-focused advising and assist students in developing skills that lead them to take active responsibility for the advising process.

The above essentially states that advisors at Virginia Tech will be given the resources they need to assist you. However, advisors are guides. The key phrase in the paragraph is, “..aids the individual student in making **responsible** academic and career decisions.”



You are the captain of your own ship!!

Please read your responsibilities on your journey to graduation:

STATEMENT OF STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

You share the responsibility for developing an advising partnership with your advisor. Over time, the partnership results in increased responsibility for you. You are responsible for:

- Communicating goals, needs, wants, and concerns to your advisor in a respectful and sincere manner;
- Keeping abreast of your own academic progress and requirements related to your academic program;
- Making, keeping, and being prepared for appointments with your advisor;
- Informing your advisor of changes in plans and/or circumstances that might impact academic performance;
- Knowing departmental procedures for changing advisors; and
- Bringing concerns regarding quality of advising to the attention of Dr. Sumner or the (Director of Academic Advising for CALS)

Not sure who your advisor is? This can be found on Hokie Spa → [View Your General Student Information](#).

And don't forget the Virginia Tech Principles of Community. These are as much your responsibility as abiding by academic policies.

VIRGINIA TECH PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY

 We affirm the inherent dignity and value of every person and strive to maintain a climate for work and learning based on mutual respect and understanding.

 We affirm the right of each person to express thoughts and opinions freely. We encourage open expression within a climate of civility, sensitivity, and mutual respect.

 We affirm the value of human diversity because it enriches our lives and the University. We acknowledge and respect our differences while affirming our common humanity.

 We reject all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including those based on age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, and veteran status. We take individual and collective responsibility for helping to eliminate bias and discrimination and for increasing our own understanding of these issues through education, training, and interaction with others.

 We pledge our collective commitment to these principles in the spirit of the Virginia Tech motto of Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).

UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Remember you are the captain of your own ship!! But even Captain Jack Sparrow knew some laws applied to him on the high seas.



ABSENCES

Students are expected to attend class. You and/or your family are paying a lot of tuition to learn so go to class!! Most professors will state their attendance policy on the first day of class or on their course syllabus. In the event that you cannot attend class for a legitimate reason, especially on a day on which an exam, quiz, or assignment is scheduled, there are ways to present the instructor with a verified absence.

PERSONAL ILLNESS

In the event of an illness, you must attend Schiffert Health Center. Schiffert then sends documentation to the Associate Dean of Academic Programs. The Associate Dean's office (Academic Programs Office) will communicate with all of your instructors indicating that you had a verifiable absence for illness.

DEATH/ILLNESS IN THE FAMILY

In the event of a death or illness in the family, you should contact the Dean of Students, 540-231-3787 or <http://www.dos.vt.edu/>. This office will verify the situation and send communication to the Associate Dean of Academic Programs in Litton-Reaves. The Associate Dean's office will then send communication to all of your instructors indicating that you had a verifiable absence.

ATTENDANCE OF A PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE

Verification of absence for a professional conference should be done through your department.

STUDENT ATHLETE COMPETITIONS

If you are a student athlete and you are scheduled to miss class due to an athletic competition, you should ask your athletic advisor to send communication regarding the days of competition to the Associate Dean of Academic Programs. The Associate Dean's Office will then send communication to all of your instructors indicating that you had a verifiable absence.

!! It should be noted that the instructor has the prerogative to provide make-up exams, quizzes, and allow you to turn in assignments upon an absence. A verified absence does not automatically ensure that you will be allowed to make up any work.

ACADEMIC ELIGIBILITY

You are required to maintain a minimum, cumulative, overall GPA of 2.0 to stay in school. When your GPA drops below 2.0, you have essentially placed a huge speed bump on your own path to graduation. It is not necessarily a speed bump that you cannot overcome, but a speed bump nonetheless. If you get into this situation, remember you have an advisor who is willing to help you!! Your advisor can recommend strategies and resources to help you clear this hurdle.

ACADEMIC PROBATION

Students who do not maintain the required GPA are first placed on **Academic Probation** for one semester. During academic probation, you are allowed to enroll at classes at Virginia Tech. If you elect to take classes elsewhere during a period of **Academic Probation**, the courses can transfer back to Virginia Tech provided appropriate policies and procedures are followed and met.

ACADEMIC SUSPENSION

If your GPA remains below a 2.0 after a semester of **Academic Probation**, you are placed on **Academic Suspension**. During **Academic Suspension**, you are not allowed to enroll in classes at Virginia Tech. Any classes taken elsewhere cannot be transferred back to Tech either. The first time you are placed on **Academic Suspension**, you are prohibited from enrolling at Virginia Tech for one semester. The second time, two semesters, and the third time, you are not allowed to return to Virginia Tech. This policy is outlined in the Undergraduate Catalog, <http://www.undergradcatalog.registrar.vt.edu/>.

If you are placed on **Academic Probation or Suspension** you will receive an email message from the Associate Dean of Academic Programs outlining that a hold will be placed on your account by the college until you meet with your academic advisor. A copy of the email is also sent to your advisor.

!! Some departments will place a hold on your account until you meet with your advisor to ensure that you realize the consequences of the probation or suspension and to inform you of appropriate resources to help you with academics.

ADD/DROP

Dates for adding and dropping courses are given on the timetable of classes and on Hokie Spa. You can add classes up until the 5th day of class in a semester (3rd day for summer). Dropping a class without penalty is available until the end of the sixth week into the semester (end of second week in summer sessions). If you drop courses before the deadline to drop without penalty, the class does NOT show on your transcripts. There is no record that you were ever enrolled in the class. Adding and dropping can be done on Hokie Spa → Registration and Schedule.

If you want to drop a class after the deadline without penalty, you must withdraw from the class. The policy for this is found under Withdrawing from a Course. You cannot drop the last course you have on Hokie Spa. See Resignation/Withdrawal section for the procedure to do this.

APPLYING FOR DEGREE

All students should apply for degree no later than the first semester of their junior year or four semesters before their expected graduation date. This is done on Hokie Spa → Degree Menu → Undergraduate Student Degree Menu → Application for Degree. You can do this sooner than that though!

Students who anticipate that their graduation date will change can always go back into Hokie Spa and change their graduation date. Students who do not complete their degree requirements for the semester in which they have applied must return to Hokie Spa and change their graduation date.

AUDITING A COURSE

A student may audit a course with the instructor's permission. Typically the course is on the transcript but you do not earn credit or a grade for the course. You add the course as you would any other course via Hokie Spa.

Be sure to choose "Audit" from the grade mode menu. If you do not choose Audit, you will receive a grade for the course. If you realize too late that you did not choose audit, you cannot change the grade to audit! An auditor may not add the audited class after the last day to add classes. When you audit a course, you cannot later take it for a grade.

CHANGE OF MAJOR/MINOR/OPTION

Students can change their major, minor, change options within their major, add minor(s), and change or drop options. This can be done within the college and outside of the college provided the department or college in which you are interested does not have any restrictions. Make sure you explore and research any restrictions and/or rules of the department you wish to change to.

For example within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the HNFE department is restricted and students must demonstrate specific grade qualifications to change their major into that department. The Biological Sciences Department in the College of Science only allows change of majors during a one week period in the fall and spring semesters. It is your responsibility to learn of these types of restrictions. The Registrar lists the departments that are restricted on the following website: www.registrar.vt.edu/prospective/majors/restricted-majors.html

Virginia Tech also has a policy regarding students changing their major, "Undergraduate students must be enrolled in their major(s) [and minor(s)] of choice prior to the beginning of their senior year, or by the time they have 30 semester hours to complete before their graduation. Students seeking double majors must be accepted into the second major by the academic department before the university can award the second major." (VT Undergraduate Course Catalog).

Also, from the Virginia Tech Undergraduate Catalog, "Students should submit their applications for changing majors or adding minors two weeks prior to the start of each semester's registration period. This will allow students adequate time to assess their situations before deciding to transfer and registering for the following term." Some departments do not allow change of majors to occur during course request or at other times of the semester. You should research this and be aware of when you are allowed to change/add majors, minors, and options.

The process for changing majors within CALS is as follows:

Pick up a change of major form in 1060 Litton Reaves or obtain one online, <http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/change-major-minor.pdf>. Complete the form and obtain the signatures required, in the order required on the form!! Signatures required must be obtained in this order: 1. the department that agrees to accept you (the advisor in your new department), 2. the college that agrees to accept you (the associate dean in your new college), 3. the department that is going to release you (the advisor in your old department), and 4. the college that agrees to release you (the associate dean in your old college). Do not leave the form in this last office - you need to take the form with ALL signatures back to the associate dean's office of the college that is going to accept you.

One exception is HNFE. This department has very specific instructions for changing into their department which are found on their website, http://www.hnfe.vt.edu/undergraduate_academics/documents/Change_of_Major_10_12.pdf.

*Per University Catalog, **students should submit their applications for changing majors or adding minors two weeks prior to the start of each semester's registration period.** This will allow students adequate time to assess their situations before deciding to transfer and registering for the following term.*

CHECKSHEETS/DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

Checksheets are a list of courses that are required for you to earn a degree in your major. Most majors have different options or concentrations that you can choose to complete your degree based on your career goals and/or interests. Checksheets for each CALS major are located on your department's or the University Registrar's webpage. All courses listed on the checksheet for your option must be completed to graduate. For all CALS majors, 120 credits minimum must be completed to graduate. Your advisors will help you navigate your way through college using the checksheet as a blue print to complete your degree.



There is one thing about checksheets that is uniform throughout each department. All checksheets have a list of courses that the university requires you to complete. This list of courses is called the Curriculum for Liberal Education (CLE). The CLE is further divided into 7 areas. Students are required by the university to complete specific types of classes for each area. A list of courses that fulfill each area requirement can be found in the Guide for the Curriculum of Liberal Education, <http://www.cle.prov.vt.edu/guides/>. Yearly guides are provided as pdfs from this webpage.

Another thing that is uniform throughout each department is that the University Registrar does not approve degree requirements until 2 years prior to a graduation year. For example, if you came in as a freshman in 2016, your degree requirements if you graduate in 2020 may change in the year 2018! So be sure to ask your advisor if any changes are anticipated at the end of your sophomore year.

COURSE OVERLOAD

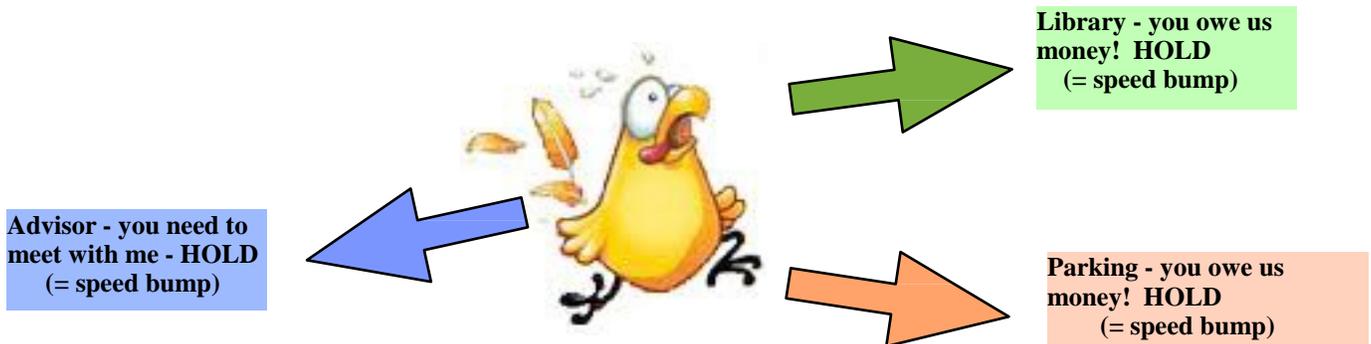
Students in CALS who wish to take more than 19 credits in one semester (9 during the summer) must complete a Course Overload form, found at <http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/course-overload.pdf>. You must obtain a signature from your advisor on this form and then take it to 1060 Litton-Reaves for the Associate Dean of Academic Programs' review and signature. Completing the form does not guarantee permission to take more than 19 credits - **please read all instructions on the form.**

Once permission has been granted for course overload, you are responsible for adding all desired courses onto your schedule. If force-adds are needed, you must follow appropriate procedures for force adding the class.

COURSE REQUEST

Course request occurs during the 9th week of the semester for one week. During this time you can **REQUEST** sections of courses via the online request system on Hokie Spa. It is important that you realize that you are requesting courses and this does not guarantee that you will obtain a seat in a particular section of a course or the course at all. If you did not get the courses you desired/needed, you can adjust your schedule as needed when drop/add opens later in the semester, however, you are still not guaranteed to get the courses you need.

You cannot request courses during course request if there is a hold on your account. Therefore it is your responsibility to determine if there are any holds on the account and to take care of the hold. We recommend that a couple of weeks before on line course request opens, that you check your account for holds so that if there are any, you have time to take care of them before the big day that course request opens. Don't be the guy who is running around like a chicken trying to take care of library fines, parking tickets, etc. all so you can request a high-demand course!



COURSE SUBSTITUTIONS

Substituting courses is handled through each individual department. Typically you and your advisor will work together to determine which, if any, course substitutions can be made. The procedure for completing course substitutions is also done via each individual department.

COURSE WITHDRAWAL

The Course Withdrawal Policy is designed for students who are struggling with a course in which they find themselves ill-prepared, or for students facing other extenuating circumstances (e.g., a student has changed majors and no longer needs a course for graduation requirements). Presidential Policy 196 allows currently enrolled students to designate a course status of "Course Withdrawn."

A maximum of three courses (3) may be dropped beyond the normal six week drop deadline date during a student's academic career at Virginia Tech subject to the following stipulations:

1. This option may be exercised up through the Friday of the last full week of classes of each term, prior to a student's scheduled graduation. http://www.registrar.vt.edu/dates_deadlines/timetable_calendar/
2. Students must formally request to drop a course by the last regular day of classes in the semester in which they are enrolled.
3. Courses from which a student withdraws under the terms of this policy will appear on their transcript with a **W**. The W signifies that this policy was invoked and does not reach the rationale for its use. The reasons for use remain your responsibility.
4. A student's decision to invoke this policy is irrevocable and may not be appealed.
5. Withdrawals under this policy may not be employed to reduce or obviate any penalty otherwise accruing to students under the University's Honor system.
6. Students may request withdrawal from any course irrespective of the evaluation earned in it up to the point of their request for withdrawal.

To exercise this option, you must complete the Course Withdrawal form found at <http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/course-withdrawal-w-grade.pdf>. You must then obtain your advisor's signature and then take the form to 1060 Litton-Reaves for approval and processing.

Students typically wait until the absolute last day and last hour to decide to exercise this option. If you think you may need to use this option, you should meet with your advisor a couple of weeks ahead of time for some guidance on making this decision. You can get the form signed but you do not necessarily need to turn in the form at that time, you can hang on to it and then turn it in on or before the due date. This way you do not have to wait in line behind numerous other students who are also contemplating withdrawing from a course to explain your situation to your

advisor (at 4:45pm on the day when the form is due at 5:00pm = huge speed bump).



Who needs that stress?

Aren't you stressed enough over your finals that are coming up? Plan ahead, think ahead and then if you need to use the form, you will have it to turn in.

COURSES THAT DO NOT COUNT TOWARD DEGREE

The following courses do not count toward degree requirements:

- UNIV 1004 College Success Strategies
- UNIV Cadet Success Strategies
- Credits taken to fulfill Foreign Language Graduation Requirements
- Any more than 2 credits taken from HNFE 1XXX Activity classes

DEGREE AUDIT REPORT SYSTEM (DARS)

The Degree Audit Report System (DARS) is a tool that is used by the University Registrar's office and should be used by you to determine if and how many degree requirements are complete. To be able to use DARS, you must first apply for your degree, by going to Hokie Spa → Degree Menu → Undergraduate Student Degree Menu. After the application for degree goes through, a DARS can be run using the same menu.

DARS will indicate which classes have been completed with a green check. Course that are "In Progress" (IP) are included in the audit and are noted as such.

DARS will also provide you with other information including in-major GPA, overall GPA, and total number of credits completed.

Free electives always have a red X next to them. This does not mean that free elective credit requirements have not been completed. Rather, the total number of credits should be assessed to determine if free elective credits are complete.

DOUBLE-COUNTING COURSES

Some courses can at times count for dual or more than one purpose(s). For example, a course may possibly be listed as a requirement for a minor and also listed as a course that can be taken for one of the areas of the Curriculum for Liberal Education. In this instance the one course can count for both requirements.

Classes listed in the Curriculum for Liberal Education can sometimes double count. If a class is listed as fulfilling an area 7 and another area, the one class can count for both areas. However, if a class is listed as an area 6 and another area, it can only count for one or the other – not both.

DOUBLE MAJOR VS SECOND DEGREE

Degree requirements for a **DOUBLE MAJOR**: You must complete all course work required for both majors and the minimum number of credits for their major (primary or major that requires the most number of credits for graduation). Completion of degree requirements and diploma conferral date for both majors must be in the same semester.

Student responsibilities:

1. You must complete a Change/Add Major or Minor form. This must be signed by the appropriate person in the department for the major you are adding and then brought to 1060 Litton-Reaves for processing.
2. You must also apply for double major on Hokie Spa on the degree application menu.
3. The second major must be added before your senior year at Virginia Tech

Of note:

- You are awarded a diploma for the primary major and a certificate for the secondary major. Each major is acknowledged separately on your transcripts.
- Adding a second major may add additional coursework and delay graduation.
- Advisors for the second major can be assigned on paper and entered in Banner but only the advisor for the first major will have access to your academic records on Faculty Access.

Degree requirements for a **SECOND DEGREE (DUAL DEGREE)**: You must complete all course work for both majors and an additional 30 credit hours above the minimum number of credits of first degree. Requirements for both degrees can be completed in the same semester, however they do not have to be completed in the same term. If they are not completed in the first term, the primary major must be completed first. If the second major is completed first, you must complete a change of major form and place the completed degree as the primary major.

Student's Responsibilities:

1. You must complete a Change/Add Major form for the major you are adding found in 1060 Litton-Reaves, or the CALS/Current Student/Student Forms website. This must be signed by the appropriate person in the department and then brought to 1060 Litton-Reaves for processing. If the second major is in a different college, then you add the major and you must obtain signatures from both departments and colleges.
2. You must also declare both majors on Hokie Spa on the degree application menu.
3. The second degree must be added before your senior year.

Of note:

- You are awarded a diploma for each degree completed.
- Advisors for the second major can be assigned on paper and entered in Banner but only the advisor for the first major will have access to your academic records on Faculty Access.
- If requirements are finished in one semester and you want to participate in the May graduation ceremonies of only one major, you can designate on Hokie Spa which ceremony you will participate in so you can receive both diplomas in one envelope.

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 is intended to grant all students certain rights regarding their educational records. Essentially, no person employed at the university is allowed to give your academic information to anyone unless you have given them permission to do so.

The FERPA disclosure is now located on Hokie Spa → FERPA. You provide the names of persons to whom faculty/staff can disclose academic information AND the person who is allowed that information must provide a "code" that you have entered on the online form when they request the information.

FINAL EXAMS: THREE EXAMS IN ONE 24-HOUR PERIOD

If you learn that you have three final exams in one 24-hour period, don't panic!! You can request to have one of the exam times changed. The process for requesting this is:

Complete the **Change of Exam for 3 in 24 Hours** form which is found in 1060 Litton-Reaves and on line. Obtain approval to reschedule the exam from the Academic Programs Office in 1060 Litton-Reaves. This approval must be obtained first. Take the form to one of your instructors and politely request the exam change. The agreeable exam change is documented on the form with your instructor's signature. You then return the form to 1060 Litton-Reaves.

FIELD STUDY/INDEPENDENT STUDY/UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

FIELD STUDY in CALS

Each department may have specific forms and criteria for field study, please check with your department representative.

FIELD STUDY in HNFE

Field Study (X964) courses are work experiences approved by HNFE and are selected to augment traditional classroom activities. You are evaluated on the knowledge and skills acquired as a result of the experience. Emphasis is placed on the academic and practical value of the work. You must follow the rules and policies of HNFE; they have specific forms that you must complete for the course.

Students can enroll in this class via Hokie Spa during course request or Drop/Add. Only grades of Pass/Fail can be assigned for Field Study.

INDEPENDENT STUDY

Independent Study (X974) courses generally involve extensive reading and tutorial sessions with the faculty supervisor and also may involve written papers. The subject of an independent study usually is a continuation in greater depth of a topic covered in a regular course, allowing students to study topics of particular individual interest. You cannot enroll in this via Hokie Spa. You must be enrolled by the department through which you are working. Complete the Virginia Tech CALS Undergraduate Research/Independent Study/Field Study Authorization found either at <http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/undergrad-research-independent-study.pdf> or in 1060 Litton-Reaves. Obtain approval and signatures from the instructor who will supervise the project, your advisor, and your department head. The department then processes the form and adds you to the course. The form is then sent to the Associate Dean of Academic Programs. Grades of either A-F or Pass/Fail can be assigned for Independent Study.

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Undergraduate Research (X994) courses are individual research projects carried out by students under faculty supervision. You define the research topic, propose methodology, carry out the research, and write a report. Students cannot enroll in this via Hokie Spa. They must be enrolled by the department through which they are working. You complete the Virginia Tech CALS Undergraduate Research/Independent Study/Field Study Authorization found either at <http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/undergrad-research-independent-study.pdf> or in 1060 Litton-Reaves. You must obtain approval and signatures from the instructor who will supervise the project, your advisor, and your department head. The department then processes the form and adds you to the course. The form is then sent to the Associate Dean of Academic Programs. Grades of either A-F or Pass/Fail can be assigned for Undergraduate Research.

If any of these courses are taken Pass/Fail, you must consider how many credits will be taken pass/fail as no more than 10% of VT credits can be taken pass/fail.

FORCE-ADDS

You can be force-added into a class 1) if the class section is full and the instructor is agreeable to allowing you in the course anyway, or 2) if the class section has restrictions (prerequisites, majors only, etc.) and the instructor or department is agreeable to your taking the class anyway.

The procedure for force adding a class is as follows:

1. You should obtain a pink force-add slip form from CALS Academic Programs Office in 1060 Litton-Reaves.
2. Take the force-add slip to either the instructor of the course for permission and signature OR to a departmental representative.
3. Once the force-add form is signed, it should be taken to the departmental office for processing.
You should give the office ample time to process, but if the course is not showing on the class ticket after sufficient time, you can contact the office to inquire about the force add. What is sufficient time? At least 3-5 days. If you are waiting until the last day to force-add a class, it is inappropriate to expect the office staff to add the class that day. Being proactive works to everyone's benefit!

FULL-TIME STATUS

You are considered full-time when you are enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours in the fall/spring semesters and 6 credit hours in each summer term. While the university does not require a student to be full-time, other offices/programs do, such as **Financial Aid, NCAA, and Housing**.

Other ramifications of being part-time status may include not qualifying for insurance coverage under your parent's auto insurance, etc. You are wondering about football tickets? Yes, you must be full-time status to qualify for obtaining football tickets.

Also, if you do not enroll full-time you may have a delayed graduation date. If you wish to enroll part-time, you should discuss all consequences with your advisor.

GRADE APPEALS

If you have a disagreement about a grade assigned for a course, and feel the grade was assigned in a prejudiced or capricious manner, you should first discuss the grade with the instructor of the course. If the issue is not resolved at this point, you should ask to meet with the instructor's department head. If the issue is still not resolved, you should be ask to meet with the associate dean of the instructor's college. Meeting with the department head or associate dean does not necessarily mean you will get your grade changed.

GRADE MODE CHANGES AND DEADLINES

Changing grade mode from

A/F to Pass/Fail change can be done until the last day to drop without penalty for that semester.

Pass/Fail to A/F can be done until the last day for a student to resign without penalty for that semester.

Up until the last day to ADD a class, you can change Grade Mode on Hokie Spa → Registration and Schedule. However, after the last day to add a class, you must come to the Associate Dean of Academic Programs office in 1060 Litton-Reaves to request Grade Change Mode. After the deadlines noted above, if you wish to change grade mode, you must meet with the Associate Dean of Academic Programs. These requests are rarely, if ever, approved.

GRADUATION, COMMENCEMENT, AND WALKING IN GRADUATION

The big day - the big dance - the big moment you've worked so hard for.

You've made it over the speed bumps, you have arrived! Or have you? Did you know that you have to apply for graduation? Yeah - did you know that it is not enough to complete your classes, make the good grades, etc. You have to **apply** for graduation. But it is simple really....



All students should apply for graduation no later than the first semester of their junior year. Students apply for their degree via Hokie Spa → Degree Menu.

Students can subsequently request a DARS (Degree Audit Reporting System) through the Hokie Spa.

Students who do not complete their degree requirements in the semester for which they have applied for graduation must return to the degree application on Hokie Spa and change their graduation date.

Students who complete their degree requirements in the spring semester walk in the May commencement ceremonies and students who complete their degree requirements in the fall semester participate in December commencement ceremonies.

Students who will complete their degree requirements in first or second summer sessions must contact their major department to request to “walk” in the May commencement ceremonies if they wish to do so. A Permission to Walk form is found on the CALS webpage, <http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/requesttowalk.pdf> in the spring semester. This form must be turned in to 1060 Litton-Reaves by the deadline noted on the form.

Information for students and parents regarding the commencement exercises are posted on the college's webpage every spring, approximately four to six weeks before graduation. This information will include when and where students should report, when and where parents can enter the Coliseum, etc. More information is available on <http://www.vt.edu/commencement/>.

!! Students who are taking courses elsewhere during their final semester at Virginia Tech have 30 days after the commencement date to transfer courses back to Virginia Tech and graduate in that semester.

Students who have an Incomplete in a course in the final semester at Virginia Tech have until 30 days after commencement to complete their coursework and have the grade change processed to graduate in that semester.

Students not cleared for graduation in the 30 days after their declared graduation date will no longer be eligible for graduation on that declared date and must apply again for their degree through the University Registrar's office. When you participate in graduation ceremonies, the envelope that would normally contain the diploma is empty. If you are cleared for that semester, the diploma is mailed to you.

HOLDS/BLOCKED SCHEDULES

If a student has a **HOLD** placed on his/her account, the reason for the hold can be found on your account on Hokie Spa. Only the person/office that has placed a **HOLD** on a student's account can remove the **HOLD**. Therefore, to have the hold removed, you must resolve the issue with the particular office that placed the hold in the first place. A **HOLD** precludes you from course request and add/dropping courses.

Reasons for a **HOLD** on an account include, but are not limited to, outstanding library fees, parking fines, infirmary fees, honor code violations, and lack of health history form on file with Schiffert Health Services.

Departments can also place holds on your account for various reasons.

ORIENTATION HOLDS

As soon as students are batch registered into their classes, the college places a “college” hold on all new students' schedules. These holds are removed by the college during summer orientation. However, some departments will place departmental holds on a student's account until you have met with someone in the department to finalize your schedule.

HONOR CODE

The University Honor System is upheld in all classes in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. This website explains Virginia Tech's Honor System, <http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>. Remember, cheaters don't win and winners don't cheat. The Honor System is student run so any interested student can become involved.

INCOMPLETES

An Incomplete grade can be assigned for a student who is unable to finish all necessary coursework due to legitimate circumstances such as illness, death in the family, etc. If you are assigned an Incomplete, you have the next full semester to complete the coursework. If an Incomplete is earned in the fall semester, you must complete coursework by the end of the spring semester. If an Incomplete is earned in the spring semester, you must complete coursework by the end of the fall semester. If an Incomplete is earned in either summer terms, you must complete coursework by the end of the fall semester.

Once you do complete the coursework in the necessary time frame, the instructor must complete a Grade Change form. Assigning an Incomplete and allowing a student the next term to complete any coursework is the prerogative of the instructor.

If you still have not completed the necessary coursework after the next full semester, the Incomplete automatically reverts to a failing grade.

PASS/FAIL GRADING OPTION

Only courses that are **NOT** degree requirements can be taken pass/fail. Also, only students who have completed 30 credit hours or have a cumulative GPA of 2.0 or above may take a course pass/fail. This policy does not apply to courses that are only offered with pass/fail option.

Pass/fail grade option can be chosen by you on Hokie Spa until the last day to add classes. For grade mode changes done after the last day to add, please see the section on Grade Mode Changes and Deadlines.

No more than 10% of VT credits can be taken Pass/Fail. This is an important consideration for transfer students who typically have less than 120 credits taken at Tech.

PLAN OF STUDY

A plan of study is an outline of the courses that you are going to take and when you plan to take them. **It is your responsibility to create your plan of study!** This is your journey - own it! There are different ways to create a plan of study. Some departments have paper planners and/or electronic planners. The university offers an electronic planner, https://banweb.banner.vt.edu/ssb/prod/twbkwbis.P_WWWLogin.

PREREQUISITES



There is a reason for prerequisites and it is not to delay your graduation by one semester. It is to make sure that you have the foundational knowledge and/or skills to perform well in the next course. The idea is to set you up for success - not failure!

It is up to each department to reinforce prerequisites. Departments can request that the University Registrar's office also reinforce prerequisites within the online course registration/add-drop.

PURGED REGISTRATION

A student's schedule may be purged (removed from the system) for nonpayment of fees. Purging of a schedule does not eliminate your financial obligation of tuition and fees to the university.

If your schedule has been purged, you must come to the Associate Dean of Academic Programs' office in 1060 Litton-Reaves to request reinstatement of your schedule.

READMISSION

If you leave Virginia Tech in good academic standing (GPA >2.0), you are able to course request via Hokie Spa at any time provided you do not have holds on your account.

If you are returning to Virginia Tech with a GPA <2.0, you should meet with someone in the Associate Dean of Academic Programs' office to discuss your plans for academic success. If the Associate Dean's office is aware that you are able to return from suspension, you will be sent a letter informing you of dates of course request and a recommendation that you meet with the program director in your department.

If you have graduated from Virginia Tech and wish to return to complete a second degree, you can enroll in classes via Hokie Spa, but when you do so, you are enrolling as a student in the department from which you completed your degree. Once enrolled in courses, you must complete appropriate paperwork and processes to change your major to the second degree you wish to complete. You must be aware of any restrictions of the second major as this may impede your ability to change your major to the second major.

REPEATED COURSES

If you have earned a grade of "C" or better in a course, the course CANNOT be repeated for an improved grade. The second assigned grade of "A-D" automatically changes to a "Pass" when the Degree Audit Report system detects a repeated course with a grade of "C" or better.

If you have earned a grade of "C-" or less, you can retake the course for an improved letter grade. Both grades are factored into your cumulative GPA, however the credits for the repeated class will not be included in the credit hours required for graduation.

If you fail a course at Virginia Tech and want to retake that course at another college or university, you need to discuss this with your advisor and confirm with him/her that this is a viable option for retaking a course. Points that you need to consider:

- If the course being repeated is included in your in-major GPA do you need to repeat it here in order to improve your in-major GPA? Do you need to retake the course to improve your overall GPA?
- If you take the course elsewhere, only transfer credit will be awarded to you; the grade does not transfer.

After discussing these issues with your advisor and the advisor agrees you can repeat the course at another school, you also need to complete the "Authorization to Take Courses Elsewhere" process.

RESIGNATIONS/WITHDRAWALS FROM THE UNIVERSITY

Withdrawal is withdrawing from all courses **through** the first day of classes.

Resignation is withdrawing from all courses **after** the first day of classes.

Both require the Resignation/Withdrawal form found <http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/withdrawal-resignation.pdf>

SCHOLARSHIPS

Information about college issued scholarships can be found on the CALS website: <http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/scholarships/scholarships-academic-programs.html>. Students should check the deadline for application each spring. Inquiries about departmental-issued scholarships should be directed to each department.



STRUGGLING?

If you are having difficulties with your academics, ask for assistance!! There are numerous individuals and services that want to see students succeed - your advisors, your professors/instructors, and your associate dean of Academic Programs are all individuals that are very willing to help you if you are not doing as well as you would like. Don't be intimidated to ask for help and the sooner you ask for help, the less likely you are to get behind the 8 ball.



There are also services such as the Student Success Center <http://www.studentsuccess.vt.edu/> and Cook Counseling Center <http://www.ucc.vt.edu/> that provide a myriad of ways to help students from online self assessments, to workshops, to tutoring. The resources are there for you - you just need to ask.

SUSPENSIONS

When you are suspended from the university for academic or disciplinary reasons, you are not allowed to enroll in courses at Virginia Tech. You are also not allowed to transfer any courses taken elsewhere during the period of suspension back to Virginia Tech. (See also Academic Eligibility)

TRANSFER CREDIT

TAKING COURSES ELSEWHERE (IN THE UNITED STATES)

Courses taken elsewhere can transfer for Virginia Tech credits provided you have completed three things:

1. You must determine if the course is equivalent to the Virginia Tech course. This can be done by looking up the course on the Transfer Equivalency Database. If the course does not transfer equivalently to any VT course, it may be able to come in as a free elective. Occasionally the department representative may allow a course that does not come in as a specific Virginia Tech course to be substituted for a required course. The department must then complete a substitution form.
2. You must complete an Authorization of Transfer Credit form found at <http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/transfer-credit.pdf>. This form should be signed first by the appropriate advisor in your department, then the form is brought to 1060 Litton-Reaves (some departments keep the form and send to Litton-Reaves, e.g. HNFE) for processing.
3. You must earn a minimum of a "C" in the course taken elsewhere for the credits to transfer, AND you must arrange for the other University/College to send the transcripts to the University Registrar's office at Virginia Tech.

It is important for you to realize that when a course is taken elsewhere the credits transfer but the grades do not.

You can determine if a course has been awarded transfer credit within Hokie Spa → Grade Menu → Transfer and Other Additional Credit.

A student who is on academic probation can receive credit for courses taken elsewhere. A student on academic suspension cannot receive credit for course work taken at any other college or university during any period in which you have been placed on suspension by Virginia Tech for academic or disciplinary reasons.

TAKING COURSES ELSEWHERE (OUTSIDE OF THE UNITED STATES)

TYPE	WHERE ARE THEY ENROLLED?	WHAT STUDENT AND ADVISOR NEED TO DO:
BI-LATERAL AGREEMENT EXCHANGE	<p>Students enroll at the foreign school they will attend</p> <p>Students pay tuition at Virginia Tech.</p> <p>Semester enrollment at Virginia Tech will be: IS 3944 International Enrollment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decide classes the student needs to take here at VT for the next semester. (Sometimes it is a good idea for student to apply for graduation if they have not done so and have a DARS to determine degree requirements left to finish) • Find classes at the exchange institution that could be equivalent courses at VT. • Complete the Authorization to Take Courses Elsewhere Form including having someone from the Education Abroad Office sign form. They are located in the Pack Building at 526 Prices Fork Road (corner of Toms Creek Road and Prices Fork Road). • Have a transcript sent to the University Registrar when the education abroad experience is finished. Students should request that the host institution sends a transcript to the Registrar's Office even if you are required to order an extra and pay for it. Transcripts sent to student's homes cannot be accepted as official if you have opened the envelope
DIRECT ENROLLMENT - EDUCATION ABROAD AT ANOTHER INSTITUTION THAT DOES NOT HAVE A BI-LATERAL AGREEMENT.	<p>Student enrolls at the education abroad institution (These institutions can be US based schools sponsoring education abroad programs that accept transient student enrollment.</p> <p>Student pays tuition at the other institution.</p>	<p>Decide which classes student needs to take here at VT for the next semester. (Sometimes it is a good idea for student to have a DARS run if they are a junior)</p> <p>Find classes at the exchange institution that could be equivalent courses at VT</p> <p>Complete the Authorization to Take Courses Elsewhere Form</p> <p>Have a transcript sent to the University Registrar when the education abroad experience is finished. (See details above on transcripts)</p>
EDUCATION ABROAD COURSE(S) OFFERED THROUGH VIRGINIA TECH (THIS INCLUDES ENROLLMENT IN SEMESTER AT CESA [CENTER OF EUROPEAN STUDIES ABROAD] AT RIVA SAN VITALE SWITZERLAND)	<p>Student enrolls at VT</p> <p>Student pays tuition to VT</p>	<p>Decide how the credits will fulfill requirements for your degree here at VT.</p> <p>No other action is needed unless the advisor agrees the course taken is substitution for a required course for the degree.</p>

For Further information on Education Abroad Programs, students can contact:

Office of International Research,
 Education and Development Pack Building
 526 Prices Fork Road, room 131
 231-5888

vtabroad@vt.edu

<http://www.oired.vt.edu>

TRANSFER CREDIT PROBLEMS

If students have problems with transfer credits, they should contact the program director of their department.

List of Academic Advisors for each department is found at <http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/advising/index.html>

APPENDICES

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

RESOURCE	CONTACT INFORMATION	RESOURCE DESCRIPTION
BURSAR	231-3238 www.bursar.vt.edu	Provides timely and accurate billing statements, ensuring payments and credits are properly applied, disbursement of payroll, administration of Budget Tuition Program
CAREER SERVICES	231-6241 www.career.vt.edu	Career advising, career and major exploration, career fairs, assistance with employment, co-op and internship exploration
THE STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER	231-5499 www.studentsuccess.vt.edu	Academic support, such as tutoring and study skills seminars at no extra cost for students who are struggling. Programs and activities for students who are already succeeding academically, and simply want to enrich their educational experiences at Virginia Tech
COMPUTING	231-4357 www.computing.vt.edu	Services related to email, internet access, on-line tutorials for software, guidance with hardware, etc.
COOK COUNSELING CENTER	231-6557 www.ucc.vt.edu	Individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, medical and psychiatric referral
CRANWELL INTERNATIONAL CENTER	231- 6527 www.international.vt.edu	Primary support service for the international community ranging from orientation for all international students, visa-related services for undergraduate internationals and dependents, cultural exchange programs, travelcards for students and faculty traveling abroad, and providing intercultural exchange
DEAN OF STUDENTS	231-3787 www.dos.vt.edu	Advocacy office for students/families in crisis or challenging situations, facilitates communication with Hokie Parents/families, nurtures a welcoming campus climate
DINING SERVICES	231-3933 www.dining.vt.edu	Dining plans, employment
FINANCIAL AID	231-5179 www.finaid.vt.edu	Support the university's student access, enrollment, and retention goals by providing the financial means to encourage economic, social, cultural, and academic diversity in the student body
GREEK LIFE	231-6609 www.greeklife.vt.edu	Fraternity and Sorority Life
HOKIE HANDBOOK	www.hokiehandbook.vt.edu	Designed to be a resource for you to make the most of your college experience, contains the Code of Conduct, University Policies for Student Life, and other

		key policies you are required to know and abide by
HOUSING	231-6205 on campus - www.housing.vt.edu 231-3466 off campus - www.campuslife.vt.edu	Help with on-campus and/or off-campus housing
OFFICE OF HEALTH PROFESSIONS ADVISING	231-6241 www.career.vt.edu/healthprofessionsadvising/Index.html	Assists students and alumni pursuing a health care career in medicine, dentistry, optometry, pharmacy, chiropractic, occupational therapy, nursing, physician's assistant, veterinary medicine, or other graduate health professions
OFFICE OF STUDENT CONDUCT	231-3790 www.studentconduct.vt.edu	Meetings, hearings, programs and training sessions
REGISTRAR	231-6252 www.registrar.vt.edu	Transcripts, transfer credits, and transfer guide
SCHIFFERT HEALTH SERVICES	www.healthcenter.vt.edu	Provides primary health care, women's health care, immunizations, pharmacy, etc.
SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	231-3788 www.ssd.vt.edu	Provides assistance, guidance, verification, and testing for a variety of disabilities
STUDY ABROAD	231-5888 www.globaleducation.vt.edu	Provides information and assistance with any and all study abroad options
UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM	231-4591 www.univhonors.vt.edu	Challenges motivated students to create their own world-class education and provides leadership in innovative and extraordinary learning opportunities
WRITING CENTER @ VIRGINIA TECH	231-5436 www.composition.english.vt.edu	Tutoring in writing open to students and faculty/staff, appointments are recommended

FORMS

ACADEMIC SUSPENSION APPEAL PETITION

http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/Academic_Appeals_Petition.pdf

AUTHORIZATION OF TRANSFER CREDIT - EDUCATION ABROAD

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/transfer-credit.pdf>

AUTHORIZATION OF TRANSFER CREDIT - WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/transfer-credit.pdf>

CHANGE OF MAJOR/MINOR

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/change-major-minor.pdf>

CHANGE OF OPTION

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/change-option.pdf>

COURSE OVERLOAD

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/course-overload.pdf>

COURSE WITHDRAWAL

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/course-withdrawal-w-grade.pdf>

DISCLOSURE OF STUDENT INFORMATION

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/student-information-disclosure.pdf>

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH/INDEPENDENT STUDY/FIELD STUDY

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/undergrad-research-independent-study.pdf>

WITHDRAWAL/RESIGNATION FORM

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/files/withdrawal-resignation.pdf>

For a complete list of all CALS Forms:

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/current/forms/index.html>