

FOCUS EXEMPTION Information and Application

Undergraduate students may apply for exemption from up to three Focus requirements if they have had one or more *extraordinary college-level educational experiences* that fall outside of normal university coursework and also meet appropriate Focus Hallmarks. A separate application form should be submitted for each experience, although one experience/application can be submitted to request exemption from multiple Focus requirements. (Please note that one experience cannot earn multiple W Focus exemptions.) If approved, exemption from a particular Focus requirement does not reduce the total number of credits that a student needs to graduate.

Deadlines. Students must submit the application form, statement, and the Sponsor Verification and Assessment Form at least one semester prior to the anticipated semester of graduation. Students are encouraged to submit earlier if possible. (Please note that submission does not guarantee approval.) Due dates:

August graduation—March 1 (or earlier)
December graduation—April 1 (or earlier)
May graduation—November 1 (or earlier)

Applicants will be notified of a decision approximately 4-6 weeks after submission. All decisions are final and cannot be appealed.

Application process

1. Read through all of the Focus Exemption materials to be sure that the experience qualifies and meets the Hallmarks of the Focus requirement for which you are requesting exemption.
2. Determine whether the experience is “course-based” or “non-course.” (See FAQ #2, below.)
3. Submit the application form with a statement of no more than 750 words addressing how the experience was extraordinary and met each of the Hallmarks for the requested Focus area and type of experience.
4. Have the sponsor complete the Sponsor Verification and Assessment Form to be included as part of your application.
5. Include a course syllabus if you are submitting a “course-based” Focus Exemption request.

Frequently asked questions

1. What makes an experience “extraordinary”?

An extraordinary experience stands out as uncommon when compared to educational experiences of the general UH student population. It is something that falls outside of normal university coursework yet is instructive, with a concentration on knowledge and skills acquisition in the Focus area for which the exemption is sought.

Here are some examples of “extraordinary” experiences that may serve as the basis for an exemption:

- Service as a student representative on a college campus’s academic grievance board (non-course experience; Contemporary Ethical Issues)
- Receipt of training and mentoring on giving public presentations and/or conducting interviews as part of professional work experience in the U.S.A. or abroad (non-course experience; Oral Communication)
- Participation in a project or projects of the Polynesian Voyaging Society (non-course experience; Hawaiian, Asian, & Pacific Issues)
- Production of marketing brochures or informational flyers for a community center (non-course experience; Writing Intensive)
- Successful completion of one or more college courses taught in a foreign country (most commonly taken through the Study Abroad Program). These courses must be taught by non-UHM faculty in order to be eligible. Courses taught by UHM faculty should go through the regular Focus designation process prior to the start of the Study Abroad Program in which they are being offered. Please consult with the General Education Office for clarification regarding these types of experiences, as restrictions apply (course-based experience; Focus area depends on course focus)
- Completion of company training sessions on ethical business practices (course-based experience; Contemporary Ethical Issues)

2. What is the difference between a “course-based” and a “non-course” experience?

- A “course-based experience” is an educational experience that involved professional training or one or more classes taken outside of the U.S.A., and for which a Focus designation was not possible. A course taken at another U.S. institution is not considered extraordinary, as over half of UHM students graduate with transfer credits.
- A “non-course experience” is an educational experience that did not involve a course, training session, or other formal instruction.

3. Which Hallmarks do I use?

- If the experience involved a course, workshop, training session, or similar educational experience, use the *Focus Exemption: Hallmarks for Courses*.
- For non-course experiences, use the *Focus Exemption: Hallmarks for Non-course Experiences*.

4. How do I demonstrate that my experience was both *extraordinary* and *educational*?

In your statement of no more than 750 words, give evidence for how your experience is not possible to obtain at UHM. Explain what you learned as a result of the experience. The knowledge you gained must be directly related to the Hallmarks of the Focus area(s) for which you are seeking an exemption.

5. How do I provide evidence that the experience met the Focus Hallmarks?

Consult the *Focus Exemption: Hallmarks for Courses* or *Hallmarks for Non-course Experiences* on the UHM General Education website: www.hawaii.edu/gened. In your statement, include detailed examples from your experience that illustrate how each Hallmark was met. Be sure to address each of the Hallmarks.

6. Are there samples that I can follow?

Each statement will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, not only in terms of the factors mentioned above, but also on the degree or intensity of the experience. Students must present compelling arguments to receive an exemption from the Focus area(s) requested.

7. Who can be a sponsor?

The Focus Exemption requires a sponsor who can verify that the student has completed the extraordinary educational experience.

- For course-based experiences, the sponsor should be the course instructor or trainer.
- For non-course experiences, the sponsor can be the director, employer, mentor, or equivalent person who supervised the experience.

8. What happens after I submit my form, statement, and sponsor verification form?

Faculty members on the UHM General Education Committee or the appropriate Focus Board(s) will review the documents. You should receive a response to your application within four to six weeks after submission. (Please see above for due dates.)

9. What if I've missed the deadline?

Applications that are submitted after the published deadline may be accepted, but it is likely that the request will not be reviewed until the following semester, after registration for that semester has closed. This poses a problem for students if their requests are not approved, as they will not be able to add the additional Focus course they need in order to graduate that semester.

If you decide to submit a Focus Exemption request, make sure it includes the following:

- ☐ Application Form
- ☐ Sponsor Verification and Assessment Form
- ☐ Typed statement explaining how the experience was extraordinary and met each Focus Hallmark
- ☐ Course syllabus (required for course-based requests only)

FOCUS EXEMPTION APPLICATION FORM

Name of student (printed): _____

Focus Exemption(s) sought: Writing Intensive Contemporary Ethical Issues
 Oral Communication Hawaiian, Asian, & Pacific Issues

Type of experience (circle one): Course Non-course

Date of experience. Start: _____ End: _____

1. Attach a typed statement of no more than 750 words that contains the following:
 - Description of the experience.
 - Explanation of how the experience was both educational and extraordinary.
 - A compelling argument showing how the experience met each of the Hallmarks for the Focus area.
(See Hallmarks at www.hawaii.edu/gened.)
2. For a course-based experience, please attach the course syllabus or equivalent.
3. Give your sponsor a copy of your statement and the Sponsor Verification and Assessment form.
Ask the sponsor to complete Sponsor Verification and Assessment form.
4. Attach the Sponsor Verification and Assessment Form if the sponsor does not submit the form directly to the General Education Office.

Student's UH ID number: _____

Student's e-mail address: _____

Student's mailing address: _____

Student's signature: _____ Date: _____

Deadlines: August graduation—March 1 (or earlier); December graduation—April 1 (or earlier);
May graduation—November 1 (or earlier)

Submit this form, statement, Sponsor Verification and Assessment Form, and syllabus (if course-based) to

General Education Office, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
2545 McCarthy Mall, Bilger 104
Honolulu, HI 96822

Email: gened@hawaii.edu
Fax: 808-956-9170

FOCUS EXEMPTION SPONSOR VERIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT FORM

The UHM Focus Exemption process requires a sponsor who can verify that the applying student has completed the extraordinary educational experience. Information about the Focus Exemption is available at www.hawaii.edu/gened/.

Name of student: _____

Name of sponsor: _____

Sponsor's place of employment: _____

Sponsor's title: _____

Sponsor's e-mail address: _____

Sponsor's signature: _____ Date: _____

How many hours did the applicant put into the project, or how many academic credits did the student earn through the project or course? _____

What type of training / evaluation / assessment / feedback did the student receive? From whom?

Please read the student's statement and then explain below why you think student deserves an exemption from the UHM General Education Focus requirement(s) specified.

Please return this form to the student or submit form directly to

General Education Office, University of Hawai'i at Mānoa
2545 McCarthy Mall / Bilger 104 / Honolulu, HI 96822
E-mail: gened@hawaii.edu Fax: (808) 956-9170