

FOCUS EXEMPTION Information and Application

Undergraduate students may apply for exemption from one Focus requirement if they have had a college-level *extraordinary educational experience* that falls outside of normal university coursework and also meets appropriate Focus Hallmarks. Please note: 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 these well before the due date. Due dates:

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

Application process

1. Read through all of the Focus Exemption materials to be sure that the experience qualifies and meets the hallmarks.
2. Submit the application form with a statement of no more than 750 words addressing how the experience met the hallmarks and was an extraordinary educational experience.
3. Have the sponsor complete the Sponsor Verification and Assessment Form to be included as part of your application.

Frequently asked questions

1. What is an *extraordinary educational experience*?

Broadly speaking, there are two types of extraordinary educational experiences. Both types stand out as uncommon when compared to educational experiences of the general UH student population. The two types involve

- 1) An educational experience that did not involve a course (“non-course experience”), and
- 2) An educational experience that involved professional training or one or more classes taken outside the UH system, typically outside of the U.S.A., for which a Focus designation was not possible (“course-based experience”).

For a non-course or a course-based experience to qualify, it should be instructive, with a concentration on knowledge and skills in the Focus area for which the exemption is sought.

A course taken at a UH system or other campus in the U.S.A. is not considered extraordinary: over half of UHM students graduate with transfer credits.

Here are examples of student experiences that may serve as the basis for an exemption:

- Serve as a student representative on a college campus's academic grievance board (non-course educational experience, with a focus on Contemporary Ethical Issues)
- Receive training on public presentations, give public presentations, and/or conduct interviews as part of professional work experience in the U.S.A. or abroad (non-course experience; Oral Communication)
- Participate in a project or projects of the Polynesian Voyaging Society (non-course experience; Hawaiian, Asian, & Pacific Issues)
- Develop marketing brochures or informational flyers for a community center (non-course experience; Writing Intensive)
- Complete one or more college courses taught in a foreign language or in a foreign country, courses that are ineligible for a UHM Focus designation but nonetheless concentrated on the Focus area for which exemption is sought. Please consult with the General Education Office for clarification of this possibility because restrictions apply (course-based experience; Focus area depends on course focus)
- Complete company training sessions on ethical business practices (course-based experience; Contemporary Ethical Issues)

2. 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*.

3. 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 extraordinary when compared to educational experiences of the general undergraduate UHM student population. Explain what you learned as a result of the experience. The knowledge you gained must be directly related to hallmarks of the Focus area for which you are seeking an exemption.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.

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

Faculty members on the UHM General Education Committee 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.)

**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 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