

APC Expectations on Use of the Permission of Instructor Option

Effective Spring 2025

Overview

The APC believes that Mount Holyoke students should be able to register themselves for courses in nearly all cases, without being required to get permission of instructor, through the fifth academic day of classes at the start of the term. This document provides guidance about the instances in which PER-I (permission of instructor required of *all* students) requirements should be allowed for individual courses and, for those courses, the operational expectations for PER-I courses.

The rationale for wanting to minimize the number of courses operating on a PER-I basis is included at the end of the document.

Please note that this document is about courses for which getting an instructor permission would be mandatory for all students. It is *not* about the following situations in which permissions are required only for some students or only during some registration phases:

- All Mount Holyoke students need instructor authorization to add any course after the fifth academic day of the semester.
- Five College students need instructor permission to add any Mount Holyoke course at any point during Add/Drop. (This is not true during the initial April or November registration periods for the upcoming semester -- just during Add/Drop.)
- Any student will need instructor permission, at any point, if seeking exception to a course's specified eligibility requirements (course prerequisites and/or any other eligibility restrictions such as "juniors only").

This document details APC's expectations in these three areas:

- Eligibility for PER-I
- Operational expectations for PER-I courses
- Rationale for minimizing the use of PER-I requirement

Eligibility for PER-I

There are some categories of courses for which PER-I is routine for all students in all registration periods. These are:

- the course is an independent study
- the course is an independent performance study in Music
- the course is an advanced athletic or performing arts course for which admission via audition/tryout has long been approved:
 - a varsity sport PE course
 - advanced by-audition opportunities in the performing arts, such as dance repertory or FMT practica
- specific academic training courses open only to those selected for academic-adjacent positions such as SAW mentors or CBL fellows.

These courses will continue to be classified as PER-I, and will not require routine review to confirm continued eligibility to retain PER-I status. They should follow the operational processes below regarding timing of permissions as much as possible, without needing to meet the operational provisions below re having application forms linked from their entries in the schedule.

All other courses seeking to operate on a PER-I basis will need to be reviewed each semester and their eligibility for PER-I confirmed through review by the Registrar and decisions confirmed by the APC's Course Subcommittee. These include courses newly seeking PER-I status as well as courses which have run previously as PER-I.

What is the rationale for requiring continued review for PER-I eligibility? As noted elsewhere in this document, the APC believes PER-I should be rarely invoked. The academic criteria for course admission are almost always enforceable by the registration system without requiring each student to seek and secure an instructor permission. PER-I should only be used when academic admission criteria cannot be implemented in any other way. The department must be able to describe clearly what the academic criteria will be and their arrangements for managing admission to the course must conform to APC's operational expectations below.

New courses seeking to operate on a PER-I basis should indicate this on their course proposal in the provided field and provide the Registrar's Office each semester with the information required in the Operational Expectations section below to have eligibility confirmed for continued PER-I status.

An instructor of an existing course who wants to begin requiring permission for all students should submit a course proposal for a revision of the course. They should then follow the operational expectations below for continued use of PER-I each semester.

Instructors of existing courses not in the routinely approved categories above that wish to continue to operate with a PER-I requirement should follow the operational guidelines below each semester to retain PER-I eligibility.

Operational Expectations for PER-I Courses

Each course -- except those in the bulleted list above for which PER-I status is routinely granted -- will need to meet the following operational expectations each semester to retain their PER-I designation.

1. Each semester, the department must include a link in their schedule submission ("call for courses") to each PER-I course section's online application form. All students will be required to complete this form to be considered, by the course instructor, for permission to enroll in the PER-I course section.
 - o The online application form for a course will be created and maintained by the instructor or department, but must have been approved by the Chair of the department proposing the course before the link is submitted to the Registrar's Office on the department's course schedule spreadsheet.

- The application form page must describe clearly the criteria the instructor will use in choosing between applications for the course.
 - Instructors should take great care in proposing their criteria and deciding what information to collect from students in making their decision, to minimize the risk of bias or perceived bias.
 - The Registrar's Office will review the application form on behalf of the APC's Course Subcommittee. Any concerns about the application will be referred to the subcommittee or to the full APC who may request additional information and/or reject the request for PER-I for the course.
 - The link to the application form will be included in the published listing for the course, including application deadlines/timing information.
2. Timing of student permissions:
- Students must be instructed to submit their online application forms for any PER-I course during Advising Week before the initial registration period for the next semester.
 - The instructor must act on these timely applications by the Saturday at the end of Advising Week, granting permissions from qualified applicants to fill course capacity (unless the department Chair has agreed some seats should be held for summer new-student registration) or to deny the applications.
 - The intention of this timing is that by the official first day of registration on Monday, the students who'd applied for permission would either have the permissions in the registration system to be able to register for the course themselves at their earliest registration opportunity or they would have an answer denying their request for permission.
 - After this initial period, later applications should be considered on a rolling basis, with decisions made within a week after the student's application.

Rationale for Minimizing the Use of the PER-I Requirement

- PER-I inherently invokes equity issues:
 - Requiring students to get permission of the instructor opens the potential for bias, either real or perceived, in selecting the students.
 - Students do not all react to PER-I requirements the same way. Some otherwise qualified students may be intimidated by this requirement, and this self-selection away from PER-I courses may be based on identities instead of pertinent academic distinctions.
- Requiring permission of the instructor can depress enrollment in a class, leaving valuable seats unfilled.
- If permissions for PER-I courses are not granted in a timely manner:
 - there may be unnecessary turbulence in other class rosters, as students will hold seats in other classes while they wait for answers to their PER-I requests.
 - students lose their best chance at settling their schedules in the most advantageous way while they still have priority to optimize their schedules.
- Requiring PER-I makes true demand for the course invisible to anyone but the instructor, so other students, administrators, and faculty members are hampered in advising the student about their registration prospects and in understanding how demand for this course fits into the College-wide curriculum.
- Requiring PER-I makes registration a more time-intensive process for both the student and the instructor.