The American University of Kurdistan
Policy of Course Substitution

Policy Number: AS015
Effective Date: June 15, 2021

1. **Policy:** This policy defines the standards, eligibility criteria, and academic requirements governing the approval and implementation of course substitutions at The American University of Kurdistan (AUK). The University is committed to maintaining academic rigor while providing flexibility for students to fulfill curriculum requirements through alternative courses when appropriate. All regulations pertaining to course substitutions shall be developed, reviewed, approved, and implemented in accordance with this policy. The policy will be communicated openly to the University community, published on the AUK website, and reviewed periodically to ensure continued relevance, academic integrity, and alignment with AUK's mission, institutional objectives, and curricular frameworks. All members of the AUK community are required to comply fully with policies approved by the AUK Board of Trustees (BoT).
   a. **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines and procedures for course substitutions, including the criteria and parameters for granting approval, to ensure consistency, transparency, and academic integrity in the management of students' study plans.
   b. **Scope:** This policy applies to all undergraduate students, Academic Departments, Academic Advisors, Department Chairs, College Manager/Coordinator/Assistant, College Deans and the Provost as overseen by the Admissions and Registration Department (ARD).

2. **Definition of Terms:**
   Academic Catalog: The University's official publication of academic policies and procedures, programs of study, and course offerings for a particular academic year.
   Course Substitution: A course substitution request is made when a student desires to substitute one course for a required course when a clear relationship exists between the two courses. All substitution requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis and must be approved in a manner that preserves the integrity of the academic program.
   Cumulative GPA (cGPA): The overall grade point average across all courses taken at an institution.
   Student Records: The Student Records pertains to the content and the confidentiality of academic records, access to academic records, academic transcripts, other academic records, non-academic student records, and the Student Information System (SIS).
   Transcript: Serves as the student's official academic record and the University's official record of credit and degrees awarded, including the courses taken by a student and the grades received in each course.

3. **Responsibilities:**
   a. **Issuing Unit:** ARD holds primary responsibility for implementing and monitoring this policy, ensuring compliance with established procedures, maintaining relevant records, and taking necessary actions in cases of noncompliance.
   b. **Other Stakeholders:** Academic Advisors, Department Chairs, College Manager/Coordinator/ Assistant and College Deans.

4. **Procedures**

Application and Approval Process
- Students must review the Academic Catalog when they were admitted to identify program requirements and prerequisites prior to submitting a course substitution request. Course substitution shall only be applied strictly in special circumstances, such as when a student is graduating and a required course is not offered, or when a course is no longer offered, and not based on the student's personal preference. A substitution may be requested when a student seeks to replace a required course with an alternative course that demonstrates a clear academic relationship to the original course.
  - It is recommended that students submit requests as soon as they are aware that a course substitution may be necessary and at least one semester prior to the time that the student is expected to enroll in the course(s) under consideration.
  - If a course no longer is offered due to changes in the plan of study or other reasons, the Department or College may initiate a blanket course substitution that applies to all students enrolled under the old or current study plan. Suggestions made by the Deans regarding blanket courses shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and require approval by the Academic Council and the University Cabinet.
- The student shall submit the Course Substitution Form (see Section 6: Related Documents) to their Academic Advisor and Department Chair for review and approval.
- The form shall then be submitted to the College Dean for final approval, who will then forward the form to ARD for verification and updating of the student's record.

All provisions governing course substitutions shall be aligned with the following requirements:
- All students are expected to follow the Study Plan in effect at the time of their entry into AUK; however, under exceptional circumstances, a student may petition to follow a study plan from a later catalog and request course substitutions to maintain timely progress toward graduation.
  - Such petitions and substitution requests shall be granted only under exceptional circumstances and must not compromise the academic integrity of the student's study plan or learning outcomes, credit hours.
- Students should avoid enrolling in courses outside their current class level (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior), even if they meet the prerequisites, as this may undermine the intended sequence of learning in the curriculum.
- Students are strongly encouraged to meet with their assigned Academic Advisors prior to registration or any major academic decisions. Academic Advisors play a key role in guiding students, preventing enrollment errors, and supporting academic success.
- All course substitution requests shall be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and must be approved in a manner that preserves the integrity of the academic program. Approval is not guaranteed for any request, and the approval of one student's request does not imply that a similar request will be granted for another student. To be approved, a substitute course must:
  - Cover material similar in content and foster similar skill development as the required course.

- o Be at the same level or a more advanced level than the course it replaces.
- No course substitutions are allowed for minor degree specializations.
- A student may receive no more than three course substitutions in any one program, including General Education, as excessive substitutions undermine the integrity of the Program Educational Outcomes.
- All course substitutions shall be reviewed by the ARD to ensure they align with the student's degree requirements.
- The following are not considered valid justifications for a course substitution:
  - o A desire to complete the program of study more quickly.
  - o Failure to enroll in and complete a required course that is regularly offered.
  - o Dislike of a professor teaching a required course.
  - o Substitution for a required course that the student has previously failed.
  - o Personal preference for a course outside the approved study plan.

5. Timeline and Communication/Implementation

Activity	Responsibility Party	Timeline	Communication Channels	Details
Policy Revision Announcement	ARD	February – March 2026	University website, email, Policy Orientation	Announce the revision of the policy, assessment metrics, and objectives.
Implementation Support	ARD	March – April, 2026	Email, information sessions	Provide support to employees/ student affected by the policy; Monitor early implementation challenges
Feedback Collection	ARD	February, 2027	Surveys, suggestion boxes, email	Gather feedback from the University community on the policy's effectiveness, challenges, and areas for improvement.
Periodic Reviews and Updates	OIEP, University Leadership	As necessary	Website, email, staff meetings	Review the policy and its enforcement mechanisms & procedures as necessary to ensure continued relevance and compliance.

6. Related Documents
AUK Catalog(s)
Course Substitution Form
Policy of Change of Grade
Policy of Student Grievance
Policy of Undergraduate Degree Audit and Conferral of Degrees

7. Ways to Measure Success
All approved course substitutions have complete required approvals and are properly kept in the student's file.

8. Policy History
   a) **Approved by:** Board of Trustees
   b) **Adopted:** June 15, 2021
   c) **Revised:** January 18, 2026