

Requesting a PVC Variation in Health Sciences: A Guide for Staff

What is a PVC Variation? (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Variation)

The Regulations for all postgraduate qualifications include a final section with the heading “Variations”. Most read like this:

VARIATIONS

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Health Sciences) may in exceptional circumstances approve a course of study which does not comply with these regulations.

Therefore, the term “PVC variation” is used to describe all those situations where special PVC approval is being sought to allow a student to do something different than what is explicitly required or allowed by the regulations.

How can PVC Variations be used?

PVC variations can be used anywhere and anytime a student’s course of study does not meet the Regulation requirements. The most common situations are:

- **Admission** (e.g. applicant does not meet admission criteria specified in the Regulations),
- **Programme of Study** (e.g. the programme does not fit the prescribed Schedule in the Regulations),
- **Credit/Exemption/Substitution** (e.g. the student is seeking transfer credit *beyond* what is allowed in the Regulations and/or from another institution where the Regulations do not allow such from other institutions),
- **Duration** (e.g. where a student wants more time than allowed by the Regulations to complete the qualification), or
- **Examination** (e.g. where it is requested that two internal examiners are used instead of the required internal and external, for lack of qualified externals)

In addition, PVC variations are sometimes used in cases where the course of action is not clearly or explicitly proscribed, but where increased oversight and a paper trail is desirable.

Who approves PVC Variations?

The authority to approve PVC Variations is usually delegated by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor to the Divisional Associate Dean (Postgraduate Studies), Associate Professor Chrys Jaye, and the Associate Dean (Academic), Professor Lois Surgenor. In certain cases, such as those concerning admission to professional programmes, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor may approve the variations himself.

PVC variations should not be seen as a rubber-stamping exercise, and it is important that the departments should make absolutely no assurances or promises to students that assume a variation request will be approved.

What kind of justification is required for a PVC Variation

There is a strong presumption in favour of adhering to our regulations, and as such we expect that variations should be used sparingly, and in exceptional cases. Where a pattern of similar requests develops, that is usually a signal that a amendment to the programme regulations is indicated.

Care should be taken in preparing a justification that outlines the exceptional nature of the case, and explains the necessity for departing from the standard pathway. Depending on the nature of the case, some helpful questions to consider may include:

- Is there any precedent for what is requested? (If so, please include details)
- Is there any intention to amend regulations in the future so that a variation will not be required for similar cases going forward? (If so, please indicate a plan or timeframe)
- If generalized, would the variation create risk for the University?

Preparation of the case for a PVC variation is regarded as an academic task, and it is expected and required that academic staff should do the drafting of these.

What is the process for requesting a PVC Variation?

1. Get the PVC Variation form from the Health Sciences [Divisional Academic Board website](#).
2. Complete the Department section. Electronic completion and signing of the form is preferred (though print/sign/scan is also acceptable).
3. Attach the student's academic record and any relevant supporting documentation.
4. Get the Department section signed off by the Academic Leader or HOD before sending it for Divisional approval.
5. Send the completed form (with supporting documents) and email to the Divisional Academic Committees and Services Specialist (currently Dr Tosh Stewart: tosh.stewart@otago.ac.nz). Please copy in Amanda Clifford for UOC programmes, and Trevor Williams for UOW programmes.
6. Once a decision has been made, a copy of the completed form will be returned to you. Turn-around time for decisions generally will be within a week, and frequently occur within a day or two. The Academic Committees and Services Specialist will take responsibility for informing Student Records of the outcome so that it can be noted on the student's academic record.
7. Inform the student of the outcome in writing in accordance with your departmental practice. Or, where the Variation is related to an admission, you can inform the student via the eVision offer letter, using the template additional text pertaining to Variations.

8. Where a variation is related to an admission, the completed and approved PVC Variation form should be attached to the Approved Admissions Record as supporting evidence, and then signed off by the Academic Leader (or designated nominee for Admissions sign-off).