

## **Procedures for the Election of Undergraduates to the Rhode Island Alpha of Phi Beta Kappa and Minimum Standards for Election**

Established in 1830, the Rhode Island Alpha of Phi Beta Kappa at Brown University seeks to encourage intellectual distinction among undergraduates by recognizing *outstanding academic accomplishment in the course of a broad liberal education*.

The Alpha of Rhode Island holds elections three times annually: in February (to elect juniors), in April (to elect seniors), and in late May (to elect seniors who transferred to Brown University as juniors). Undergraduates elected to the Rhode Island Alpha in their junior year become, in their senior year, the constitutionally designated electors for the remaining members of their class, and for juniors in the class succeeding.

Election to Phi Beta Kappa is a highly competitive process, particularly for juniors. Although electors review the academic records of all undergraduates who meet the minimum qualifications for membership, *meeting the minimum qualifications does not guarantee election*. No individual can apply for membership, nor does the Rhode Island Alpha accept letters of nomination or support on behalf of undergraduates. According to the Laws of the Rhode Island Alpha, “no more than one-sixth of the undergraduate members of a graduating class shall be elected members. Of these, not more than one-third shall be elected in the junior year.”

Election to Phi Beta Kappa is based on academic achievement as shown by grades in the candidate’s transcript. Course grades received from other institutions are not taken into account. The electors consider quality and strength of a candidate’s curriculum, particularly after the first two semesters and with special attention to the arts, humanities, social sciences, and/or pure mathematics beyond the introductory level; informed use of the Brown University curriculum; distinction in one’s concentration program; evidence of superior academic performance, such as the number of grades of “A” or grades of “S with distinction”; and, in the case of seniors, participation in a concentration honors program.

### **A. Junior election**

To be considered for election as a junior, a student must have completed a minimum of **twenty courses** over five semesters *at Brown University*. Two-fifths of these courses must have been taken in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and/or pure mathematics. The record must also show a total of at least **eighteen** grades of “A” or “S with distinction.” An additional “A” or “S with distinction” will be expected in compensation for every grade of “C”.

## B. Senior Election

To be considered for election as a senior, a student must have completed a **minimum of twenty-eight courses** over seven semesters or their equivalent at *Brown University*. Two-fifths of these courses must have been in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and/or pure mathematics. The record must also show at least **twenty-three** grades of “A” or “S with distinction” by the end of the seventh semester. An additional grade of “A” or “S with distinction” will be expected in compensation for every grade of “C”. The same criteria apply to candidates from the senior class who have completed requirements for graduation at mid-year.

## C. Requirements for students who participate in study-away programs, who enter with transfer credit, or who receive credit prior to admission for courses taken elsewhere

Participation in *study-away programs*, internationally or in the United States, entrance with transfer credit, or receipt of credit prior to admission for courses taken elsewhere do not adversely affect the chances of candidacy. These students will be considered for election as **seniors** rather than as **juniors**. Because grades for courses taken at other institutions are not considered, minimum course and grade requirements for candidacy are adjusted as follows:

Candidates in this category who received **one** semester of credit for study elsewhere will be considered if, prior to their final semester, they have completed a **minimum of twenty-four courses** at Brown University, and have received a minimum of **twenty** grades of “A” or “S with distinction” in those courses.

Candidates in this category who received **two** semesters of credit for study elsewhere will be considered if, prior to their final semester, they have completed a **minimum of twenty courses** at Brown University and have received a minimum of **seventeen** grades of “A” or “S with distinction” in those courses.

Candidates in this category who received **three** semesters of credit for study elsewhere will be considered if, prior to their final semester, they have completed a **minimum of sixteen courses** at Brown University and received a minimum of **fourteen** grades of “A” or “S with distinction” in those courses.

For all of these categories, an additional grade of “A” or “S with distinction” will be expected in compensation for every grade of “C.” In all cases, a minimum of two fifths of the Brown courses must have been in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and/or pure mathematics.

## D. Special Senior Election

Seniors must complete at least **four** semesters at Brown University before they can be considered for membership in the Rhode Island Alpha. In the case of seniors who

transferred to Brown University as juniors, the requirement is usually not satisfied until the end of the senior year. The chapter holds a special election during the week before commencement to evaluate such cases. To be considered, these students must have completed a **minimum of sixteen** courses at Brown University and received a minimum of **fourteen** grades of “A” or “S with distinction.” Two-thirds of the courses taken at Brown University must have been in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and/or pure mathematics. An additional grade of “A” or “S with distinction” will be expected in compensation for every grade of “C.” Because of time constraints and the small number of candidates, this election is conducted by the faculty secretary and the two undergraduate secretaries.

### **E. Election Process**

The faculty secretary of the Rhode Island Alpha presides at each election, but votes only at special senior elections. The undergraduate electors participate in a training session conducted by the faculty secretary and sign a pledge to abide by the rules for the election of new members and to maintain the confidentiality of the election process. Electors who are present at an election examine transcripts of all eligible students, with the names of these students blocked out. The election of each candidate must be unanimous. A statement of the reasons for the objection must accompany a “no” vote.

After an election, the Associate Dean of the College who chairs the Standing Committee on the Academic Code reviews the names of the selected candidates to assure that none has been found guilty of academic dishonesty. Those students chosen by the electors and cleared by the associate dean receive invitations to become members of the Rhode Island Alpha of Phi Beta Kappa.