

## **FACULTY GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC APPEALS**

### **Approved By the Administrative Board of the College of Arts and Sciences**

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is committed to helping each student reach his or her full academic potential. Students are encouraged to give thoughtful consideration to their academic and personal goals leading them to take responsibility for their academic choices and decisions. Nevertheless, on occasion, student academic performance is affected by circumstances beyond one's control. The University has authorized an academic appeals process to consider and act in these circumstances. The deans in each college have been given the authority to oversee this academic appeals process. The ultimate goals of this process are to promote student success and respond to student needs while maintaining academic integrity and equity.

Within the College of Arts and Sciences, the academic appeals process will be administered by the Office of Undergraduate Education including the Academic Advising Program and the Retention Program. Academic administrators in these areas, including academic advising deans and the retention coordinator, will work collaboratively to make appeal decisions. The faculty guidelines contained in this document will guide all decisions. This document will be reviewed periodically by the Administrative Board.

### **Course Drops**

The following are appropriate grounds for submitting a request to withdraw from a course after the published drop deadline: serious illness, family-related illness, personal or family problems/emergencies, financial problems requiring employment, or other serious problems that prevent students from meeting their academic responsibilities.

Course drops may be granted when students present compelling explanations of the difficulties that kept them from meeting their academic obligations. Requests to drop for medical reasons should be accompanied by a verification of diagnosis and an evaluation of the severity of the problems, as provided by Campus Health Services or Counseling and Wellness Services. In the case of financial difficulties or employment obligations, the student must present corroborating documentation.

Course drops should be granted only for extenuating circumstances that are beyond the student's control. Students must make a direct connection between those circumstances and their performance in the class and should also mention any steps they took to resolve the situation, including speaking with the course instructor, working with tutors, counselors, doctors or therapists, reducing work hours, or seeking other support or relief.

In most cases, if a student has been accommodated previously, the reasons for a new request should be **significantly** different than the previous explanation.

In general, students may be approved to drop only one course. Only in very rare instances should students be approved to drop below 12 credit hours.

Students who wish to drop below 9 hours in a current semester may wish to consider transferring to Part-time Classroom Studies. They also have the option of withdrawing from the term. If a student is permitted to drop below 9 academic hours in any semester, that term will not be counted as a semester in residence.

For retroactive course drops, students should generally not be approved to drop courses they have passed. In general, selective drops of some courses and retention of other courses in or across terms is not encouraged.

### **Consequences of Dropping Below Twelve Hours**

Students who request late course drops might not be aware of the potential consequences of their request. Dropping courses may leave students academically ineligible (insufficient number of hours passed) or in need of extra semesters or summer school to ensure academic eligibility or normal progress toward graduation. Dropping below twelve hours during a fall or spring semester may yield additional complications, including loss of scholarships or

financial aid (including possibly having to pay back money already spent), loss of medical insurance coverage, or loss of campus housing. Students should investigate these possibilities before requesting the course drop(s).

### **Transferring to Part-time Classroom Studies**

Students who are unable to carry at least twelve hours during a spring or fall semester may consider transferring to Part-Time Classroom Studies (PTCS). This is a particularly good option for students who must support themselves financially and whose employment hours interfere with class scheduling and/or with fulfilling the academic obligations of a full-time courseload. It may also be an option for students with chronic medical or personal/family issues.

Students may request transfer to Part-Time Classroom Studies by seeing a full-time Academic Advisor or a dean before November 1 in the fall or April 1 in the spring. Students must be in good standing to transfer to Part-Time Classroom Studies.

Students who transfer to Part-time Classroom Studies may not transfer back to full-time status until they have been away from the General College or the College of Arts and Sciences for a fall and a spring term. That is, they may be in Part-time Classroom Studies for one term and then either enroll in PTCS or take a leave of absence the second term.

### **Retroactive Semester Withdrawals**

A retroactive withdrawal of an entire semester is an alteration of the historical record. As such, it may be granted only when a student presents a very compelling reason for his/her failure to meet academic responsibilities—for example, the death of a loved one, severe medical (including physical and psychological) problems, or other extreme situations. Written documentation from qualified professionals or employers must be provided. A request to withdraw for medical reasons should be accompanied by a verification of diagnosis and an evaluation of the severity of the problems by Campus Health Services; or, if the student was seen by a psychologist or therapist during the semester in question, by Counseling and Wellness Services.

Sometimes students stop attending classes and as a result have all ABs or FAs on their record. In this case, students must explain why they did not seek withdrawal in a timely manner. Documentation of the circumstances or proof of leaving campus (e.g., employment record) is strongly recommended.

The Administrative Board Appeals Committees may consider in their decision-making whether the student has taken responsibility for addressing the issues that caused his or her poor performance. They may also consider whether the student has made an attempt to improve his or her academic record via subsequent coursework and whether he/she has made a turnaround in academic performance.

In most cases, if a student has been granted a previous retroactive semester withdrawal, he or she is not likely to be granted a second request for similar reasons.

### **Waiver of Academic Ineligibility (for students under “old eligibility rules”)**

A one-semester waiver of academic ineligibility may be granted when a student presents a compelling explanation of the medical, psychological, financial or personal difficulties that prevented him/her from fulfilling eligibility requirements (hours passed, GPA). For medical, psychological, emotional, and financial difficulties, written documentation must be provided. A waiver will not be granted if the student cannot restore eligibility in one semester or if the student’s performance has been getting worse rather than better. Students must identify a plan of action for the upcoming semester and show that they have already taken steps to put it into effect. This can include working with the Learning Center; establishing a relationship with an academic advisor, counselor, or therapist; reducing hours of employment; or changing majors. Typically, waivers are approved only for students whose hours and GPA are very close to the eligibility requirements, and it seems reasonable for the student to restore eligibility after one semester. Waiver requests are not granted if it would be statistically impossible for the student to restore academic eligibility in that semester.

### **Academic Probation (for students under “new eligibility rules”)**

First year students entering the University on or after May 14, 2007 are required to meet certain eligibility standards (remain in Good Standing), which define the minimally acceptable levels of performance. Students who fall short of the standards for Good Standing, but have passed at least nine credit hours of graded coursework (excluding BE or PL credits) in the preceding semester and who were not already on probation, will be on academic probation for one semester with the objective of meeting those standards. The requirements to remain in Good Standing at the university include:

A 2.000 cumulative UNC-Chapel Hill grade-point average and the following number of academic semester credit hours passed:

- 9 academic hours to enter a second semester
- 24 academic hours to enter a third semester (30 hours is recommended)
- 36 academic hours to enter a fourth semester
- 51 academic hours to enter a fifth semester (60 hours is recommended)
- 63 academic hours to enter a sixth semester
- 78 academic hours to enter a seventh semester (90 hours is recommended)
- 93 academic hours to enter an eighth semester

A student who does not qualify for probation or who does not meet cumulative eligibility standards after a probationary term are academically ineligible and may not enroll in a spring or fall term. Such a student may request a semester of academic probation or, if he or she was on academic probation in the preceding semester, request a semester of continued probation.

#### *Requesting Academic Probation*

Academic probation may be granted to students presenting medical, psychological, financial or personal difficulties. The request must contain a compelling explanation for the student’s poor academic performance in the preceding semester as well as an explanation of why the student believes he or she should be granted a probationary semester. This request should be accompanied by supporting documentation if appropriate (such as documentation from Campus Health Services or other records). It should also identify the student’s plan of action for the upcoming semester if he or she is granted a semester of probation.

- Typically, a semester of probation is granted only for students whose hours and GPA are very close to the eligibility requirements, and it seems reasonable for the student to return to Good Academic standing after one semester.
- Requests for probation should not be granted if it would be statistically impossible for the student to restore academic eligibility in that semester.
- On average, first-year and sophomore students with a cumulative GPA below 1.600 are unlikely to return to good academic standing. This rule of thumb should be taken into consideration when considering an appeal for academic probation from a first-year or sophomore student. Juniors and seniors appealing for probation should have a cumulative GPA well above a 1.600.
- **Special Consideration for first semester First-Year Students and new Transfer Students:** Transitioning to college life is a significant challenge. It is important to take into consideration the unique nature of the first semester of college. For these reasons, First-Year Students and new transfers who become Academically Ineligible after their first fall semester at the university are notified of the procedure to request a semester of probation. In general, First-Year Students and new transfers who request a semester of probation and supply a

compelling explanation for their poor academic performance in the preceding semester as well as an explanation of why they believe they should be granted a probationary semester may be granted a semester of probation.

### *Requesting Continued Probation*

In the rarest of cases, a student who has just completed a semester on probation may be granted one additional semester of continued probation. This will occur only when a student presents a compelling explanation of medical, psychological, financial or personal difficulties that prevented him/her from returning to good academic standing. The request must contain a compelling explanation for the student's poor academic performance in the preceding semester as well as an explanation of why the student believes he or she should be granted a probationary semester. This request should be accompanied by supporting documentation if appropriate (such documentation from Campus Health Services or other records). It should also identify the student's plan of action for the upcoming semester if he or she is granted an additional semester of probation.

- Students requesting continued probation should have done everything requested of students on Probation during their probationary semester:
  - completing the Self-Assessment,
  - completing the online Student Success Seminar,
  - completing and signing the Probation Contract,
  - completing the End of Semester Assessment,
  - meeting with their academic advisors
  - and
  - utilizing university resources.

Whether or not a student completed these tasks should be taken into consideration when considering an appeal for continued probation.

- Students will not be granted continued probation if they cannot return to good academic standing in one semester or if the student's academic performance is getting worse rather than better.
- It is recommended that students who are granted Continued probation have at least a 1.900 cumulative GPA.

### **Specials Notes:**

- If a student is granted probation or continued probation then withdraws during the probationary semester, the student must re-appeal.
- If a student earns probation after mid-semester (this would typically occur due to a grade change), the student may appeal for probation for the following semester but it would not be considered continued probation.

### **Grade Appeal**

A student who feels he or she has been awarded an incorrect grade should first attempt to resolve the matter with the instructor concerned. If this fails to result in a satisfactory agreement, the student may submit of a letter of appeal to the Associate Dean of the Academic Advising Program no later than the last day of classes of the following (fall or spring) semester. The student should attach a copy of the course syllabus, copies of all graded work, and any other documentation he/she feels is relevant to their case. If the Associate Dean believes that the student has made a sufficient argument to have the grade looked into in more detail, the dean will request that the chair of the department concerned appoint a committee to review the student's argument and all submitted evidence. The departmental committee may consult with the course instructor concerning the student's allegations, attendance and performance. The departmental committee will then make a recommendation to the department chair, and the chair will send it back to the Associate Dean of the Academic Advising Program.

For a grade change to be considered, it must be based upon one or more of the following grounds and upon allegation that the ground or grounds cited influenced the grade assignment:

- Arithmetic or clerical error
- Arbitrariness, possibly including discrimination based upon race, sex, religion, or national origin of the student
- Personal malice
- Honor Court sanction

### **Non-traditional Readmission**

Students who do not meet the GPA requirements for traditional readmission and who have not been enrolled at Carolina or at any other college or university as a full-time student for five calendar years may request non-traditional readmission through the Associate Dean of the Academic Advising Program. Students should submit a typed statement indicating their intention to return as a non-traditional readmit, the semester for which they would like to resume enrollment under this option, an explanation of their prior academic performance, an explanation of how they have gainfully used their time out of school, and preferably some documentation of recent academic success. The latter can include the completion of summer school classes or Carolina Courses Online through the Friday Center for Continuing Education, or, secondarily, evidence of successful academic performance at other colleges or universities. Students should have met with an academic advisor to consider their progress toward the degree and the appropriateness of the intended major.

Students who are granted non-traditional readmission retain credit hours toward graduation for all transfer and BE coursework and for all Carolina courses completed with grades of solid C or higher. Any courses that have been passed at Carolina will be considered to fulfill general education and major requirements, but courses in which the student earned a C-, D+ or D will not be counted as hours toward graduation. Students will be granted a new semesters-in-residence count based on the number of credit hours they retain. Their cumulative GPA will begin to be calculated anew beginning with the term of their non-traditional readmission. Students granted non-traditional readmissions are not eligible for graduation with distinction. Students who lose their academic eligibility as a non-traditional readmit must then meet the current academic eligibility requirements before they will be permitted to continue their enrollment at the University. A non-traditional readmission is granted only once.

### **Approved Underloads**

Students with major medical problems that interfere with their ability to maintain a full-time enrollment may request a medical underload for a semester, an academic year, or on a continuing basis. Students initiate this request with Campus Health Services or Counseling and Wellness Services, ideally before classes start for a term, but no later than eight weeks into the semester. The Vice Chancellor for Campus Health Services (or his/her designee) will review these requests and, if deemed appropriate, will send a letter recommending an approved underload to the Associate Dean for Academic Advising Programs. The Associate Dean will inform the student of the approved medical underload.

Students with approved medical underloads may see a dean at any point up through the last day of classes to drop a course or courses during the approved terms. The dean will complete the drop form with the notation “approved medical underload, no grade, no W.” The student should be counseled that if he/she drop below twelve hours, his/her financial aid, insurance coverage, or ability to remain in campus housing may be affected.

In rare instances, students with approved medical underloads will be allowed to drop below 9 credit hours during a fall or spring term. Students who do drop below twelve hours may face academic ineligibility and/or may need to attend summer school or complete Carolina Courses Online in order to maintain appropriate academic progress.

In rare instances, students may be approved for underloads due to family-related illness, personal or family problems/emergencies, financial problems requiring employment, or other serious problems that prevent students from meeting their academic responsibilities.