

Motion re Hardship Withdrawals
Draft of October 17, 2012

Motion:

Effective Fall 2013

The following changes are made to the hardship withdrawal policy: *Additions* ~~Deletions~~

~~Students may request an be granted hardship~~ *Emergency Withdrawals* when a non-academic emergency situations occurs which prevents them from completing their course work (e.g., severe medical problems, traumatic events/circumstances that cause them to miss numerous classes) ~~during a semester and when the timing or nature of the emergency prevents them from voluntarily withdrawing from their classes. (See Section 1332.10)~~

~~Hardship~~ *Emergency Withdrawals* are subject to the following restrictions:

~~Students are not eligible for hardship withdrawals in any course in which they have completed the course requirements (e.g., taking the final exam or submitting the final project).~~

~~Students may request a single Emergency Withdrawal for two consecutive semesters if documentation is provided to justify how a single emergency situation applied to both semesters included in the request.~~

Students must initiate an application for an ~~hardship~~ *Emergency Withdrawal* no later than ~~one~~ two academic years after the semester in which the courses were taken.

Students may request Emergency Withdrawals in a maximum of two semesters of their enrollment at GSU.

Students may not request an Emergency Withdrawal after degree conferral.

~~Hardship status normally applies to all courses taken in a semester but in some cases may be granted for partial courses taken in a semester. Students requesting a hardship withdrawal in some but not all of their courses must provide documentation to justify such a partial withdrawal. If a student is granted a hardship withdrawal (full or partial), the instructors of the courses from which the student is withdrawing must award a grade of "W" or "WF," depending on whether the student was doing passing work as of the effective date of the hardship.~~

Emergency withdrawals normally apply to all the courses a student took in a semester. In exceptional cases, emergency withdrawals may be granted for some of a student's courses. Students requesting a emergency withdrawal in some but not all of their courses must provide documentation to justify a partial withdrawal.

~~Hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawal Process:

All ~~hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawal requests are submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students.

Decisions regarding ~~hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawals requested within the same semester of enrollment ~~and or prior to the administration of final examinations or final projects~~ *beginning of the next academic term* will be made by the *Office of the Dean of Students or designee*.

Every year, the Dean of Students will distribute to the Senate Committee on Admissions and Standards a report that indicates (at a minimum) the number of petitions filed, the number granted, and the number denied. Any member of Admissions and Standards may review the documents of any emergency withdrawal request when there is a legitimate educational interest.

Emergency Withdrawal Committee

Decisions regarding ~~hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawals requested within ~~one two~~ academic years after the semester in which the courses were taken will be made by an ~~Hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawal Committee consisting of ~~one two~~ faculty selected by ~~the Chair of the Senate Committee on Admissions and Standards as well as two staff members, at least one of whom must be an Academic Advisor, chosen by the Associate Provost for Academic Programs two~~ academic advisors (one from the Student Advisement Center and one from a college Office of Academic Assistance) and one staff member from Enrollment Services, selected by the ~~Associate Provost for Academic Programs. The Associate Provost for Academic Programs will designate one of these two staff as a voting member. The other will not have a vote. The committee will elect its chair from among the two faculty members. A Dean of Students designee will serve ex officio as Chair but will not have a vote. A decision to grant an hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawal must be supported by three of the four voting members of the ~~Hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawal Committee. The ~~Hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawal Committee is not authorized to grant exceptions to the ~~two~~ restrictions above.

~~Hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawal Appeals and Petitions Committee:

If the student or ~~the~~ faculty members involved in a case wishes to appeal the decision of the Dean of Students or the ~~Hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawal Committee, ~~or if the Dean of Students feels that an exception to the restrictions above is justified, the student's case shall be considered by the appeal must be submitted to the~~ ~~Hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawal Appeals and Petitions Committee *within 90 business days of the notification of the original decision*. In these instances, the instructor of the course(s) in question will be contacted by the Office of the Dean of Students in advance of the Committee's meeting and offered the opportunity to write a letter to the Committee stating anything the instructor feels is relevant to the case. *This Committee will also review waiver/variance petitions submitted by students requesting an exception to any of the restrictions listed above.* The ~~Hardship~~ Emergency Withdrawal Appeals and Petitions Committee will be composed of *two* faculty selected by ~~the Chair of the Senate Committee on Admissions and Standards and two staff members from the division of Enrollment Services~~ *two individuals chosen by the Vice*

~~President for Student Services. The Associate Provost for Academic Programs will designate one of these two staff as a voting member. The other will not have a vote. The committee will elect its chair from among the two faculty members. The Dean of Students designee will serve ex officio but will not have a vote. The Dean of Students shall serve as Chair but shall not have a vote. The University Attorney or designee will be an ex-officio member of the Committee but will not have a vote. No one may serve on both the Emergency Withdrawal Committee and the Emergency Withdrawal Appeals and Petitions Committee. A decision to 1) override the decision of the Dean of Students or the Hardship Emergency Withdrawal Committee, or 2) to grant an exception to the two restrictions above, must be supported by three of the four voting members of the Hardship Emergency Withdrawal Appeals Committee.~~

Emergency Withdrawal Grades

~~If a student is granted an Emergency Withdrawal, W grades will automatically be awarded. If a student is granted a Hardship Withdrawal, the instructors of the courses from which the student is withdrawing must award a grade of W or WF, depending on whether the student was doing passing work as of the effective date of the hardship. W grades awarded as a result of the Hardship Emergency Withdrawal process do not count against the student's Voluntary Withdrawal limits.~~

Appeals of the decisions of the ~~Hardship~~ *Emergency Withdrawal Appeals and Petitions Committee and appeals of the automatic award of a W* may be initiated by either the faculty or the students involved in the case *within 10 business days of notification of the Appeals Committee decision* and will be considered by the Provost.

Appeals of the decision of Provost may be initiated by the faculty or student involved in the case within 10 business days of notification of the Provost's decision and will be considered by the President.

The motion applies to both graduate and undergraduate students. However, a college may decide to set up a staff and committee structure to handle the emergency withdrawal requests of graduate students in its graduate courses.

Rationale:

The Hardship Withdrawal Policy was most recently updated in 2006, prior to the implementation of limitations on voluntary withdrawals (1332.10 B. Limits on Withdrawals with a Grade of W). Given both (1) a significant increase in requests for hardship withdrawals that has impacted workload for both Hardship Withdrawal committees and administrative offices, and (2) an increase in appeals from students requesting retroactive hardship withdrawals for reasons other than non-academic emergencies as required by the policy, a subcommittee of the Admissions & Standards Committee was charged with reviewing and making recommendations for changes to the Hardship Withdrawal Policy. The subcommittee is recommending the following policy changes:

- Change the name of the policy to “Emergency Withdrawal Policy” to more accurately convey the purpose of the policy. Experience has shown that the title “hardship withdrawal” leads students to apply on the grounds of long-standing difficulties in their lives (e.g., a parent who has had mental health issues since before the student enrolled at GSU).
- Add text about voluntary withdrawals to more accurately convey to students that emergency withdrawals are not given when a student could have voluntarily withdrawn from a course.
- Extend the submission deadline from one year to two years:
 - Faculty members and OAA/SAC academic advisors frequently refer students to the Hardship Withdrawal Policy based upon circumstances that are disclosed to them by students during advising/academic progress discussions. These advising discussions often occur after the one-year deadline that is currently in place.
 - A two-year submission deadline is recommended in that it should provide a substantial and reasonable timeframe in which students may pursue a hardship withdrawal, but not such a long time that it becomes too difficult to verify documentation regarding hardship circumstances and/or unlikely that instructors of record have records and/or recollection of interactions with their students.
 - This extension would better allocate the workload between the Emergency Withdrawal Committee and the Emergency Withdrawal Appeals and Petitions Committee.
- Limit the total number of Emergency Withdrawal Requests to a maximum of two semesters:

Students now have alternative policy options for addressing their needs to withdraw for non-academic difficulties (e.g., Voluntary Withdrawal Policy and the establishment of the Repeat to Replace Policy). With this limit and the maximum of two semesters of complete withdrawal found in the Voluntary Withdrawal policy, students have the opportunity to take all Ws in four semesters. This is sufficient.

- Students may not request an Emergency Withdrawal after graduation:
Once a degree is conferred, it is not appropriate to remove grades from a students' records.
- Extend the deadline for submission of same-semester emergency withdrawal requests to the beginning of the next academic term:
Students who are experiencing emergencies often must request documentation from doctors, legal systems, etc., in order to submit a complete application. This change would allow students who experience their emergencies during the last three weeks of the term a more realistic timeframe for retrieving the documentation they need in order to have their applications reviewed in the same process as students whose emergencies occurred earlier in the semester.
- Establish deadlines for the submission of appeals:
Currently, students do not have a deadline for the submission of appeals. The changes recommended in the policy offer students approximately one semester (90 business days) to gather additional documentation needed in order to submit their appeals of initial Emergency Withdrawal decisions to the Emergency Withdrawal Appeals and Petitions Committee. The appeals deadlines at the higher administrative levels reflect those in many other University policies (10 business days).
- Reporting requirements:
In order to efficiently process emergency withdrawal requests while also insuring academic integrity, the Dean of Students is required to make reports to the Senate Committee on Admissions and Standards. This is not a change. It merely codifies existing practice. It parallels the requirements of other appeals committees (e.g., Admissions Appeals and Registration Appeals).
- Changes in membership of the committee:
These are designed to increase faculty participation and remove possible conflicts of interest. These changes parallel the composition of other appeals committees.
- Grades assigned to students who receive Emergency Withdrawals:
In Spring 2011, of 410 grades awarded to 130 students, only 11 grades and 2 students received WFs. Waiting for faculty to decide whether to award a W or a WF takes significant time and involves significant workload for the Office of the Registrar. This changes will also significantly shorten the time from when a student files a request and when the grade-change appears on the transcript.
- The policy applies to both graduate and undergrad student unless a college opts out:
This is not a change. It merely codifies existing practice. At this time, only the College of Law has opted out.