

Appealing for a Dean's Waiver or Faculty Transfer

Staff in the Office of the Ombudsperson have written this guide to help students understand the Dean's Waiver and Faculty Transfer Processes. Following the steps in this guide may make an appeal more effective but is no guarantee that it will be granted.

This guide is not an official university document and is intended to supplement - not replace - the Academic Calendar or information provided by faculties and departments.

Required to Withdraw

Students who do not meet the progression requirements of their program are required to withdraw from that program, and may be required to withdraw from the University if they are not eligible for probation. Progression requirements are described in the Academic Policies area of the [Governance](#) website, as well as in the [Academic Calendar](#).

Progression requirements are the *minimum* requirements a student must achieve in order to continue at university or in a particular program, and may be expressed as an average over a number of courses, or an average over a year or years of study; or as a particular grade and course requirement, depending on the program.

Probation eligibility

If you are unsure about your eligibility for probation, or the conditions attached to being on probation, check with an academic advisor in your home faculty.

Appeal for a Dean's Waiver

Appeal for a Dean's Waiver by writing to the dean of your faculty of registration. Note that deans delegate this authority to an Associate Dean – sometimes called Associate Dean Academic or Associate Dean Undergraduate Studies. This guide uses the term Associate Dean throughout.

Some faculties have a Dean's Waiver appeal form or post waiver instructions on line. Use the appropriate form for your appeal and be sure to review your Faculty's web site for the most complete, up-to-date information and forms.

Note: If you were planning to change faculties, or you now believe you should transfer to another faculty, see instructions under Transfers, below.

The Dean's Waiver process is a safety net provided by the University for students whose academic performance was impacted by a serious health issue or other circumstances beyond the student's control. If your situation was within your control, or not very serious, a waiver is unlikely to succeed.

AN APPEAL FOR A DEAN'S WAIVER OR A TRANSFER MUST BE SENT TO THE ASSOCIATE DEAN BEFORE JUNE 30.¹

Contact the Associate Dean's office to find out when you will get a response, but keep in mind that these decisions can take a few weeks.

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What the Associate Dean looks for

In considering an appeal for a waiver, an Associate Dean looks for evidence in support of the claim that the student's academic performance was significantly affected by the extenuating circumstance. However, associate deans also expect students to take sensible steps to limit impact on their academic record: dropping courses before the deadline, reducing extra-curricular activities, requesting extensions when ill, deferring examinations when too sick or upset to write them, and seeking timely professional help and the advice of an academic advisor.

The questions below are typical of those on the current waiver forms:

- What were the extenuating circumstances which contributed **most significantly** to your poor academic performance during the past academic year? When did the problems arise? Supporting documentation **must** be submitted with this petition.
- What attempts did you make at the time you were encountering problems to contact your instructors, academic advisors, Leadership and Learning staff, or other professionals such as a physician?
- Please list the courses in which you were enrolled, with the names of the instructors. For each course indicate a breakdown of your grades, with approximate dates of tests, quizzes and exams; and the percentage of lectures/labs/tutorials you attended. If you failed to complete all the course requirements, explain why for each incomplete requirement. This is best done in a chart or table.
- Why do you think you would be successful in University-level studies, if your petition were granted?
- What are your academic goals?
 - a) What is your long-term degree and program objective?
 - b) In what specific program do you wish to register during the coming year?
 - c) What specific courses do you wish to take during the coming year?

If your faculty does not provide a form like the one above, write a letter to the associate dean providing the same kind of information.

¹ June 30 is the deadline in the case of programs where marks and report comments become available up to and including May 31. In all other cases, the deadline is 3 weeks after the marks/comments become available.

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Tips on drafting your appeal:

- Be specific (not vague): don't say "my father lost his job last year," say, "my father lost his job in mid-November."
- Be accurate. "I have always been an A student" is not true when you had a B average in your last year of high school.
- Provide documentation (or arrange to have it sent) when relevant documentation exists. All documentation should be signed and dated and should provide a time-frame for the event or matters being attested to.
- If documentation is being sent directly to the associate dean, indicate this clearly in your appeal and, if possible, provide the date you expect the documentation to arrive.
- Clearly identify the factors which affected your academic performance the most. Sometimes it is useful to submit a chronology. The Ombuds Office produces a guide on chronologies that might be useful.
- Answer all the questions on the form or in the guide. An associate dean needs all the relevant facts in order to make a fair decision.
- Be professional.

Appealing to SRBA

When a student is required to withdraw from Western, it is a policy driven decision and not the decision of the Dean.

SRBA has a limited scope for appeals and states they only have jurisdiction to hear an appeal when a Dean's decision specifically requires you to withdraw. SRBA does not have "jurisdiction to hear appeals where the Dean's decision subsequently triggers the implementation of policy(ies) administered by the Office of the Registrar requiring your withdrawal." ([SRBA Application for Hearing](#)) which limits the grounds on which a student can appeal the denial of a Dean's Waiver.

Before appealing the outcome of your Dean's Waiver, consider the grounds on which you wish to appeal and ensure they fit within the requirements for appealing at this level.

Disagreeing with the outcome does not meet the threshold of grounds for an appeal to SRBA.

Faculty Transfers

- a. If you were required to withdraw from your Faculty (rather than the University), you may be eligible to apply to another Faculty. If you decide to do this, write to the Faculty in which you hope to register explaining why you believe you will do well in that Faculty. Cite evidence such as grades achieved in courses offered in that Faculty.
- b. If you have been required to withdraw from the University, and you believe your poor performance was at least in part related to having chosen a program of study for

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which you were not suited, you may wish to appeal to transfer to a different Faculty. **Your appeal must be directed to your original Faculty of registration with a clear request that it be forwarded to the Faculty to which you hope to gain admittance.** Explain why you originally chose an unsuitable program, and indicate why you believe you will do well in the Faculty to which you have requested the transfer.

Note: you must meet all the requirements for admission to your new program choice.

- c. You may have requested a transfer to another Faculty during the intent to register process, before you realized you would not meet the progression requirements. To which Faculty should you now address your appeal for a waiver of progression requirements? **Address your appeal to your original Faculty of registration, just as in b, above, explaining that you wish to enter the Faculty to which you requested a transfer in March.**
- d. When in doubt, *ask* to whom you must appeal

Common questions about being required to withdraw

I had no idea I would be required to withdraw. Now the deadline to submit an appeal has passed. This seems unfair. What can I do?

Appeal to the associate dean to consider your appeal late, explaining why you missed the original deadline. If the associate dean concludes you should have known and appealed earlier, they may refuse to consider it.

I don't understand why I have been asked to withdraw.

To understand why you have been asked to withdraw, you need to review the progression requirements for your program as outlined in the Calendar. If you are still puzzled, contact your academic counsellor.

It is not fair that I have been asked to withdraw - one of my grades is wrong.

Contact your instructor as soon as possible to get your grade corrected. Follow the grade appeal procedure outlined in the Calendar. (The Office of the Ombudsperson's information on appealing grades may also be helpful.)

If I don't appeal now but take the year off, will this make it harder for me to be readmitted? Won't the University assume I don't really care?

Readmission is based on the merits of the case and on how your situation changed during the year away. The decision to readmit you should be unaffected by whether you appealed for a waiver or not.

What does the University expect me to do for a whole year? It seems like a waste of time!

During your time away from Western you should get treatment for health concerns that caused you to do poorly, or work if it was financial difficulties that impacted your academics. You also need to take courses so that you can demonstrate to Admissions that you are

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capable of doing well in postsecondary studies. You cannot take courses at Western, but you can take courses through [Athabasca University](#), [Guelph Open Learning](#), or other open universities. "Open Universities" offer courses on-line and they are open to everyone. You don't need to apply. There is a chance Western will transfer the credits back to the University if you are readmitted.

If you were required to withdraw after first year, you might want to look into college programs that offer a good grounding in general arts and science. Regardless of where you take courses, be sure to take them in an area that corresponds to what you want to study at Western.

Can't I just transfer to another university?

Transfer really means applying for admission to another university - and that involves submission of transcripts of all previous college and university level work. Ontario universities have agreed to respect each other's "required to withdraw" decisions, so it is very unlikely that an Ontario university would accept you before the "year off" was up.

What about universities elsewhere in Canada and the States?

All universities are free to consider applications from you.

If I go to university elsewhere next year, can I come back to Western the year after?

You may certainly apply for readmission to Western. Courses taken at another university will be considered for transfer credit if you are readmitted.

Will it help if I get my father or mother to call the dean?

It may help your father or mother understand how the University works, but it is unlikely to influence the way the associate dean views your appeal unless they provide new relevant information. Note: The associate dean will require your permission in writing before discussing your situation with your family.

What good will it do to take college courses? I can't use them in my university program.

To take courses and succeed in them requires some persistence and application, whether the courses are at a college or a university. However, it is a good idea to take academic courses that have some relevance to the area of study you are interested in pursuing. If you do take courses, be sure to do well in them.

If I don't take any courses in my year off, will I be denied readmission?

Not necessarily. See the Ombuds guide on Readmission.

I thought I only needed a cumulative average of 55%. Shouldn't someone have explained that I needed 60% to be in good standing?

It is the responsibility of the student to know the requirements, which are stated in the Academic Calendar. If something seems unclear, it can always be clarified by speaking to an academic counsellor.

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I appealed to my Faculty for a Dean's Waiver, but I was denied. Can I appeal for a Faculty Transfer now?

Yes, you can, provided the deadline (June 30) has not passed. If the deadline has passed, contact the Faculty to which you would like to be admitted and ask if they will look at your appeal.

I appealed to my Faculty for a Dean's Waiver, but I was denied. I now have some new information which I think makes a difference. What can I do?

Send in the new information and ask the associate dean to reconsider your appeal in the light of the new information.

I appealed to my Faculty for a Dean's Waiver, but I was denied. I wanted to talk to the associate dean, but I could not get an appointment. I think the associate dean made a mistake; I feel like they must not have read my letter or something. What can I do?

There are two things you may be able to do. First, you can speak to the Ombudsperson. She may be willing to look into the matter. Second, you can apply for a hearing to the Senate Review Board Academic. (Note: if applying for a hearing, be sure to do so within six weeks of the associate dean's decision.)

I applied for a Faculty Transfer, but I was denied. What can I do? Can I appeal to the SRBA?

A Faculty Transfer decision is an admission decision, and cannot be appealed to the SRBA.

The reasons I did so poorly are very personal and I do not feel comfortable putting those reasons in writing. For one thing, the reasons involve other people.

State this in your letter or petition form, and request an opportunity to speak to the associate dean or an academic counsellor in person. If you feel you cannot tell the associate dean or academic counsellor your reasons, even in person, you may have to forego an appeal and simply apply for readmission when you are eligible to do so. Note: **all** information you give about your appeal is confidential and normally it will not be shared by the associate dean's office with others except at your own request.

I was very ill in first year, and was granted a dean's waiver. Now I need to appeal again, this time for different reasons. I'm afraid they'll think I'm just a poor student.

While each case is considered on its merits, you are perfectly correct in supposing that a **second** associate dean's waiver is harder to get. Even though your reason is different the second time, there is an assumption that you should have been able to protect your academic record by requesting deferred exams, dropping courses, and so on.