

Tips on Preparing an Effective Chronology

Your chronology or timeline is a written record that should help you to express to the reader what happened, when it happened, and *how* it affected you.

Provide Appropriate Information

- First, provide the overall context upfront by framing the issue in one paragraph. Think of it as a roadmap to guide your reader. What is the fundamental essence of your concern? Ask yourself:

Why are you presenting a chronology?

What are your goals?

What are you asking for?

- If your chronology is part of an appeal for a Dean's Waiver or other appeal application where you are asked specific questions, be sure to answer those questions and use your chronology as a supporting document.

Organize your Details

- Include only relevant details. Not every incident, conversation or email will be relevant.
- Provide a straightforward account by stating the facts succinctly and objectively.
- Don't over-chronicle – most dates are unimportant.
- Avoid story-telling – list the facts, actions, decisions, and outcomes.
- Use thematic headings to guide the reader, if needed.
- Do not include assumptions about others' motivations or intentions. Describe behavior, not personality traits. For example, instead of "He always harasses me because he is an arrogant and aggressive bully" say "He spoke in a loud voice, stood over me and said that my work was useless".
- Include relevant department policies from student handbooks or university regulations in a separate appendix.
- Include supporting documents (including: emails, medical notes, letters of support, etc.) in a separate appendix.

Be Respectful

- Use people's names and titles respectfully.
- Avoid hostile or aggressive language. Instead of "The counsellor always ignores my emails because people at this university stick together to cover up mistakes" say "I did not receive a response to three emails sent on dates x,y and z".

Be Brief

- Use very short paragraphs or bullet points.
- Use natural, plain English.
- One word is usually enough – instead of "due to the fact that" use "because"
- Avoid exaggeration – instead of "the vast majority" use "most"

Sample Chronology

The information provided here outlines the key events leading up to my Required to Withdraw status in the Faculty of XXX.

Year 1	Year Average 75% - no failed courses
Year 2/Term 1	Term Average 62% with two failed courses – extenuating family/financial circumstances:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I was required by my family to help look after my grandmother after her stroke in October. I was one of her main caretakers from mid-October to December 24. Part of my care duties was to be at home with my grandmother, particularly in the mornings. (letter from my parents is enclosed)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I was absent from about 25% of my two morning courses and missed two midterms from those courses (UNIV 2220 and UNIV 2231).
Nov 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I talked to Professor X and Professor Y because the work I was missing was worth less than 10%. They agreed to discount my missed quizzes and re-weight my final exam. I did not go to Academic Counselling to inform them of the problems because I thought I could handle the coursework and get back on track.
Dec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I couldn't catch up and I failed those two courses.
Year 2/Term 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My family was no longer able to help me with tuition in Term 2 because of the cost of my grandmother's care. (see invoice from "Nurse Next Door")
Jan 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I dropped one class and found a part-time job (see letter from my employer).
Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My work life and school life were not balanced. I wasn't able to keep up with assignments and did not hand in two major papers.
Feb 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I emailed my professors and asked for more time (see email #1 and #2).
Feb 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My professors both referred me to Academic Counselling
Mar 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I visited Academic Counselling and asked for extensions for the papers. My counsellor, Ms. Y, told me that I was not eligible for accommodation because I didn't have documentation.
Mar 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I appealed the denial of accommodation to the Associate Dean (see appeal letter).
Mar 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My appeal was denied (see response letter) and it was too late to hand in my late papers. I received 0% on both which led to my failing grades in UNIV 2240 and UNIV 2451.
Mar 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Registered for two summer courses
May 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My family arranged for long-term affordable care for my grandmother.
Jun 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took a time management workshop through the Learning Center (see certificate of completion)
June 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received letter from the Registrar's Office informing me that I was required to withdraw because my cumulative average was 48%
May-Jun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed two Intersession courses – Term average 85%
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visited Student Development Services and found strategies to help me communicate my needs to my parents (see letter from counsellor)
June 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spoke with an Academic Counsellor to work on a graduation plan with an extra year so that I can maintain a strong cumulative average
June 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted appeal letter to Dean's Office, requesting permission to continue