

Appealing for a Dean's Waiver or Faculty Transfer

The purpose of this guide is to help a student appeal for a Dean's Waiver¹ or Faculty transfer. Following the steps will 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 *Calendar* or information provided by faculties and departments. (Official, up to date Calendars can be found at: [www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/.](http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/))

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 to be placed on probation. Progression requirements are described in the Academic Policies area of the University Secretariat www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/registration_progression_graduation.html as well as the Academic Information section of the Calendar www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/, and more specifically in the program sections of the Calendar. There is a specific section relating to Progression Requirements for professional programs.

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 over a year or years of study, or particular grade and course requirements, 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 your academic counsellor.

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. Some faculties have a form for this purpose or a handout with instructions on how to submit a waiver and what information to include. Use the appropriate form for your appeal. 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 appeal process is a safety net provided by the University for students whose academic performance was affected by serious medical or other circumstances beyond the student's control. If your situation was within your control, or not very serious, an appeal is unlikely to succeed.

¹ Dean's Waiver may also be referred to as a Waiver of Progression Requirements.

AN APPEAL FOR A DEAN'S WAIVER OR A TRANSFER MUST BE SENT TO THE DEAN BEFORE JUNE 30². To find out when you will get a response, ask the Dean's Office.

What the Dean looks for

In considering an appeal for a waiver, a Dean looks for evidence in support of the claim that the student's academic performance was significantly affected by the extenuating circumstance. However, Deans also expect students to take sensible steps to limit damage to 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 counsellor.

The questions below are typical of those on forms and handouts currently in use:

- 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 counsellors, Student Development Centre (Learning Skills counsellors or others) or other professionals, e.g., your doctor?
- 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.
- 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 Dean providing the same kind of information. Follow a standard business letter format.

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."

² 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.

- 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 Dean, indicate this clearly in your letter and, if possible, provide the date you expect the documentation to arrive.
- Clearly identify the factors which affected your academic performance the most: don't simply list circumstances in chronological order.
- Answer all the questions on the form or in the guide. A dean needs all the relevant facts in order to make a fair decision.
- Be polite and business-like and thank the dean for taking the time to review your appeal.

ALWAYS KEEP A COPY OF ANY LETTER OR FORM YOU SUBMIT IN AN APPEAL PROCESS. APPEALING IS MUCH SIMPLER IF YOU KEEP ON TOP OF THE PAPER WORK!

If the Dean denies your appeal you may apply for a hearing before the Senate Review Board Academic. See the Office of the Ombudsperson's guide, *Appealing to the Senate Review Board Academic*, and SRBA in the Academic Rights and Responsibilities section of the Calendar.

Note: Only the decision of the Dean of your own Faculty can be appealed to the SRBA. Faculty Transfer denials are regarded as admission decisions and are not appealable to the SRBA.

Have a plan of what you will do if your appeal is denied.

A plan will:

- help you feel less anxious about the outcome
- help you to present your case more calmly
- make you feel more in control of your future
- demonstrate that you are realistic about your situation.

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 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, or send the original Faculty your appeal and the proposed Faculty a copy of the appeal. Remember, whenever you send a copy of a letter to someone other than the addressee, it is helpful to indicate this at the bottom of the letter:

Example:

cc: Dr. M.D. Owen, Associate Dean
Faculty of Science

Common Questions About The Requirement 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 Dean to consider your appeal late, explaining why you missed the original deadline. If the Dean concludes you should have known and appealed earlier, he or she 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 guide on appealing grades may 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!

It is up to you how you spend the year. You can take programs through Western's Continuing



Studies; on-line University programs such as those offered at Athabasca University www.athabascau.ca/; community college programs; the Canadian Securities Course; upgrading mathematics or computer skills; investigating International Work Opportunities through the Career Resource Centre (UCC 210); volunteering; and so on. Whatever you do, it is important that you demonstrate that you can succeed at University.

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" messages, 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 Dean views your appeal unless they provide new information which is relevant. Note: The Dean will require your permission in writing before discussing your situation with your family.

What good will it do to take courses at a community college? 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 community 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. The Committee which considers readmission applications will not be impressed by poor grades.

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

Not necessarily. See the handout on Readmission.

I missed meeting the progression requirements in my program by only two marks. I don't think it's fair that I should have to withdraw because everyone knows two marks aren't significant.

The University disagrees with you about the significance of two marks.

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 [Calendar](#). If something seems unclear, it can always be clarified by speaking to an academic counsellor.

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 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 Dean, but I could not get an appointment. I think the Dean made a mistake; I feel like she 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 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. However, you can speak to the Ombudsperson, who may be willing to look into the matter.

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 Dean or academic counsellor in person. If you feel you cannot tell the 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 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** 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.

***NOTE:** This guide was produced by the Office of the Ombudsperson www.uwo.ca/ombuds. It is not an official university document and is not intended to replace university policy. 05/2002 Frances Bauer wrote the original text. Revised January 2013.*