OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSPERSON

I am Required to Withdraw...what do I do?

You have the right to appeal.

One possible ground for appeal for some students is extenuating circumstances. Extenuating circumstances are normally considered “…circumstances beyond a student’s control which could not have been anticipated or accommodated ahead of time and were responsible for their poor performance…” Examples of extenuating circumstances that may be considered appealable fall into three categories:

- physical illness of a longer term or chronic nature; or health problems relating to accidents;
- mental health challenges of a recurring or continuing nature;
- significant personal trauma.

(Sourced from various Faculty appeal procedures and the Academic Accommodations Appeals Body Committee on Issues for Students with Disabilities)

If you want to pursue this option, here are the steps to take:

1. Note the appeal deadline; 15 calendar days (including Saturdays, Sundays and holidays) inclusive of the date of the decision letter; (example: if your letter is dated December 12th your appeal is due no later than December 26th).
2. Obtain a copy of your faculty’s appeal regulations; For the 2011-2012 University of Calgary academic regulations concerning appeals please see http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm. Students are strongly encouraged to review the on line version of their respective faculty appeals regulations and are also encouraged to schedule a meeting with their own Senior Academic Faculty Advisors to discuss the academic review and appeal process specific to their faculty. (See also, http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/disclaimer.html)
3. Draft your appeal letter; all relevant documentation must be attached to your appeal letter to validate your appeal. Examples of valid documentation include but are not limited to medical records, counseling records, death certificates, etc. Visit the University of Calgary’s Ombudsperson at Rm. A166, Administration Building (403-220-6420) for further information or help editing your letter.

General Guidelines

- All faculties review a student’s performance for continuation in a program. If your faculty deems your academic record in the classroom, in tests, or in final examinations as unsatisfactory, they may at any time require you to withdraw from the faculty in which you are registered. Although the university requires that any student withdraw should their grade point average fall below 1.70, most faculties have higher requirements for continuation in their program.

- If you are required to withdraw for academic reasons from any faculty from any university you will not be considered for readmission to the University of Calgary until at least twelve months have passed from the time you were required to withdraw. Registration as an Open Studies student is not permitted during this time.
- If you were required to withdraw from a faculty at the university and wish to return, you must re-apply for admission to the university by the deadlines stated in the University Calendar (usually around Apr. 1st). In order to be re-admitted you will be required to meet the competitive admission requirements that are in effect at the time you apply. It is strongly recommended that students consult with the faculty to whom they are applying in order to gain specific admission information.

- Admission is not automatic and will be considered on an individual basis by each faculty.

- If you are readmitted after having been required to withdraw you will be readmitted on probationary standing. Students are permitted a maximum of one probationary period while registered as undergraduate students. Students will be required to withdraw rather than be placed on probation for a second time. Students placed on probation as a criterion of admission will have this period counted in the total periods permitted. Probationary periods that have occurred in excess of five years previous will not be counted.

- If you are twice required to withdraw from one or more faculties at this or any other institution you will not normally be considered for admission at any time.

- If you are seeking admission to the university and are /were involved in academic/non-academic misconduct, you should consult with the Admissions Office regarding admission criteria.

- If you are seeking admission or readmission after having been required to withdraw for academic reasons, you must attach a letter to your application which:
  a) offers an explanation for your unsatisfactory academic record,
  b) outlines your academic plans, and
  c) explains why you are now likely to be successful in your studies.

Preparing an Appeal Letter

There are five parts to any appeal letter. Please refer to your Faculty Appeal Procedures as well to double-check their appeal letter requirements:

1. **Identifying information**
   Include your name, year, faculty, ID# and contact information.

2. **The decision you are appealing**
   If you have received a letter from your faculty, it is best to quote the date of the letter and the decision as stated in the letter.

3. **The grounds for appealing or why you are appealing the decision**
   This is the most important part of the letter. In this section you must clearly outline any extenuating circumstances or any other reasons relevant to your appeal. In this section you want to persuade the committee that the decision made by the faculty is in error and should be overturned. Stick to the facts and provide evidence.

4. **How you will improve next year**
   The committee will want to see that you have thought about your situation and have formulated a plan for improvement.

5. **What relief are you seeking?**
   What decision would you like the committee to make? (E.g. "I would ask the committee to allow me to continue my studies in the Faculty of Communication and Culture.")
Required to Withdraw Appeal Letter Checklist

Note: The purpose of this handout is to help students appeal a requirement to withdraw. Following the steps outlined may help make an appeal more effective, but it is **NO guarantee that the appeal will be granted**. The information contained in this document is drawn from the Academic Calendar but is not meant to replace information in the Calendar or information provided by the Faculties and Departments. For the current 2011-2012 calendar please see. [http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs-calendar/current/index.htm](http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs-calendar/current/index.htm)

- **Have you found out the date your appeal is due?**
  This may be different from Faculty to Faculty, so be sure to check. If in doubt, check with your Faculty office. If you do not launch your appeal by the appropriate deadline you are deemed to have waived your right to an appeal.

- **Have you checked all the regulations pertinent to your case?**
  Each faculty has guidelines for students appealing an academic decision. Be sure to obtain a copy of these guidelines from your faculty.

- **Have you identified yourself?**
  Include your name, Faculty, year of study and ID number.

- **Have you included your telephone number?**
  It is a good idea to provide a telephone number where you may be reached during the day or where a message can be left for you.

- **Have you described the decision being appealed and included a copy of the decision letter?**

- **Have you included for the committee/Chair the factors and events which affected your academic performance?**
  You may organize the letter either chronologically or by subject. The letter should be clear and concise.

- **Have you told the committee/Chair the whole story?**
  While you should not be repetitive, detail is important. Detail will make the story believable. If possible, choose specific statements over general statements (e.g. instead of saying “I have had family problems”, say, “My parents separated in Oct.”) Do not conceal embarrassing or personal facts if they have had an impact on your academic performance. While these may be hard to discuss, the committee/Chair can only make a decision based on the facts you give them. Any information presented to the committee/Chair will be held in confidence.

- **If you are alleging bias on the part of a Faculty member, have you included evidence to back up your allegations?**
  Don’t include allegations concerning a particular person unless you feel very strongly that they have a personal bias against you and you can provide proof to back up your suspicions.

- **If helpful, note your previous academic performance.**
  What you want to do is establish a link between the events of this year and your poor academic performance and to establish the fact that without these events you would have in fact been able to attain acceptable grades.

- **Have you outlined any steps that you took during the year to inform the Faculty of your situation?**
  If you did not take any steps you may want to discuss why not.

- **Have you included your plan to change your circumstances to ensure that your academic performance will improve?**
If the circumstances of the past year have been resolved, state this clearly. If the situation still persists, advise the committee/Chair how you intend to deal with the situation so that your studies will not be affected (e.g. taking fewer courses, learning effective study skills, counselling, obtaining student loans etc.).

☐ **Have you included any options that you would like as relief?**
Check regulations to see if there are any restrictions as to what the committee may grant. If possible give the committee some options.

☐ **Have you signed the letter?**

☐ **Have you attached copies of supporting documentation/evidence?**
This may include a death certificate, doctor’s note, letter from counsellor, professor, religious leader etc. Make sure to refer to attached documents so the committee/Chair can properly identify their significance. Submit copies and keep the originals in your file.

☐ **Has someone proofread your letter?**
After you have composed a draft of your appeal letter, have it proofread for content and grammar. The Ombuds can assist with this.

☐ **Have you made alternate plans in case your appeal isn’t successful?**
Understand that there is always the possibility that your appeal will not succeed. Therefore it is prudent to check out your alternatives. This will show the committee that you are practical, goal-oriented, and realistic about your future.

☐ **Have you made a copy of your letter for your records?**
It is extremely important to maintain a record of all documents that pertain to your appeal for future reference.
Sample Appeal Letter
June 1, 2011

Dean, Faculty of Arts
The University of Calgary
2500 University Drive NW
Calgary, Alberta T2N 1N4

Dear Dr. Who,

My name is Chris P. Crunch and I am in my third year of the Bachelor of Religious Studies program. I am writing to appeal the decision requiring my withdrawal from the Faculty of Arts as stated in your letter dated May 25th, 2011. The request that I withdraw from my studies is on the basis of my inability to maintain an acceptable grade point average. I wish to continue my studies in the Faculty of Arts by appealing the decision of the requirement to withdraw based on the extenuating circumstances outlined in this letter.

During the first semester of the first reporting term (fall 2009), my overall grade point average was 2.9 as I began to prepare for my examinations. However, it was at that time that my father began to experience the severe symptoms associated with his chronic illness. The rapid decline in my father’s health has had a very traumatic effect on everyone in our family. My ability to perform and concentrate was affected so dramatically, that my grade point average fell below the minimum 1.7 GPA required to remain as a student within the Faculty of Arts.

I began the fall 2010 academic term with the hopes that my father’s health would improve and therefore, I would have the ability to continue a successful academic career within the Faculty of Arts. I now realize that I had been overly optimistic. My father’s health continued to deteriorate until his death in March 2011. As a result, I was unable to maintain the adequate grade point required throughout the academic year in order to remain as a student with the faculty. I now realize that I should have taken necessary time to recover, instead of continuing with my program and trying to make my way through despite my loss.

If not for the tragedy befalling my family over the past academic year, I am certain that I would have been able to continue my work within the faculty and maintain my 2.9 GPA. I am currently seeking counselling for my loss, and my family is now on its way to becoming more stable. I am enclosing letters from our family physician as well as from my counsellor for your review. I began to meet with my counsellor in April 2011 and continue to meet with him on a weekly basis.

It is my wish to be permitted to continue my studies in the fall 2011 semester so that I may work to reestablish a secure GPA. I have a strong desire to continue my studies in the Faculty of Arts and now I believe that I have the support and recovery necessary to succeed.

Sincerely,

Chris P. Crunch
Student ID 90210
Tel: 403-555-5555
Email: cpcrunch@ucalgary.ca

Attached: 1) Death certificate; 2) Letter from Counsellor, and 3) letter from Physician