

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA ASHEVILLE
FACULTY SENATE

Senate Document Number 5620S
Date of Senate Approval 04/30/20

Statement of Faculty Senate Action:

APC Document 52 (Student Affairs): **Establish Hardship Withdrawal Policy**

Effective Date: Fall 2020

1. **Update:** On page 41, the entry under **Withdrawal (Exit) from the University:**

When a student finds it necessary to exit after the Schedule Adjustment Week (week 1 of the fall/spring semester), but before the published deadline to withdraw, a grade of W will be assigned for each course. The official date of withdrawal, used for determining grades and tuition refunds, is the day on which the student submits the completed forms to withdraw to the Academic Success Center. A student who fails to file the appropriate forms by the stated deadline will receive an F as the final grade in each course.

The withdrawal period for full semester fall and spring courses is through the 8th week. (Note, shorter courses will have shorter deadlines published.) Students with extenuating circumstances requiring withdrawal after the 8th week of the semester should follow the Hardship Withdrawal Policy. .

Students who withdraw from all classes in a semester must meet with an Academic Success Center advisor or the Senior Director of Advising and Academic Success prior to registering for future semesters.

Add: On page 41, after the entry above:

Hardship Withdrawal Policy

If a student encounters an unforeseen extraordinary situation such as a serious illness or injury or some other significant personal situation after the withdrawal deadline, which prevents the student from being able to successfully continue in their classes, they may submit a request for a Hardship Withdrawal from the semester. The student is encouraged to work with their professors to discuss possible alternatives to withdrawing.

Under most circumstances, a Hardship Withdrawal is a complete withdrawal from the semester, rather than withdrawal from one or two courses. All requests for a Hardship Withdrawal require thorough, credible and verifiable documentation. Applications for less than a complete withdrawal from the

semester may be considered provided they are exceptionally well documented to justify the exception to a full semester withdrawal, and thus will be held to a higher standard of review to qualify for this exception.

Depending upon the nature of the circumstances of the withdrawal, return criteria, including the semester a student is permitted to return, may be placed on a student prior to their being allowed to re-enroll.

Additional information on procedures and requirements is available at registrar.unca.edu.

Additional information that will be at registrar.unca.edu

Criteria for a Hardship Withdrawal:

A student may request consideration for a Hardship Withdrawal when unforeseen, extraordinary circumstances arise that prevent the student from successfully continuing in their classes. Examples that may warrant consideration are:

- serious illness
- major physical health issues
- injury or accident which results in significant medical complications
- profound mental health difficulties which prevent the student from successfully continuing in their classes
- death in a student's immediate family
- a significant family trauma
- the need to care for a seriously ill immediate family member

Procedure for Requesting a Hardship Withdrawal

A student wishing to request consideration for a Hardship Withdrawal must submit the following to the Academic Success Center (CPO 1580, 1 University Heights, Asheville NC 28804 or ASC@unca.edu):

- A narrative of the reason for the request. This should include the specifics of what transpired over the semester, how the unforeseen issue impacted the student's ability to be academically successful for the semester, and what efforts the student has made to manage/resolve the issues, such as conversations with faculty, and any campus resources the student utilized to assist with management or resolution. The narrative should include what has now brought them to the point of requesting the withdrawal, and why the withdrawal is necessary. The narrative should also provide some information on what the student will do in the time they are away from the university which will manage/resolve the issue and thus allow for a successful return in the future.

- Supporting documentation (see below). In all cases, the last date of class attendance must be included.
- Any additional documentation the student feels provides necessary information related to the withdrawal request.

The Hardship Withdrawal request will be reviewed by the Enrollment Services Committee and a determination will be made as to whether the request meets the criteria. If the withdrawal is granted, the student will receive grades of W for their classes. A determination also will be made if return criteria will be placed on the withdrawal, and what the criteria will be. A representative from the Enrollment Services Committee will communicate the decision via UNC Asheville email to the student. Providing false information on a Hardship Withdrawal petition may result in its denial, reversal and/or a violation of the Student Conduct Code.

Appropriate Documentation for a Hardship Withdrawal

Requests for withdrawal due to medical reasons will require documentation from a healthcare provider(s) and should include:

- the general nature of the medical issue and how/why it has prevented the student from successfully completing their coursework;
- the date of onset of medical issues;
- dates medical care was received;
- the follow up that is necessary for the student to successfully return to school, and the general timeframe of the anticipated return
- any other relevant information

This information should be on the health care provider's letterhead and must be signed by the provider.

The documentation needed for other significant personal emergencies is dependent upon the nature of the extenuating circumstances. Students are asked to use their best judgment on providing verifiable documentation.

Verification for significant personal emergencies may include:

- obituaries
- death notices
- police reports
- documentation from an immediate family member's medical provider

Important considerations prior to requesting a Hardship Withdrawal:

Rationale for withdrawal

The hardship withdrawal policy exists to help students in serious, unforeseen and extraordinary circumstances. Students who have found themselves

academically unsuccessful or significantly challenged due to common transition and life issues are not considered for this process. Students are encouraged to speak with their faculty to try to work through academic issues, as well as utilize campus resources such as the Health and Counseling Center (828-251-6520), Academic Success Center (828-350-4500, asc@unca.edu) or their Community Director (if they are a resident student).

Return Criteria

Depending upon the nature of the extenuating circumstances surrounding a withdrawal, return criteria may be placed on a student prior to their being permitted to return to the university.

*Significant medical/mental health issues normally require a minimum of a **full semester absence from the university in an effort to adequately address, resolve and prepare for a successful return to the University.***

Return documentation may include evidence of successful compliance with treatment directives, evidence of ability to be successfully reintegrated into campus life and recommendations for follow up. The student will need to agree to follow the terms of re-enrollment (which normally includes necessary medical/mental health follow up and utilization of student support services).

Financial Impact of a Withdrawal

Refund of tuition from the point of withdrawal will follow the published refund schedule. Additionally, depending upon the financial aid a student receives, they may have to reimburse the University for a percentage of their aid package. The student is strongly encouraged to consider this in advance as part of the overall decision to withdraw from the university and speak with a representative in the Financial Aid office (828-251-6535, finaid@unca.edu) in order to fully understand the financial impact of withdrawal.

Academic Impact of a Withdrawal

Withdrawing from courses has an impact on your academic progress. . Students are highly encouraged to discuss their withdrawal and how it will impact their academic plan with their academic advisor or the Academic Success Center. Hardship withdrawals will not count toward the student's withdrawal limit.

International Students

International students with an F1 or J1 visa must consult with the Study Abroad Office to discuss how withdrawal can impact the student's immigration status and ability to remain in the US and/or return for study.

Residence Hall Impact of a Withdrawal

Students must be enrolled and attending classes to remain in the residence halls. Upon withdrawal, a student is expected to vacate their residence hall space within 24 hours unless other arrangements have been made with Residential Education (828-251-6700, reslife@unca.edu).

Impact: Currently the majority of students requesting full semester withdrawals (most often after the standard withdrawal period) are those who have been having their status monitored by the Care and Crisis Team or who have had a sudden hardship, medical/mental health or family related issues. The Dean of Students is frequently already working with the student and/or the family on the exit process as well as what a possible reentry plan may need to contain. A significant number of these withdrawals require some clear, constructive plans for addressing the student's issues during the time that they are away from campus. Students who elect to withdraw for mental health or medical reasons frequently feel the break away from school will suffice and in those cases there is often a premature return, a lack of addressing the mitigating issues and ongoing academic and personal issues upon their return. There is a direct impact on retention, as some may then face academic action, including suspension and dismissal. Others take additional leaves of absence which impact our graduation rate. And at times, some simply leave and do not return. To not have a withdrawal process which addresses a reentry plan that focuses on addressing the needs/issues/concerns of the student (which has caused the need for the withdrawal) during the absence is a profound disservice to the student. The institution's goal is our student's success, thus to be able to have a clear withdrawal framework that helps students address their period away from campus, facilitated by the staff member and team with the most expertise in support scaffolding, allows for us to stand true to our statement. Additionally, it allows for a student to be more prepared for a successful return.

Rationale: This would allow the Dean of Students, the staff member responsible for behavioral intervention and response to student crises, to oversee the hardship withdrawal process and present the cases to the Enrollment Services Committee. This allows the Dean of Students to spearhead the intervention strategies to afford a student a streamlined exit, comprehensive dialogue on the return strategy and to be able to implement clear return criteria to ensure students return more capable and prepared for their personal and academic success. The Dean of Students is already in full collaboration with the offices most involved in the scaffolding of a student in crisis. Additionally, it would create a clearer process for ensuring a student is prepared for return and has a higher likelihood of success upon their reentry. The new policy would allow for the evaluative portion of any mental health or medical concerns to be with our professionals in our Health and Counseling Center, who would then consult with the Dean of Students so a reentry plan can be provided for continuity of care if needed (or desired). This would provide a student in this situation with a seamless return. Other scaffolding such as

case management, mentoring, accommodations or academic support are available as part of the Care and Crisis Team's collaborative team membership. The Registrar would continue to be consulted as previously so full academic impact and options can be shared. Lastly, this allows for a clear message to a student that we take their university withdrawal very seriously; that this is for highly extenuating circumstances; and that we as a university want to ensure that whatever has caused/impacted them, the student, to the point of needing to leave the university, will be properly addressed in their time away, so when they return they are able to achieve at their full potential.