

Queen's University
Senate Committee on Academic Procedures

**POLICY ON TRANSCRIPT TERMINOLOGY FOR STUDENTS WITHDRAWING
FROM QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY**

**Proposal of Amendment
September 2012**

Background

In early 2011, decisions by the University Student Appeals Board (USAB) demonstrated a potential misunderstanding of the intent of the Queen's University Senate Policy on Transcript Terminology for Students Withdrawing from Queen's University. As a result of these decisions, in March 2011 the University's Legal Counsel, the Academic Integrity Advisor to the Provost and Vice-Principal (Academic), and the Chair of the Senate Committee on Academic Procedures (SCAP) met and agreed that clarifications to the Policy were required.

Analysis and Discussion

The intent of the Policy is that no transcript notations be altered or removed except as prescribed in the Policy itself. This decision was made deliberately, in order to maintain the integrity of Queen's students' academic records. This intent includes required to withdraw (RTW) notations related to academic performance.

Current practice in Faculties and Schools dictates that, if a student successfully appeals a requirement to withdraw decision, the original notation is replaced with "*Required to withdraw for academic performance for (a minimum of) (x) year(s); subsequently waived*".

In May 2011, the Senate Committee on Academic Procedures presented recommendations for the approval of Senate (additions represented by italicized font):

- *In cases where a student successfully appeals the required-to-withdraw decision, the original notation will be replaced with "Required to withdraw for academic performance for (a minimum of) (x) year(s); subsequently waived".*
- *In all cases, a student may appeal a finding to the University Student Appeal Board once all avenues of appeal within the Faculty or School have been exhausted. In no cases may the transcript notations concerning requirements to withdraw be altered or removed, except as prescribed in this Policy. In cases where a student successfully appeals the required to withdraw decision, the original notation will be replaced with "Required to Withdraw for academic performance for (a minimum of) (x) year(s); subsequently waived".*

At the Senate meeting, concern was expressed regarding the potential impact the transcript notation in question may have on students' mental health as well as the potential punitive nature of the ruling, given it is amended when a student's appeal is successful and not removed from the transcript.

Over the course of the 2011/2012 academic year, SCAP reviewed its original recommendations on the subject, gathered feedback from colleagues both on and off campus, and reviewed best practices as stipulated by the Association of Registrars of Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC).

The following points were discussed by SCAP:

- The Association of Registrars of Universities and Colleges of Canada's *National Transcript Guide* states that "The transcript should contain a complete and accurate history of the academic path of a given student in a particular postsecondary institution". SCAP members agreed that this history includes transcript notations related to students' academic performance and that expunging a portion of the transcript contradicts best practices.
- All students have the opportunity to demonstrate improved academic performance after a required to withdraw notation is added to their transcript. This improved performance demonstrates to external reviewers that the student in question has overcome the difficulties, personal or otherwise, which resulted in an RTW notation.
- The Chair and Secretary of SCAP met with the Director of Health, Counselling, and Disability Services, who agreed that having a student's entire academic history, including any rulings related to academic performance, properly recorded on the transcript is important. The need to explain such a notation does not, in the Director's experience, place an undue burden on students' mental health. Indeed, the absence of a notation in the presence of poor academic performance may necessitate more of a need for explanation than the notation itself. It was noted that HCDS has in the past provided a letter when requested that explains poor academic performance related to mental or physical health issues.
- Some Faculties/Schools will permit a student to drop a course/courses after the academic drop date deadline if extenuating circumstances were involved. If the student's performance in the course/courses at issue resulted in a RTW notation and their appeal was successful, the RTW notation would be removed from the transcript along with the course/courses.

Recommendations

SCAP members believe that the transcript notation currently used in situations of a successful appeal should be clarified. It was agreed that the notation should be amended to read: "*Required to withdraw for academic performance for (a minimum of) (x) year(s); waived on appeal*".

The following amendments (in italics and bolded) are recommended to be made to the Senate Policy on *Transcript Terminology for Students Withdrawing from Queen's University*, in order to ensure students' complete academic records are reported as accurately as possible:

Transcript Terminology for Students Withdrawing from Queen's University

The following four withdrawal notations may appear on transcripts:

1. (Effective Date): Required to withdraw from the University for a breach of academic integrity for (a minimum of) (x) year(s).

2. (Effective Date): Required to withdraw from the University for non-academic discipline (for (x) year(s)) or (for a minimum of (x) year(s)) or (until specified conditions have been met).
3.
 - a. (Effective Date): Required to withdraw for academic performance for (a minimum of) (x) year(s), or
 - b. (Effective Date): Required to withdraw for academic performance, eligible to apply at any time for readmission, or
 - c. (Effective Date): Required to withdraw for academic performance.
4. (Effective Date): Voluntary withdrawal from the (Faculty of.../School of...).

Additional Information:

- The wording "required to withdraw" is used by the University in place of terms such as "expelled", "suspended", etc., in all documents, correspondence, and motions.
- The notation for a breach of academic integrity (Notation 1) and non-academic discipline (Notation 2) will appear on the transcript only for a minimum duration of the withdrawal (or until the specified conditions have been met), after which time they are to be removed from the transcript.
- The notation for poor academic performance (Notation 3) will remain permanently on the transcript.
- ***In cases where a student successfully appeals the required-to-withdraw decision, the original notation will be replaced with "Required to withdraw for academic performance for (a minimum of) (x) year(s); waived on appeal".***
- The process for determining the period for which a student is required to withdraw is as follows:
 - for a student required to withdraw for academic performance, the decision of the time period is approved by the Faculty Board; ***or delegated committee.***
 - for a student required to withdraw from the University for academic integrity, the decision of the time period is recommended by the Faculty or School for approval by SCAP;
 - for a student required to withdraw from the University for non-academic discipline, the decision of the time period is normally recommended by the Alma Mater Society or Society of Professional and Graduate Students' Judicial Committee for approval to the Senate Committee on Non-Academic Discipline.

In all cases, a student may appeal a finding to the University Student Appeal Board ***once all avenues of appeal within the Faculty or School have been exhausted. USAB is intended to ensure that fair procedures have been followed and that there has not been a clear error in the exercise of discretion. In cases where a student successfully appeals the required to withdraw decision, the original notation will be replaced with "Required to Withdraw for academic performance for (a minimum of) (x) year(s); waived on appeal". Transcript notations concerning requirements to withdraw shall be made as prescribed by this Policy and consistent with other Senate policies.***

The "effective date" in the transcript notation will be the date determined by the body in authority as the starting date of the period for which the student is required to withdraw.

- The phrase "a minimum of" will be used in the transcript notation when the body in authority has determined that the student may appeal for readmission or registration at the end of the minimum time period indicated. Readmission is not guaranteed.
- A lack of specified time period (Notation 3b and 3c) will be used in the transcript notation when the body in authority has determined that the student may apply for readmission at any time. Readmission is not guaranteed.
- The phrase "until specified conditions have been met" will be used when the body in authority wishes to indicate that the student may resume the program of study after the specified conditions have been met.
- A fixed time period will be used in the transcript notation when the body in authority wishes to indicate that the student may, without ***the requirement*** to appeal, resume the program of study after the fixed period has elapsed.

- The Secretary of Senate will notify the student in writing of the decision and will also notify the appropriate Faculty or School in writing of the notification of the requirement to withdraw ruling, in cases of non-academic discipline and academic integrity.

Summary

The Senate Committee on Academic Procedures approved the amendments proposed above at its September 19, 2012 meeting and now requests that Senate consider the following motion:

Be it resolved that the changes to the Policy on Transcript Terminology for Students Withdrawing from Queen's University be approved and updated on the Senate website for information.

Membership

T. Alm, Interim University Registrar
L. Burlock, B.A. '14
R. Coupland, Office of the University Registrar (Secretary)
C. Esselmont, PhD candidate, Department of Philosophy
H. Everson, Faculty of Arts and Science
J. Mennell, Department of Spanish and Italian
J. Morelli, Department of Physics, Engineering Physics, and Astronomy
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