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Policy on Withdrawal from Courses

Source Committee: Student Affairs Committee

Unit(s) Responsible for Implementation: VP Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, Office of the Registrar

Consultations: Academic Policies Committee, Associate Deans Council

History

Version	Approved	Revisions(s)
6	05/28/2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Adds language defining serious and compelling for withdrawal purposes. Specifies an updated process for student-initiated withdrawals and approvals.</i>
5	03/05/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Adds "drop" requirements for courses taught in an asynchronous online mode.</i>
4	12/08/2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Changes the "drop" deadline from two to three weeks after the start of instruction</i>
3	05/12/2009	
2	04/14/1998	
1	1996	Original

Summary

During the first three weeks of instruction, withdrawing from courses is permitted without restriction or academic penalty. This action is commonly referred to as “dropping a class.” No symbol is recorded on the student’s permanent record, future class lists, or grade report. The drop period (the withdrawal- without-penalty period) is the three-week period beginning when all classes meeting more than once a week begin. Instructors may also initiate withdrawals if students have not participated in course activities during this period. The procedure for dropping a course during this period is described in detail by the Registrar’s Office.

During the fourth through the twelfth week of instruction, students may initiate withdrawals for serious and compelling reasons, as specified by the student. Students should be informed of potential consequences of withdrawal and referred to advising resources. The instructor and department chair or director of school review and approve or deny, except in cases that violate limits on total units for withdrawal or number of times a student may withdraw from the same course, which will not be approved.

From the thirteenth week through the last week of instruction, students may initiate withdrawals in cases, such as accident or serious illness, where the cause of withdrawal is due to circumstances clearly beyond the student’s control and the assignment of an Incomplete is not practicable. Such withdrawals will not count against the maximum number of withdrawal units.

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At SF State, dropping a course is the student’s responsibility. However, faculty are authorized to instructor-drop students who do not attend the first class meeting, who do not meet the course criteria, or who do not participate in the course as required during the drop period. Faculty are strongly encouraged to define course participation required during the drop period in the course syllabus and to instructor-drop all students who do not participate as required before the end of the drop period. Courses that are primarily or exclusively taught using an asynchronous online learning mode during the drop period are required to have at least one activity that captures participation (e.g., assignments, forum posts, engagement exercises) due during the drop period. Students who do not complete these initial activities may be instructor-dropped for non-attendance.

1. Fourth Week through the Twelfth Week of Instruction

From the beginning of the fourth week through the twelfth week of instruction, withdrawal from a course will be permissible, for serious and compelling reasons as defined and specified by the student. The student may initiate a request for a withdrawal using an electronic, Web-based process. The advising process should provide the student with information about withdrawal limits, the need to withdraw from lectures and associated lab sections together, the potential consequences of withdrawal on financial aid and other enrollment or status issues, and potential resources. The instructor of the course must receive notification of the request for a withdrawal and review the request. If the instructor is not able to receive notification or is no longer at SF State, the department chair or director of the school must receive notification of the request. The instructor must approve or deny. If approved by the instructor, requests for withdrawals will be forwarded to be reviewed then approved or denied by the department chair/school director, except in the case of a student exceeding the 18-unit withdrawal limit, or withdrawing from a course more than twice.

The student will receive a ‘W’ grade (Withdrawal) if the withdrawal is approved. The student’s name will appear on the grade report with a pre-assigned ‘W’, and the student’s permanent record will show a ‘W’ grade. However, such grades will not be used to compute a student’s GPA.

2. Thirteenth Week through the Last Day of Instruction

Withdrawals shall not be permitted after the twelfth week of instruction except in cases, such as accident or serious illness, where the cause of withdrawal is due to circumstances clearly beyond the student's control and the assignment of an Incomplete is not practicable. Withdrawals of this sort may involve total withdrawal from the university or may involve withdrawal from one or more courses. Requests for permission to withdraw from a course under these circumstances shall be handled as indicated in Section 1, except that such requests must also be approved by the academic administrator appointed by the president to act in such matters. Requests for permission to withdraw from the university under these circumstances shall be submitted by the student online and routed to the Registrar for review and approval by the appropriate administrator.

Such withdrawals will not count against the maximum number of withdrawal units provided for in Section 3. The Registrar's Office is authorized to establish a unique grade symbol, e.g., 'WM', to differentiate between withdrawals permitted under Section 2 from withdrawals permitted under Section 1.

3. Maximum Number of Withdrawal Units

Undergraduate students may withdraw from no more than 18 semester-units of courses taken in matriculated status at SF State. This limit does not apply to coursework completed via self-support enrollment (through the College of Extended Learning). Only withdrawals approved as described in Section 1 for matriculated students' enrollment in regular SF State courses in Fall 2009 and subsequent semesters shall be counted towards the limit on withdrawals. Approved student-initiated withdrawals submitted as described in Section 2 will not count against the maximum number of withdrawal units provided for in this section.

4. Appeal of Withdrawal Decisions

The student may appeal withdrawal decisions by the last day of finals.

Signed Memo:
S20-196 memo
