

Georgia Tech Institute Undergraduate Curriculum Committee  
Petitions Sub-Committee  
Guidelines for Undergraduate Students Preparing Petitions

Prepared by: George Riley, Lisa Jones, Reta Pikowsky, and Paul Senft.  
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The Georgia Tech Institute Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (*IUCC*), Petitions Sub-Committee, is responsible for reviewing petitions from undergraduate students for various waivers and exceptions to Georgia Tech rules and regulations. The sub-committee meets frequently during the year and acts upon a number of petitions at each meeting. The number of petitions varies but is generally in the range of 20 to 40 at each meeting.

This document lists the most common types of petitions from students and gives a general set of guidelines that students should use in preparing their petitions, and when deciding if a petition is likely to succeed. The types of petitions fall into a number of categories, each of which is discussed below. These guidelines are specifically for undergraduate petitions, and not generally applicable to graduate student petitions.

1. **Late withdrawal from all classes.** Students frequently petition to withdraw retroactively from all classes for a given semester, sometimes the most recent semester and other times semesters in the more distant past. The most common justification for the withdrawal is a medical condition (either a physical ailment or injury, or psychological difficulties such as depression or addictions). Another common justification is the death or hospitalization of an immediate family member, either a parent, grandparent, or other close relative.
  - **Guideline.** All late withdrawal petitions must be filed within three terms of the term being requested. In other words, a student who wishes to withdraw from Fall 2008 must petition before the end of Fall 2009. Any petition later than this guideline will routinely be denied by the sub-committee.
  - **Guideline.** In the case of withdrawal due to medical reasons, students must provide written documentation from a physician indicating that the ailment existed, that the ailment was in fact during the semester being petitioned, and that the ailment prevented the student from either attending class or being able to properly prepare for assignments or examinations for an extended period of time. Further, the student's transcript must indicate a significant decrease in academic performance as compared to prior semesters at Tech. Finally, students must understand that if the petition is successful, the sub-committee will almost certainly require additional documentation from a physician indicating the ailment is cured or is being successfully treated before the student will be allowed to return to Tech.
  - **Guideline.** In the case of withdrawal citing bereavement due to the illness or death of a close relative, the student must provide documentation that shows that the illness or death in fact occurred, that it occurred in the semester being petitioned, and the student's transcript must show a significant decrease in academic performance as compared to prior semesters at Tech. Finally, the student must convince the sub-committee that he has gotten over his initial grief, and will be able to handle the academic workload at Tech upon his return.
2. **Late selective withdrawal from a single class.** Students can petition that a grade in a single class in a given semester be changed to a **W**. As in the complete withdrawal, the justification is often a medical condition or mental illness. Another common justification is a simple procedural mistake by the student, failing to execute the withdrawal procedure properly and mistakenly thinking he did withdraw before the drop deadline.

- **Guideline.** As in the case of late withdrawal from all classes, the petition for late selective withdrawal must also be made within three terms of the term being requested. Any petition later than this guideline will routinely be denied by the sub-committee.
- **Guideline.** Petitions requesting selective withdrawal citing medical reasons must follow the guidelines above for complete withdrawal. Additionally, there must be documented evidence that the ailment affected only the single class being petitioned, and not other classes. An example might be a class where attendance was mandatory and counted for a large part of the grade. The student could show that he was able to obtain lecture notes and take exams while disabled and therefore was able to do well in all classes excepting the one with required attendance.
- **Guideline.** Petitions citing procedural errors should provide documentation from the instructor of the class that the student did indeed stop coming to class and taking exams prior to the drop date for the semester in question. Further, a student who has successfully withdrawn from classes several times in the past is less likely to be successful than a first or second semester freshman who has never executed the drop procedure.

3. **Waiver of 36-hour rule.** Georgia Tech has an institute-wide requirement that states for any undergraduate degree to be awarded, the last 36 credit hours must be taken at the Georgia Tech, rather than transferring credit from another college or university. Students frequently petition to the sub-committee to waive this requirement for a variety of reasons.

- **Guideline.** *ALL* petitions for waiver of the 36-hour rule must indicate which class or classes they have taken (or are planning to take) and where the classes will be taken.
- **Guideline.** Students should *NOT* petition for a waiver of the 36-hour rule citing financial reasons, or for convenience of the student. Simply wanting to take a class at a local community college over the summer break will rarely be successful with this petition. Further, stating that taking classes elsewhere will lessen the financial burden (for example will allow the student to graduate one semester sooner) will rarely be approved.
- **Guideline.** Students should *NOT* petition for a waiver of the 36-hour rule in order to take a lighter course load in later semesters at Tech. Such petitions will rarely be approved.
- **Guideline.** Students should show that the class in question was or will not be offered by Tech prior to the student's graduation semester. An example would be the second course of a two course sequence that is needed for a social sciences elective. The student should show what the second course was not available during his final semester, and that no equivalent course was offered at Tech.
- **Guideline.** If the classes in question are in fact available at Tech, the student should show that he is unavoidably away from Atlanta for the semester in question, such as for a paid summer internship somewhere out of state.
- **Guideline.** Students should *NOT* petition for a waiver of the 36-hour rule for courses at the junior or senior level in their major field of study. Requesting a 4000 level ECE class at any other university during the last 36 credit hours will almost never be successful.
- **Guideline.** Students earning credits as part of a study abroad program *NOT* sponsored by Georgia Tech must petition to waive the 36-hour rule should those credits fall in their final 36 credit hours at Georgia Tech. These petitions should show that they need the class in question to graduate and that the semester in question (when studying abroad) is their final semester at Tech.
- **Guideline.** Students with a large number of transfer credits from other colleges or universities are discouraged from petitioning for 36-hour rule waivers. After all, the degree being earned is from Georgia Tech, not the other schools, and such petitions are rarely successful.

4. **Overload Request.** Georgia Tech has specific limits on the number of credit hours allowed to be taken by students in any given semester. The actual limit varies based on the student's academic standing. Students frequently petition to extend this limit, anywhere from 1 hour to 3 hours in a semester.

- **Guideline.** Students should first discuss their situation with the undergraduate academic adviser in their major school. The sub-committee will generally abide by recommendations from the major school advisement staff.
  - **Guideline.** Students requesting overloads should have at least one prior semester with a larger than average course load, and should have a GPA in that semester that is comparable with other semesters at Tech.
  - **Guideline.** Students with consistent good or outstanding academic performance at Tech in prior semesters are more likely to be successful with overload petitions.
  - **Guideline.** Students with average or poor academic performance at Tech in prior semesters are discouraged from petitioning for overloads, as they are unlikely to be approved.
5. **Grant degree with less than 2.0 GPA.** Georgia Tech requires a minimum GPA of 2.0 in order to earn a degree.
- **Guideline.** Students are strongly discouraged for petitioning a waiver of the 2.0 rule. Such petitions are very rarely approved.
  - **Guideline.** Students who have been absent from Tech for 5 years or more can petition for “Academic Renewal”. This is a board of regents policy that allows returning students to start with a clean slate with respect to GPA calculations. In this case, it might be possible to receive a degree with an overall GPA of less than 2.0, if the course credits from the distant past are discounted from the final GPA calculations.
6. **Re-admission after second drop.** After a second dismissal for academic reasons, students cannot return to Georgia Tech. Students often petition to the sub-committee to allow a return, almost always citing confidence that they have renewed enthusiasm and dedication to completing a degree at Georgia Tech.
- **Guideline.** In all such petitions, the student should first meet with the undergraduate advisement staff at their major school. The adviser will work with the student and determine if the major school is willing to support the petition. If so, the adviser will prepare an *academic contract* which spells out specific academic goals for the student, including which courses to take and a minimum required GPA.
  - **Guideline.** Students are strongly discouraged from petitioning for readmission without support from the major school. Such petitions are rarely successful.
  - **Guideline.** The student should give evidence in their petition indicating why he expects to suddenly improve his academic performance. Clearly, having been dropped twice indicates a history of poor performance. A common reason is previously having one or more jobs, but recently having obtained outside financing. Another common reason is past severe psychological disabilities that have been treated successfully.
  - **Guideline.** Students that are very near graduation are more likely to be successful than students who have earned only a few credit hours.
7. **Change basis from Pass/Fail to Letter Grade or vice-versa.** Students frequently petition the sub-committee to change the basis of a class from the normal *letter grade* to the less common *pass-fail*. Similarly, petitions often ask for changing to letter grade from pass-fail.
- **Guideline.** Students should be aware of recent changes in Georgia Tech policy allowing such basis changes *before drop date*. This can be done using Oscar and does not require a petition.
  - **Guideline.** When petitioning a change from letter grade to pass/fail, the student should have a clear reason why the change is necessary, other than the fact that the class is more difficult than expected. Simply doing poorly on the first two exams or homeworks is not sufficient.

- **Guideline.** Students should petition for the change during the semester in question, rather than requesting retroactive changes. Retroactive basis change petitions are rarely successful.
- **Guideline.** Petitioning a change from pass/fail to letter grade will generally be successful if the petition is timely, although the sub-committee does require a reasonable explanation as to why the change is needed.