

## **Guidelines for Students Preparing Petitions to the Faculty**

**Last Revised November 2023**

The Institute Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (IUCC) and the Institute Graduate Curriculum Committee (IGCC) are responsible for reviewing and acting on petitions to the faculty for exceptions to academic policies or curricular exceptions. Review of the petitions throughout the year is on-going. Special sessions of the Curriculum Committee may be scheduled specifically for review of petitions. The decisions of the Curriculum Committee are final; they cannot be appealed to a higher level. The IUCC and the IGCC are standing committees of the Academic Faculty and operate under their authority as part of the faculty governance process.

This document lists the most common types of petitions and gives a general set of guidelines that students should use in preparing their petitions and that academic advisors should be aware of as they discuss the documentation needed with the student. There is no guarantee that a petition will be approved.

1. Late withdrawal from all classes (withdrawal from the term). Students may petition to withdraw retroactively from all classes for a given semester, sometimes the most recent semester if they have missed the deadline, and semesters in the past if there is sufficient cause and evidence presented. The most common justification for the withdrawal is a medical condition, and this may take different forms. Another common justification is some type of severe personal situation such as the death of a family member or other personal challenges that make continuing in classes very difficult.

Guideline. All late withdrawal petitions should be filed as soon as it becomes apparent that this is the best course of action, after the student has consulted with their academic advisor and the Dean of Students Office as needed. We would expect to have the petition filed within three terms of the term being requested. This should be kept in mind since the longer the period of time after the withdrawal term has passed the more difficult it may be for the student to provide the necessary documentation. Also, during this period of time when the term has not been withdrawn, the grades from that term, assuming they are poor grades, may be impending the student's future in other ways.

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 occurred or worsened 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. It is also of note whether the student's transcript

indicates a significant decrease in academic performance in that term as compared to prior semesters at Tech. *Students should remain aware that we may require a letter from a medical doctor stating that the student is well enough to return to classes before we allow registration in a future term.*

2. Late selective withdrawal from a single class. The standard of approval for these petitions is very high. This is a request to change a grade in a specific class (or some of the classes in a given term) to a W grade.

□ Guideline. How the course will be used to complete GT degree requirements is important to note in the petition. Upper-division required courses in the major are very rarely approved. The circumstances would have to be significantly dire for this to be approved. The other concern is that many of our programs offer courses in the upper-division that are specific to Tech in their content and may be difficult to find at another institution. If the course is to be used as a Free Elective or an elective, or an area of the degree program where there is not a specifically required course, the petition has a higher possibility of being accepted.

□ Guideline. As in the request for a complete withdrawal, the justification is often a medical issue, and this could take different forms. Another common justification is a mistake by the student, failing to execute the withdrawal procedure properly and mistakenly thinking they did withdraw before the drop deadline. If the justification is based on a medical issue, the petition must make a very clear and strong case that the issue, whatever it was, affected that course (or those courses) differently. The petition must lay out clear evidence for why the student was able to perform adequately or well in some courses, but not in others. If this cannot be made clear, the student should instead request a full withdrawal from the term.

□ Guideline. As in the case of late withdrawal from all classes, the petition for late selective withdrawal must be made as soon as it becomes apparent that this is the student's best option. Generally, the petition must be filed within three terms of the term being requested.

□ Guideline. Petitions citing procedural errors should provide documentation from the instructor of the class that the student did indeed stop participating in the class on a certain date. If the student has a record of successful course withdrawals in the past, the explanation needs to be clear why this instance was different. Incoming first-year students and transfer students new to Tech may be given more leeway, assuming they act in a timely way with the petition and can provide some context for it.

3. Waiver of the 36-hour rule. Georgia Tech has an institute-wide requirement that states for any undergraduate degree to be awarded, the last 36 credit hours, counting

backward from the anticipated graduation term, must be taken at the Georgia Tech. This petition is considered if the reason is one of necessity, not one of preference.

Guideline. ALL petitions for a 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 or were taken. The petitions to approve the waiver after the fact must include a clear explanation for why the student took the courses without permission.

Guideline. Students should not petition for a waiver of the 36-hour rule citing convenience as their main motivation. Simply wanting to take a class at another institution is not sufficient. This must be a petition based on need, the fact that the student is not able to take the course at GT in the timeframe when it is needed.

Guideline. Students should not petition for a waiver of the 36-hour rule citing financial concerns as their primary motivation. The petition to the faculty is for an exception to academic policy, not a means to address financial or financial aid concerns. Such questions and concerns should be directed to the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid at Tech.

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 and as stated earlier, this is not a matter of preference, but rather a matter of demonstrated need.

Guideline. A plausible justification might be that a required course that a student needs to graduate is not offered at Tech in their final term. If appropriate and allowable for this course to be taken at another situation, such a petition might be approved so that the student's graduation is not delayed.

Guideline. If the classes in question are in fact available at Tech in that term, the student should show that they are unavoidably away from Tech for the semester in question, such as on an internship, co-op assignment, or having had taken a job that requires a start date during that term.

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. Another factor that the Committee considers is how many transfer credits from other colleges or universities the student has already applied to their program. Even though the 36-hour rule addresses the final 36 degree-applicable hours, the overall number of non-GT hours is of concern and may result in the denial of a petition.

4. Overload Request. Georgia Tech has specific limits on the number of credit hours allowed to be taken by students in any given semester. Students may request to take more than 21 hours, the maximum, more than the limit allowed by their program, or more than the limit due to their academic standing.

□ Guideline. Students should first discuss their situation with the academic adviser in their major school. The academic advisor will take the student's full record into account, as well as the reason for the request, into account. The recommendation of the academic advisor is important, but even if supported, the Committee may decide that the petition will not be approved.

□ Guideline. The cumulative grade point average is considered. Even if the student is currently meeting the minimum standards to be in good standing, the petition would need to make a strong statement as to why the overload is necessary. If the student's GPA in the prior term did not meet the minimum standard for the term, but the cumulative GPA remains above the minimum, the Committee may also be concerned about such a request if the student's performance is trending downward.

5. Undergraduate students who have been academically dismissed and who will have a difficult challenge in improving their grade point average enough to graduate have an option called Academic Renewal for which they can petition.

□ Guideline. Undergraduate students who have been absent from Tech for 3 years or more can petition for Academic Renewal. This is a Board of Regents policy that allows students one last opportunity to complete an undergraduate degree. The policy assumes that the student has struggled academically over a period of time, but with academic renewal, might have a chance to complete requirements and graduate. There is more information at:  
<https://registrar.gatech.edu/info/academic-renewal-checklist>

6. Re-admission after a first or second academic dismissal (drop). Re-admission after a third academic dismissal is not considered. After a first dismissal for academic reasons, students can return to Tech with an approved petition to the faculty, a readmission application, and a readmission contract prepared by the major School. After a second dismissal, the same process can be followed, but the bar for approval is much higher and these petitions are rarely approved.

□ Guideline. In all such petitions, undergraduate and graduate, the student should first meet with their academic advisor. 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, and this will be submitted along with the readmission application and petition. Readmission contracts for graduate students may vary since program requirements vary.

□ Guideline. The student should give evidence in their petition indicating as to why they expect to be successful and what specific actions they have taken or plans they have made to allow them to focus on academic success. Clearly, having been academically dismissed even once indicates a history of poor performance. The student is strongly encouraged to examine all options, including transferring to another institution, to complete an ungraduated degree. Readmission after a first dismissal is a critical point in the student's GT academic career. If the contract is not met, a case for readmission after a second dismissal is even more difficult. *Students and academic advisors should note that contract GPAs cannot be changed after the fact.* If the contract GPA is not met, the student is again placed on academic dismissal.

□ Guideline. Students that are near graduation are more likely to be successful than students who are in their first-year student or sophomore years. Particularly, if a student on dismissal has applied to graduate and has a possibility of being able to get good enough grades to raise the GPA to the required minimum might be considered. But there is no guarantee of approval in this instance either.

7. Change basis from Pass/Fail to Letter Grade or vice-versa. Students may petition to change the basis of a class from the normal letter grade to the pass–fail or vice versa. These petitions are looked at carefully. Students should remain mindful that this is not a means to take a course, determine the grade outcome, then ask for a change to a letter grade if the outcome is good. It, again, is not a matter of convenience or preference, but more related to a need such as they did not realize that the course had to be completed in their current major for a letter grade or they did not realize they were over the limit of their pass/fail grades for the BS degree.

□ Guideline. Students should be aware of all related academic policies and speak with their academic advisor right away if they have questions about grade modes for courses.

□ Guideline. When petitioning for 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 was/is more difficult than expected. Simply doing poorly on

course assignments is not a sufficient reason. If the student is doing very poorly and is concerned, a conversation with their academic advisor is highly suggested.