

# College of Engineering

## Petitions for Exceptions to Academic Policies and Procedures\*

(For students in degree and nondegree conditional status in the College)

**Note:** *The Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education does not grant petitions automatically. If strong documented justification is provided, petitions are granted for unusual circumstances that are beyond the student's control. Petitions are typically rejected if the main justification appears to be to raise the student's grade-point average (e.g., to get into a major or medical school).*

**Trauma Drop** is an option for students who require confidentiality (e.g., being a victim of a violent crime). At University Park, a trauma drop/withdrawal is initiated by the student in consultation with the following people:

If the student has not met with a counselor at the Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), the student should consult with Margaret Lorah, director, Center for Women Students, 204 Boucke Building, (814-863-2027; [mal273@psu.edu](mailto:mal273@psu.edu)).

If the student has met with a CAPS counselor, the student should consult with Mary Anne Knapp, clinical social worker/outreach coordinator, (814-863-0395; [mak5@psu.edu](mailto:mak5@psu.edu)) or Dennis Heitzmann, director, CAPS, 501 Student Health Center, (814-865-0966; [deh8@psu.edu](mailto:deh8@psu.edu)).

At other Penn State campuses, a strong letter of support from a staff member, petitioning for trauma drop/withdrawal may be forwarded to the appropriate contact for processing. More information can be found at <http://www.psu.edu/dus/handbook/>.

### PREPARATION OF PETITIONS

The petition consists of the following items:

- A. Student Request:** A letter of request (see examples) addressed to the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education is the critical part of the petition. It should be dated, concise, factual, signed, and should include:
1. A clear statement of the requested action(s),
  2. Reason(s) that warrant(ed) the requested action,
  3. Reason(s) that the procedures in *Policies and Rules* could not be followed at the time that conditions warranted. For example, if the request is for an increase of late drop credits, the student must explain the reasons that the allowable late drop credits were not sufficient. If the request is for a selective late drop of one or two courses from a previous semester, the student must explain why the circumstances did not affect all of courses that semester (e.g., a broken leg might affect a volleyball course, but not a calculus course.) If a retroactive withdrawal is requested, the student must explain why the withdrawal was not done before the last day of that semester's classes.
  4. Student PSU ID number, current address, email address and phone number
- B. University Forms:** [http://www.psu.edu/registrar/forms\\_for\\_students/dropadd.pdf](http://www.psu.edu/registrar/forms_for_students/dropadd.pdf)
1. For retroactive withdrawal, the completed Withdrawal Form must be included.
  2. For retroactive late drop or late add, a Registration/Drop/Add Form must be submitted.
  3. For late registration (after the last day of classes): This process is managed by the Office of the University Registrar and is described at: [http://registrar.psu.edu/registration/retroactive\\_registration.html](http://registrar.psu.edu/registration/retroactive_registration.html)
- C. Documentation:** It is the student's responsibility to collect and submit, as part of the petition, any documentation that is relevant to the request. In some cases, documentation is required and in other cases, it is optional. For example:
1. For a retroactive late drop, a letter from the instructor of the course supporting the extenuating circumstances may be submitted. A request for a retroactive late drop is considered differently if it occurs before the semester has ended, but after the late drop deadline. If the request for a late drop is granted, an add/drop fee will be charged to the student's account.
  2. Documentation from the appropriate academic unit or advising unit is required if the justification for the request is given as one of the following: unfair teaching practice, misinformation from University personnel about a University regulation, policy or procedure, an administrative, advising or clerical error\*.

\* A petition to the Faculty Senate is not necessary if an error has occurred during scheduling and the student never attended the course, the appropriate action would be an administrative course cancellation which is initiated through the Registrar's Office. Please contact the Office of Student Services, 208 Hammond Building, 814-865-7539.

3. Requests for grade changes after nine months from the conclusion of a course must include a letter of support from the instructor, explaining the circumstances. A grade change authorization form must be submitted from the department offering the course directly to the Assistant Dean's Office.
4. For a request based on illness or a medical disorder, documentation must be provided. Information from the attending physician should establish the impact the medical condition had on the student's academic situation. If the student received care at University Health Services, documentation may be obtained by contacting the primary care clinician to request verification of illness for a Senate Petition. The director of University Health Services reviews all requests and decides the appropriate recommendation.

## SUBMISSION OF PETITIONS

**Required supporting documentation must be submitted to the Office of Student Services at University Park within one month of initial receipt of the petition, and if not, the petition will be returned to the student.**

Students are responsible for preparing the request, completing University forms, and obtaining supporting documents. The whole package must then be submitted as follows:

**Students in a major:** After discussing the petition with their advisor, students must submit the whole petition package to the Assistant Dean for Student Services, 208 Hammond Bldg, who will then forward the petition to the Faculty Senate. E E students must first submit their petition package to their undergraduate coordinator, who will forward it to the Assistant Dean.

**Students in ENGR status at University Park:** Students must discuss their petition with, and submit the whole package to an advisor in the Engineering Advising Center, 208 Hammond Bldg. The advisor will forward the petition to the Assistant Dean for Student Services who will then forward the petition to the Faculty Senate.

**Students in ENGR status at Commonwealth Campuses:** Students should discuss their petition with their advisor and then submit the whole package to the appropriate individual at their campus.

## EVALUATION OF PETITIONS

The Committee reviews petitions continuously throughout the academic year, including summer sessions. Petition review is not coordinated with meetings of the University Faculty Senate.

Well-documented, fairly routine requests for retroactive withdrawal, course late drop (submitted after the deadline, but before the last day of the class), an increase of a maximum of two late drop credits, or a late grade-change are reviewed by an appointed member of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education. These types of requests require only one signature; therefore, they are generally processed faster than other petitions. At least three members of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education review petitions that are initially denied. This committee also reviews petitions for less routine requests, such as retroactive late drop (submitted after the class has ended) or an increase of more than two credits to a student's late drop credit limit.

After a petition is submitted, students can expect a decision within three to five weeks from the time the petition is received in the Senate Office.

Students will be notified of the senate's decision in writing, directly by the Faculty Senate Office.

## **SAMPLE STUDENT LETTERS FOR THE FACULTY SENATE**

(Reference: [Petitions for Exceptions to Academic Policies and Procedures](#))

*These samples include all of the required elements for a student petition letter (date, a clear statement of the requested action, a description of the conditions that warrant an exception, the reason University policy and/or procedure could not be followed, student's name and signature, current address, PSU ID number, current phone number, and e-mail address).*

### **Letter 1 (Request for a Retroactive Withdrawal)**

January 22, 2010

Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education  
Subcommittee on Academic Standards  
University Faculty Senate Office  
101 Kern Graduate Building  
University Park, PA 16802

To Vice-Chair of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education:

I am petitioning for a retroactive withdrawal from fall semester 2009 for medical reasons. In the third week of fall, I was diagnosed with mono at the University Health Center. Although I was able to keep up with my courses at first, sometimes I was too tired to go to class and I fell behind in my work. Luckily, my instructors were very understanding and allowed me to make up exams and turn in papers late. Although I was behind, I felt I could keep making up the work. Then, just as final exams were beginning, I was hospitalized with pneumonia. I realized then that I was just not going to be able to make up the work I had missed and turn in all of my final projects and take my final exams. I decided that I needed to withdraw, but it was already past the withdrawal deadline at that point. I would have requested deferred grades in order to complete the work next semester, but I will be having surgery on January 4 and therefore will not be able to do school work for an extended time. Under the circumstances, it will not be possible to complete the work by the deferred grade deadline.

I would appreciate it if the Faculty Senate would allow me to withdraw from last semester even though I missed the withdrawal deadline. I have enclosed documentation from the health center and from my family doctor.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*John Q. Student*

John Q. Student  
123 Old Main Street  
State College, PA 16803  
PSU ID# 912345678  
E-mail: jqs999@psu.edu  
Phone: 814-555-1212

Letter 2 (Request for a Retroactive Late Course Drop)

January 22, 2010

Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education  
Subcommittee on Academic Standards  
University Faculty Senate Office  
101 Kern Graduate Building  
University Park, PA 16802

To Vice-Chair of the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education:

I am petitioning to retroactively late drop Marketing 437 and 440 from fall semester 2009. On December 3, 2009, I was hit by a pickup truck on Route 322 in Lewistown, PA. I suffered a severe concussion and my left patella was broken in several places (please see attached medical documentation and the hospital records). Since the accident, I underwent two surgeries to have my kneecap rebuilt and another operation to have the hardware removed. I was unable to attend my classes for the rest of the semester. I was able to complete Marketing 426 and 428 from my home, but I was unable to complete Marketing 437 and 440 because both courses required a practicum, which I was unable to attend—thus, my reason for being selective in asking for a retroactive late drop of these two courses.

This letter serves as my formal petition for a retroactive late drop from the two courses and my explanation of the circumstances.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*John Q. Student*

John Q. Student  
123 Old Main Street  
State College, PA 16803  
PSU ID# 912345678  
E-mail: jqs999@psu.edu  
Phone: 814-555-1212

*The University may make changes in policies, procedures, educational offerings, and requirements at any time. Please consult a Penn State academic adviser for more detailed information.*