



Requests for Relief from Academic Decisions

Subject:	Requests for Relief from Academic Decisions
Sections:	Introduction ; Definitions ; Legal Counsel ; Undergraduate Student Requests For Relief From Academic Decisions ; Graduate Student Requests For Relief From Academic Decisions ; Appeals to SRBA
Approving Authority:	Senate
Responsible Committee:	Senate Committee on Academic Policy
Related Procedures:	Procedure for Undergraduate Student Academic Requests for Relief Procedure for Graduate Student Academic Requests for Relief
Officer(s) Responsible for Procedure:	Provost & Vice-President (Academic)
Related Policies:	Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Senate Review Board Academic Appeals Scholastic Offences
Effective Date:	September 1, 2026
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The University Senate has delegated to Deans and the Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies) the right to waive certain academic policies. Their rulings in academic matters are final unless overturned or modified on appeal to the Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA).

This policy is to be read in conjunction with its related procedures.

2.0 **DEFINITIONS**

Dean, for this policy and procedures, is to be interpreted as Dean or their designate or equivalent. If the matter has been designated by the Dean to another person, that person is authorized to make the Faculty's final decision on the matter. In a course offered by Western Continuing Studies, "Faculty Dean" shall be interpreted as "Dean of the partnering Faculty".

Department Chair, for this policy and procedures, is to be interpreted as Department Chair or their designate or equivalent. If the matter has been designated by the Chair to another person, that person is authorized to make the Department's final decision on the matter. In a course offered by Western Continuing Studies, "Department Chair" shall be interpreted as "Director of Western Continuing Studies."

Reasonable Apprehension of Bias means that a reasonable and informed person, viewing the matter realistically and practically, would think that it is more likely than not that a decision maker was biased in respect of the decision.

University, for the purposes of this policy, means Western University and its Affiliated University Colleges.

Vice-Provost, for the purposes of this policy, means Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies) or designate.

3.0 **LEGAL COUNSEL**

Legal counsel is not permitted at any stage of the request for relief process prior to the level of the SRBA.

4.0 **UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FROM ACADEMIC DECISIONS**

The Deans' rulings in academic matters are final unless overturned or modified on appeal to SRBA.

4.1 Requests for Relief

Student requests for relief generally fall into one of the following:

- 1) Category 1: Requests for relief relating to a specific course (e.g., with respect to a mark, grade, appropriateness of assignments or examinations, grading practices, or other academic decision determined by a course instructor). This does not include retroactive requests to waive a Senate

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policy deadline, even if it is related to a specific course. Such requests are Category 2 requests.

- 2) Category 2: Requests for relief in the form of a waiver from a Senate policy (e.g., progression requirements, program eligibility, graduation requirements), which authority has been delegated to the Deans by the University Senate. Deans have the authority to waive certain Senate policies, but in no case are they required to.
- 3) Category 3: Requests for relief from a decision by the Academic Advising unit or Dean's Office of the student's Home Faculty (e.g., regarding academic considerations or academic regulations).

In general, Category 1 includes requests for relief intrinsic to a specific course, while all other categories involve requests for relief related to a particular student and difficulties they may have encountered.

The category of request for relief determines the route followed. As a general principle, a request for relief may only proceed via one pathway. Students in doubt as to the appropriate path for their requests should consult the Dean of their Faculty of Registration.

4.2 Requests for Relief to Instructor, Department Chair, And Faculty Dean

A student may request that a grade on a particular piece of work, or a final standing in a course or program, be changed, or a student may request an exemption from a Senate policy. The subject of a request for relief can range from a waiver of progression requirements to accuracy of grades on examinations or assignments. Such a request can include questions of fairness or appropriateness of general grading practices and can be launched regardless of whether a record of the student's work exists.

A student must submit their request for relief pursuant to the *Procedure for Undergraduate Student Academic Requests for Relief*, by the deadline provided in the *Procedure*.

4.3 Grounds of Requests for Relief

A request for relief must be based on one or more of the following grounds:

- 1) medical or compassionate circumstances
- 2) extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control
- 3) reasonable apprehension of bias

- 4) inaccuracy
- 5) unfairness

Such requests must be supported by evidence. A detailed description of the evidence supporting the request (including any supporting documentation) must be presented, in writing, as part of the request for relief.

Note that requests for relief based on medical or compassionate circumstances should in most cases have been made to the student's Home Faculty Dean's Office/Academic Advising unit at the time of the circumstances. Appellants must initiate requests for retroactive relief based on such circumstances that do not involve the fairness of the course itself with the Dean's Office/Academic Advising unit and include a clear explanation of why academic considerations were not requested in a timely manner.

The following are not grounds for a request for relief, without limitation:

- 1) A student's dissatisfaction with a grade.
- 2) A claim that the grade does not reflect the student's knowledge of the material, or the effort expended on an assessment or course.
- 3) Ignorance of Senate policies or particular program requirements.
- 4) Admission decisions.

5.0 GRADUATE STUDENT REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FROM ACADEMIC DECISIONS

Students may submit a request for relief from an academic decision or ruling to their graduate program and, if unsuccessful, to the Vice-Provost (Graduate & Postdoctoral Studies). Some decisions may be appealed further to SRBA. The Vice-Provost's rulings in academic matters are final unless overturned or modified on appeal to SRBA.

5.1 Subject Matter of Academic Requests for Relief

A student may submit a request for relief for:

- 1) A mark on an examination or on a particular piece of work, or final standing in a course.
- 2) A ruling of an instructor, program, or administrator in an academic matter.

5.2 Grounds of Requests for Relief

A request for relief must be based on one or more of the following grounds:

- 1) medical or compassionate circumstances
- 2) extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control
- 3) reasonable apprehension of bias
- 4) inaccuracy
- 5) unfairness

Such requests must be supported by evidence. A detailed description of the evidence supporting the request (including any supporting documentation) must be presented, in writing, as part of the request for relief.

The following do not constitute a ground for a request for relief, without limitation:

- 1) A student's dissatisfaction with a grade.
- 2) A claim that the grade does not reflect the student's knowledge of the material, or the effort expended on an assessment or course.
- 3) Ignorance of Senate policies or particular program requirements.
- 4) Admissions decisions.

A student must submit their request for relief pursuant to the *Procedure for Graduate Student Academic Requests for Relief*.

6.0 **APPEALS TO SRBA**

A student may have a right of appeal to SRBA if the decision falls within its jurisdiction. Appeals to SRBA must be made **within six weeks of the date of the Dean's (Undergraduate) or Vice-Provost's (Graduate) decision**.

The decision of the Dean or Vice-Provost remains in full force and effect unless and until overturned or modified by SRBA.

See the *Senate Review Board Academic Appeals* policy and *Procedure for Senate Review Board Academic Appeals* for further information.