

Dean's Waiver of Progression Requirements

A Guide for Students

For Students to Read

1. What Is This Document and How Should You Use It?

You are reading this document because you have been, or expect to be, Required to Withdraw (RTW) from Western University due to unsatisfactory academic standing. That is a serious and stressful situation, and this guide is designed to help you understand your options honestly and clearly.

Please read this document in full before doing anything else. Understanding the context will help you make a better decision. Dean's Waivers are only granted in very exceptional circumstances. If you have questions about your academic standing, your options, or the Dean's Waiver process, you are encouraged to contact the Faculty of Social Science Academic Advising office via their Help Portal at <https://ssc.uwo.ca/index.html>. If you would like independent and confidential guidance from a neutral third party, you may also contact the Western University Ombudsperson's Office at uwo.ca/ombuds.

2. What Is a Required to Withdraw (RTW)?

Western University requires students to withdraw from their studies for a minimum of 12 months when one or more of the following conditions apply:

- Your cumulative average has fallen below the minimum required for continuation (below 50% at Level 1, or below 55% at Level 2).
- You failed to meet the conditions of academic probation, such as failing a course while on probation.
- You have accumulated more than 6.0 failed course equivalents.
- You failed to meet the conditions of a Dean's Waiver.

The RTW is not a punishment. It is a policy designed to give students time to step back, address the issues that have affected their academic performance, and return to university better prepared for success.

During your year away from university, you may plan to apply for readmission for the following academic year. Applications are submitted through the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC), and you should check the applicable deadlines early, as the application period may open well before your withdrawal period has ended.

3. What Is a Dean's Waiver?

A Dean's Waiver of Progression Requirements is a discretionary form of relief that, if granted, allows you to remain registered at Western University without serving the full 12-month withdrawal period. It is granted by the Dean of your Faculty at their discretion.

A Dean's Waiver is not an entitlement. It is not granted simply because you ask for it. It is available only in truly exceptional circumstances, and the Dean must be satisfied that granting it gives you a realistic and genuine opportunity to succeed in the coming year.

If a waiver is granted, the Dean will impose specific conditions on your registration. These conditions typically include requirements such as mandatory meetings with Academic Advising, passing all courses you take, achieving an average of at least 60% across all courses during your waiver year, and a restricted course load of at most 4.0 courses. In some cases, the Dean may set a lower course load or specify particular courses you must take. You will be expected to meet whatever conditions are imposed. Failure to do so will result in another Required to Withdraw.

4. How Does Academic Standing Work?

Your academic standing is based on your cumulative average across all courses you have attempted at Western. There are two levels of progression requirements.

Level 1 (applies after you have completed at least 3.0 course attempts, and less than 8.0 course attempts)

- 55% or above: you are In Good Standing.
- 50% to 54%: you are On Probation.
- Below 50%: you are Required to Withdraw.

Level 2 (applies after you have completed at least 8.0 course attempts)

- 60% or above: you are In Good Standing.
- 55% to 59%: you are On Probation.
- Below 55%: you are Required to Withdraw.

Important notes on how averages are calculated:

- All failed grades are included in your cumulative average.
- Grades below 40% are counted as 40% for calculation purposes.
- If you repeat a course, only the most recent grade is used in your cumulative average calculation. However, all attempts remain on your transcript.
- If you exceed 6.0 failed course equivalents, you will be Required to Withdraw regardless of your cumulative average.

A note on which level applies to you: Even if you are at Level 1 now (at the time of your RTW notice), you will very likely cross into Level 2 during next year if you are granted a waiver and take additional courses, at which point the Good Standing threshold becomes 60%.

5. The Three Criteria for a Dean's Waiver

The Dean will consider three criteria when evaluating a waiver petition. You must be able to satisfy all three. If any one of them is not met, the petition is unlikely to succeed.

Criterion 1: A Documented and Resolved Reason for Your Academic Difficulties

You must be able to identify a specific reason why your academic performance suffered. Vague statements such as "university was harder than I expected" or "I had a difficult time adjusting" are not sufficient on their own.

The reason must be supported by documentation for which you have not received prior consideration. Examples of acceptable circumstances include serious medical conditions (supported by documentation from a physician), significant family crises or compassionate circumstances (supported by relevant documentation), or other serious events that were beyond your control and directly impaired your ability to study.

Critically, you must also demonstrate that the circumstances have been resolved or are now being actively and effectively managed. The Dean needs to be convinced that the same issues will not prevent you from succeeding in the coming year. If the underlying problem has not been addressed, the waiver does not serve you well, because you are likely to find yourself in the same situation again.

Simply resubmitting documentation for which you received consideration or accommodation during the academic year will not support your petition.

Criterion 2: Prior Evidence of Academic Capability

The Dean's Waiver is designed to help students who have experienced a specific setback after demonstrating that they were capable of performing at a satisfactory level. It is not designed for students who have struggled from the very beginning of their time at Western University and have never achieved a period of satisfactory academic performance.

The Dean needs to see evidence somewhere in your academic record that you are capable of performing at a satisfactory level, meaning that you have earned passing grades, or grades at or near 60%, at some point during your studies at Western. This evidence demonstrates that the waiver is giving you a genuine opportunity to return to a level of performance you have already shown you can achieve.

If your record shows consistent difficulty from your very first term onward, with no period of satisfactory performance, the Dean has no prior evidence of capability to rely on. In that case, the mandatory year off and a fresh start may be a better and more realistic path for you. High school performance will not be considered.

Criterion 3: A Realistic Academic Plan towards Good Standing

A Dean's Waiver allows you to continue taking courses for one year, with a restricted course load of at most 4.0 courses. The Dean will assess whether it is realistic for you to raise your cumulative average to the good standing threshold within that one year. For practical purposes, you should plan your recovery with a target of 60%, as almost all students who are granted a waiver will be at Level 2 by the time they complete their waiver year.

This matters because your cumulative average is built on every course you have ever attempted at Western. The more courses you have completed, and the lower your current average, the harder it is to pull that average up in a single year. If your cumulative average is far below the threshold and you have many courses on record, even a strong year of performance may not be enough to reach good standing.

If a realistic plan for recovery cannot be demonstrated, the waiver does not help you. In that situation, you are likely better served by taking the year off, addressing your circumstances, and returning with a fresh start through the readmission process.

6. Deadlines

Deadlines for submitting a Dean's Waiver petition are set by Senate policy and are strictly enforced.

Students requesting a Dean's Waiver of Progression Requirements must do so in writing to the Dean of their Faculty by June 30 (if required to withdraw at the end of the Winter term), or within 30 days of the posting of the notice of their probation or Required to Withdraw status from the Office of the Registrar.

7. The Alternative: Taking the Year Off and Reapplying

If a Dean's Waiver is not appropriate for your situation, taking the required year off is not the end of your academic journey. For many students, it is actually the better path forward. Here is why.

Your cumulative average resets

When you return through the readmission process, your academic standing is assessed fresh. Your previous courses remain on your transcript, but will not be used in calculation of your cumulative average.

Your failure count resets

If you were approaching or have exceeded 6.0 failed course equivalents, readmission through the standard process resets that count. A Dean's Waiver does not reset your failure count; it only keeps you registered. For students near that threshold, withdrawal and readmission is a structurally better outcome.

You have time to address the real problem

Many students who struggle academically do so because of circumstances that take genuine time to resolve. Medical conditions require treatment. Family situations require stabilization. Personal challenges require support and counselling. Rushing back into coursework before those issues are properly addressed often leads to the same outcome: another period of poor performance.

The year off gives you the time to do this properly.

Readmission requires an application and supporting documentation

To return after your withdrawal period, you must apply through the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) at ouac.on.ca. Do not wait for the full 12 months to pass before applying. The Admissions Office recommends applying by the end of January, as spaces in programs may fill after that date.

Once your OUAC application is submitted, you must also complete the Reconsideration of Admission Form, available through your Student Centre. This is your opportunity to show the Admissions Office that you are ready to return. You should explain what you did during your time away, how you addressed the circumstances that led to your RTW, and why you are now prepared to succeed. The Admissions Office will then advise you of any additional supporting documents required through your Student Centre To Do List.

You should plan to use your year away productively. Staying academically active strengthens your readmission case. Options include taking a course at another institution, completing a certificate program, volunteering or working in a field related to your academic interests, or

accessing counselling and support services to address the issues that affected your studies. Full instructions for the readmission process are available at: [Readmission to Western](#).

Rethinking your academic goals is not failure

Some students arrive at university directly from high school having excelled academically in an environment where the pace, workload, and expectations were very different. University demands independent time management, self-discipline, and sustained academic effort in ways that high school often does not. Some students also need to reconsider whether their chosen program truly aligns with their interests, strengths, and long-term goals.

The year off is an opportunity to reflect honestly on these questions. Returning with a realistic, well-matched academic plan is far more likely to lead to long-term success than persisting in a program that is not the right fit.

8. A Dean's Waiver Decision Is Final

The Dean's decision to grant or deny a Dean's Waiver is discretionary and is not subject to appeal. The Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA) does not have jurisdiction to review a denial of a Dean's Waiver petition, because the RTW itself arises from Senate policy, not from a decision of the Dean.

This means it is important to approach the petition process seriously, with complete and honest documentation, and with a realistic understanding of your situation before you submit.

9. How to Apply

If you decide to proceed with a Dean's Waiver petition, you must complete the Dean's Waiver Petition Form available from the Faculty of Social Science Academic Advising website and submit it, along with all supporting documentation, to:

ann.seabrook@uwo.ca

Subject line: Dean's Waiver Petition – [Your Full Name]

Incomplete petitions will not be assessed. You are responsible for including all relevant documentation upon submission. Please submit one complete petition.