

The Academic Standards and Admissions Committee has had a request from Melissa Jaramillo-Fleming to modify our catalog text regarding the grade of Withdrawal without Prejudice (WO).

As you probably know, the WO grade is intended to provide a withdrawal option in cases where some devastating thing has happened to a student after the regular withdrawal deadline has passed. The current catalog text reads: "Such a petition must be presented ... before the end of the semester to the Dean of Students for review and consideration." The problem with this current text is that "before the end of the semester" is too vague. Does it mean "before the final exam"? Or after the exam, but before the end of finals week? We need to clarify that passage.

Melissa is regularly seeing 5 to 10 cases per semester in which something bad has indeed happened to a student, but the student seems to be taking the final exam to see how it goes; if the final goes badly, then the student submits the WO paperwork. There is a feeling that this practice abuses the intent of the WO grade. If a student has taken the final exam, the student has completed the course and should get a letter grade rather than a withdrawal. If the faculty agree, we can indicate to Melissa that that should be the default practice. We also propose that the catalog text should indicate the Friday before finals week as the deadline for WO petitions.

To be sparkingly clear about it, here is the current text on WO.

Under extremely unusual circumstances (for example, serious illness or death in the student's immediate family), a student may petition for a withdrawal without prejudice. **Such a petition must be presented in writing with supporting documentation (i.e., statement from a physician, obituary, etc.) before the end of the semester to the Dean of Students for review and consideration.** Students may not withdraw without prejudice from a course they are failing due to plagiarism, cheating, or other disciplinary issues. Charges for tuition and fees are not altered by such a withdrawal.

The proposal is to replace the red sentence with the following.

The petition must include the the completed Withdrawal Without Prejudice request form, a written letter explaining the circumstances, and supporting documents (a statement from a physician, obituary, etc.). The deadline for submission of the petition is the Friday before the start of final exams.