

Imperial College London

General Regulations

Appendix 1

Student Withdrawals and Appeals - Procedure for dealing with cases of unsatisfactory academic progress

GENERAL

1. The Academic Regulations require that a student admitted to any course of study must attend to the satisfaction of the Head of Department. The College reserves the right to require any student whose academic progress is unsatisfactory or who fails in an examination to withdraw from the College. Withdrawal decisions may be taken at any time during the session.
2. The right to require a student to withdraw from the College on academic grounds is vested in the Senate and is delegated by the Senate to the Departments, subject to the appeal procedure referred to below.

WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURE IN RESPECT OF TAUGHT COURSES (UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE)

3. When a student's academic progress is considered so unsatisfactory as to be likely to lead to a withdrawal decision during the session, the Department must clearly warn the student of this possibility in good time (i.e. a minimum of six weeks' notice must be given), both orally and in writing. In giving such warnings the position in respect of course work and its significance in assessment should always be made clear.
4. If the student's academic progress continues to be unsatisfactory beyond the warning period and if, following discussions with the student, it is the view of the Department that there are no or insufficient extenuating circumstances, a decision that the student be required to withdraw may be made by the Head of Department¹, in consultation with the Director of Undergraduate Studies/ Director of Postgraduate Studies and Senior Tutor/ Departmental Postgraduate Tutor, and shall be reported to the Academic Registrar within five working days for formal communication to the student within ten working days.
5. In the case of failure in an examination, the Head of Department, Director of Undergraduate Studies/ Director of Postgraduate Studies and Senior Tutor/ Departmental Postgraduate Tutor will decide (in the light of the results declared by the Examiners, the student's academic performance on the course, and the existence of any extenuating circumstances) whether the student shall be required to withdraw from the College. The decision will be reported to the Academic Registrar within five working days for formal communication to the student within ten working days.

¹ Director of Education for undergraduate medical students.

WITHDRAWAL PROCEDURE IN RESPECT OF POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS

6. When a postgraduate research student's academic progress is considered by a department to be so unsatisfactory as to be likely to lead to a withdrawal decision, the Department must clearly warn the student of this possibility in good time (i.e. a minimum of six weeks' notice), both orally and in writing. A copy of the warning letter must be sent to the Head of Department, Director of Postgraduate Studies and Departmental Postgraduate Tutor and to the Academic Registrar. Where appropriate the student should be informed that voluntary withdrawal is advisable.
7. The warning letter should indicate measurable ways and the timescale in which the student's academic progress should be expected to improve.
8. If the student's academic progress, beyond the warning period, continues to be so unsatisfactory as to justify a withdrawal decision, the Department must notify the student of this fact in writing. If the student does not withdraw voluntarily, he/she will be required to appear before an ad hoc Assessment Committee.
9. Departmental ad hoc Assessment Committees will be established as necessary by the Head of Department and should comprise the Head of Department, Director of Postgraduate Studies and Departmental Postgraduate Tutor and, wherever possible, include a member of the academic staff of another department. The student will have the right to nominate a member of the academic staff of his/her own department to serve on the Committee. The Assessment Committee will hear both the student and his/her supervisor, and will invite the student to refer to extenuating or other circumstances which, in the student's view, have affected his/her academic performance. The Committee will produce a written report on the student's academic performance and on any extenuating circumstances put forward.
10. The Head of Department, in the light of the Assessment Committee's report and such subsequent discussion with the student as he/she may deem appropriate, will decide whether or not the student shall be required to withdraw from the College. If the student is to be required to withdraw, the decision will be reported to the Academic Registrar for formal communication to the student. The Assessment Committee's report will also be submitted to the Academic Registrar.

APPEAL PROCEDURE IN RESPECT OF ALL STUDENTS

11. All students required to withdraw have the right of appeal through the Academic Registrar to an Appeal Committee of the Senate. The right of appeal relates only to the withdrawal decision and not to the results of any examination or academic assessment on which the decision may be based.
12. Students required to withdraw are given written notice, by the Academic Registrar, of their right to appeal. In respect of withdrawals during term-time as regards undergraduates and anytime in the session as regards postgraduates, any appeal must be lodged within one month; in respect of withdrawals following examination failure by undergraduates, any appeal must be made within one month. Any appeal must be made in writing and sent to the Academic Registrar and shall state the grounds on which the appeal is being made and provide evidence to support it.

13. Senior Registry staff will consider appeals (i) where there is new evidence of extenuating circumstances which the student had been unable for valid reasons to disclose before the Head of Department made his/her decision; (ii) where there is evidence that the Head of Department had acted unreasonably in requiring the student to withdraw; and (iii) where there is evidence that the Student Withdrawals and Appeals procedure has not been correctly followed. If senior Registry staff consider that there is sufficient supporting evidence then the Head of Department in conjunction with the Director of Undergraduate Studies/ Director of Postgraduate Studies and Senior Tutor/ Departmental Postgraduate Tutor is then asked to consider the appeal, and, if acceptable, to cancel its previous withdrawal decision within ten working days. If a Department does not cancel the withdrawal decision it must in its written response address the points made by the student in their appeal.
14. If a decision is made not to cancel the withdrawal decision, any request by the student for an Appeal Committee to be convened must be made in writing and lodged with the Academic Registrar. The appeal in writing must be made within ten working days of the notification to the student of the decision of the Department not to cancel its withdrawal decision. The request is considered by the Academic Registrar, Dean of Students and Pro Rector (Education and Academic Services) who shall decide on the basis of the evidence provided whether or not there are grounds for an Appeal Hearing. If an Appeal Hearing is not allowed then a Completion of Procedures letter shall be issued in accordance with paragraph 34 below.
15. The Appeal Committee shall consist of two members of the academic staff drawn by the Academic Registrar from a panel established by the Senate for that purpose, and one student representative nominated by the Imperial College Union President who shall be from a different Faculty to the appellant. The Chair of the Appeal Committee shall be an elected Dean. The Appeal Committee will not include a member of staff from the appellant's Department.
16. The student will be invited to attend the Appeal Committee and the Department will be invited to send a representative to the hearing. Students may, if they wish, be accompanied by a member of Imperial College (either a fellow student, or a personal tutor, warden or other member of the academic staff); the friend may speak in support of the student if the latter so desires. In keeping with the Human Rights Act (1998), students may, if they wish, request that the hearing be held in public.
17. Written statements will be required from the Department as follows:
 - a. In respect of withdrawal arising from unsatisfactory academic progress during the session:
 - i. A statement indicating in general terms the reasons which led the Department to require withdrawal;
 - ii. For a taught course student, a statement giving details of any progress tests undertaken so far in the session, the student's results and coursework marks and their relationship to those of the class as a whole, together with the previous academic record within the College;
 - b. In respect of withdrawal resulting from examination failure:

- i. A statement indicating in general terms the reasons which led the Department not to accede to the student's request to repeat the year, and (where appropriate) an account of any remedial measures taken by the Department to improve the student's performance;
- ii. A statement giving details of the student's examination and coursework marks, and the relationship of the performance to the class average, together with the previous academic record within the College.

These statements will be sent to the student at least one week before the hearing.

18. The conduct of the Appeal Committee will be standardised as far as possible (see also paragraphs 22-32). Both the student and the Departmental representative (if attending) will be before the Committee at the same time; the Chairman will explain that the academic details and information, provided under 17.a.ii. and 17.b.ii above, are taken by the Committee as given and that it is only empowered to hear extenuating circumstances which might lead to a conclusion that the withdrawal decision was unreasonable. The student will be invited to present his/her case, following which the Departmental representative may put questions. The Departmental representative will then make a statement of the Departmental view, with the student permitted to put questions. Finally, the student will be invited to make any further comments he/she wishes; after which the student (and 'friend' if present) and Departmental representative will withdraw, before the Appeal Committee considers the matter.
19. The Appeal Committee, in reaching a conclusion on a student appeal, may attach specific conditions to the continuance by the student of the course of study.
20. The Clerk to the Appeal Committee will inform the appellant of the Committee's decision within twenty four hours by email or telephone, and confirm in writing to the appellant providing reasons for the judgement reached in relation to submissions made at the hearing, within ten working days of the hearing taking place.
21. The responsibility for hearing and deciding upon appeals is vested in the Senate and is delegated by the Senate to the Appeal Committees, whose decisions are final.

CONDUCT OF THE APPEAL COMMITTEE (WITHDRAWAL RESULTING FROM EXAMINATION FAILURE)

22. Both the student and the Departmental representative (if attending) will be before the Committee at the same time.
23. The panel and the student will be provided with a statement giving details of the student's examination and coursework marks, the relevant pass marks, and the relationship of his/her performance to the class average.
24. The Chairman will explain that these academic details and information are taken by the Committee as given and that the Appeal Committee is only empowered to hear extenuating circumstances which might lead to a conclusion that the withdrawal decision was unreasonable.

25. The Chairman will then invite the student to present his/her case.
26. The Departmental representative is then invited to put questions.
27. Members of the Panel may address questions to the student.
28. The Departmental representative will then make a statement of the Departmental view.
29. The student is then invited to put questions.
30. Members of the Panel may address questions to the Departmental representative.
31. The student is then invited to make any further comments he/she wishes.
32. The student (and his/her 'friend' if present) and the Departmental representative are then asked to withdraw.

REPORTING ON DECISIONS

33. A formal report on all withdrawal decisions is made to the Senate. In keeping with the Human Rights Act (1998), should the student choose, the Committee's decision and reasoned judgement will be published.

COMPLETION OF PROCEDURES

34. Once a student has completed the College's internal appeals or complaints procedures, the College will issue the student with a Completion of Procedures Letter. If the student is still dissatisfied, the student may direct their complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator within three months of the date on which the Completion of Procedures Letter was issued. Information on the complaints covered by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and the review procedures is available at: <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/>. The College reserves the right to reject a complaint when it is issued more than three years after the substantive event(s) to which it relates.