
Guide to the Academic Appeals Process

Dear Engineering Student:

The Faculty of Engineering Academic Standing Committee (ASC) recently met and evaluated your academic standing. ASC has decided that you are required-to-withdraw (RTW) from your current engineering program. Under the University of Windsor's Senate Policy, you may choose to appeal this decision to the **Faculty of Engineering Academic Appeals Committee (AAC)**.

The Faculty of Engineering understands that this is a stressful situation for you. To help you, this document provides answers to *frequently-asked-questions* about the appeals process.

Q1: Why was I (the student) asked to withdraw from my engineering program?

A: There are three conditions under which you may be asked to withdraw. Depending on your circumstances, more than one condition may apply to you.

1. Your **cumulative average** was below the threshold required to continue in Good Standing. Normally, this threshold is 55% for engineering students.
2. You have **remained on academic probation for too long**. When the Academic Standing Committee evaluates you, if your cumulative average is between 55% and 60%, you are on academic probation (AP), which means you are passing but underperforming. By the next evaluation cycle, if you are still between 55% and 60%, that will mean that you have been underperforming for typically two academic years. At this point, you will also be required to withdraw.
3. You **failed a required course in the program twice**.

Q2: Are these conditions unique to Engineering?

A: No, the conditions pertaining to RTW apply to all University of Windsor programs. All engineering programs (civil, mechanical, electrical, environmental, industrial) follow the same three criteria as outlined above. Some programs outside of Engineering may set higher percentages for acceptable cumulative averages or different RTW criteria.

Q3: What does RTW, AP, and Good Standing refer to?

A: These refer to your academic standing and every student is evaluated regularly to determine his or her standing. If you are in *Good Standing*, your cumulative average is at 60% or higher, and you have passed all required courses to date. If you are on *Academic Probation* (AP), you are below 60% but above the threshold for RTW status. If you are *Required-to-Withdraw* (RTW), then you meet one of the three then you meet one of the three conditions described earlier (see Q1).

Q4: What does it mean to appeal the RTW decision? What does the Appeals Committee do?

A: The **Appeals Committee is a separate committee from the Academic Standing Committee** that decided you should be withdrawn. Basically, the Appeals Committee will decide if you, the student, should be granted an opportunity to continue. The way to do this is for you the student to submit an explanation that outlines why your academic performance did not meet the conditions to continue in good standing, and that you wish to appeal (or have the Faculty overturn) the earlier RTW decision so that you can continue in your Engineering program at UWindsor.

In other words, is there an extraordinary circumstance that explains what happened to your academic performance, and will the Appeals Committee accept these reason(s) to permit you to continue uninterrupted in your program. You should be aware that the committee is looking for *significant, exceptional reasons* to explain your performance; for example, claiming that you did not work hard enough after two years of study in engineering would not be considered a “good reason”.

Q5: Do I have to appeal the RTW decision?

A: You do not – it is your choice. Some students choose not to appeal the decision. **However, if you do not appeal the RTW decision, then you accept it, and you are withdrawn from your program for one year.** After that time, you may re-apply to your program. Re-admission is not guaranteed.

Q6: What can the Appeals Committee decide as an outcome?

A: The Appeals Committee can decide on any appropriate outcome, but there are several common decisions.

- 1. It can grant the appeal (“cancel” the RTW decision) without any conditions.** To do so, the committee must have evidence of *extraordinary* reasons. A typical reason may be that you the student suffered a severe injury or sickness requiring hospitalization. Extraordinary circumstances are therefore, recognized as severe circumstances that would impact the ability of any engineering student to perform well academically. Typically, these are circumstances the student would have little or no control over.
- 2. It can grant the appeal but impose conditions.** The Appeals Committee may find that your explanation has some merit to consider an appeal, but not enough to overturn the RTW decision without any conditions. In such a case, the committee may specify that by the next evaluation, you must have passed certain courses, that you have a cumulative average of 60% or higher, and so on. If you then meet these conditions by the next evaluation, then you can proceed in your studies without interruption. If you do not meet these conditions by the next evaluation, then you will be Required-to-Withdraw again.
- 3. It can defer the decision based on the outcome of pending circumstances.** This decision can occur if there are other ongoing circumstances that could impact your Academic performance, but if the outcomes of these circumstances are unknown.

For example, in the summer semester, if you are enrolled in current engineering classes when the RTW decision was decided, that means you received the RTW decision in May but had already started in summer classes for May through August. In this case, the Appeals Committee may specify that the decision on your appeal will be deferred and will depend on your current courses and their outcomes. High academic performance may indicate that you have overcome past obstacles that prevented you from succeeding academically. On the other hand, low academic performance may indicate that the original RTW decision was an appropriate decision. *NOTE: The Appeals Committee does NOT have to consider your performance in current classes at the time of the appeal, but it MAY choose to do so.*

4. **It can uphold the RTW.** In this case, the committee does not find that your explanation is sufficient, and you will be withdrawn from your program.

Q7: Why am I getting this RTW decision now? I have already registered in courses for this semester.

A: The Academic Standing Committee cannot evaluate your performance until the grades from the previous semester are compiled. Therefore, the committee must wait until the next semester (the one you are now in) after all the past grades are available to assess your standing.

Q8: What about the courses I am taking right now? What happens to them?

A: Nothing happens to them – you are permitted to continue in your current semester’s courses and to obtain a grade in them.

Q9: I am doing really well right now in my current semester’s courses? Can this progress be used to change my *original* RTW decision?

A: No. The RTW decision was imposed based on your work just completed, not on your current or future work which has not yet finished.

Q10: I scored really well on some midterms on courses I am taking currently. Should I tell the Appeals Committee?

A: You can inform the Appeals Committee of your current progress. It cannot change the original RTW decision because that was based on your *prior work*. However, if the Committee sees significant improvement, they *may* take your current course performance into consideration in its decision on your appeal. You should provide documentation (e.g., copies of midterms, lab reports, etc.) that support your claim that you are “doing better” this current semester. Please refer back to Q6.

Q11: I think I have valid medical or family reasons that explain my academic performance. What should I do?

A: It is up to you to decide how much to reveal to the Appeals Committee. Such situations are very personal in nature, and you may feel uncomfortable revealing private information. You should know that all information is received and discussed in confidence.

For example, if you have a serious medical condition (physical, psychological, or other conditions) that you think affected your studies, but that you do not want to discuss with the Appeals Committee in detail, you do not have to. However, the Appeals Committee would be expecting appropriate medical documentation to support your claim. The documentation does not have to discuss the specific details of your situation, but the health professional (e.g., medical doctor, counsellor) should provide his or her opinion as to why the Appeals Committee should consider your appeals request.

The documentation would be similar for serious family circumstances. For example, a death certificate would substantiate your claim that a death in the immediate family recently occurred.

You should note that medical or family reasons and documentation do NOT automatically mean the Appeals Committee will give you an opportunity to continue your studies. They are items of information that the committee will take into consideration when they evaluate your appeals request.

Q12: I have been informed that the Appeals Committee upheld the RTW decision. What happens now?

A: If this is your first RTW, then *you are required to withdraw from your Engineering program for ONE YEAR starting at the end of the current semester you are in.* If you intend to pursue other programs, then you will withdraw from the faculty and apply to another program or leave the University to pursue other options. If you intend to reapply to your program in twelve months, you will be placed in General Engineering and will meet with the Associate Dean Academic to determine which courses you should take over the one year period prior to your application to continue in your program. For example, if you are withdrawn during the summer semester, then you can re-apply to resume your Engineering program for *next* September (fall semester). If you are withdrawn during the fall semester, you can re-apply to resume your Engineering program for *next* January (winter semester).

If this is your second RTW, and your appeal for the current RTW is unsuccessful, then you will be blocked from registering in any future engineering courses.

Q13: What do I do for the year that I am not in Engineering? How can I improve my chances for getting re-admitted to Engineering after my RTW is over?

A: You are free to do whatever you choose. However, we strongly advise you to do whatever you think you need to do to overcome the challenges you faced academically that resulted in the RTW.

For example, if you recognize that time management was a problem for you, then finding employment that allows you to demonstrate and work on managing your time effectively would demonstrate that in the year away from engineering you have improved your ability

to manage your work effectively. You would then cite these reasons as to why you should be re-admitted to Engineering.

If you think you need more practice at studying in an educational setting, you could apply to another Institution (e.g., St. Clair College) or to another program at the University of Windsor. It is important to realize that you are required to withdraw from Engineering, not from the University of Windsor.

However, to remain a student at the University, you need to find another program in another Faculty. This may be difficult because other Faculties may not accept RTW students from another Faculty.

Consider carefully whether Engineering is the appropriate choice for you to study based on your strengths, weaknesses and interests. If you conclude yes, then seriously think about what you can do to improve your chances of success if you are re-admitted to our programs. In any case, meeting with the Assistant and Associate Deans is recommended to assist in planning your course of action.

Q14: If my appeal is unsuccessful but I successfully transfer to another program at the University of Windsor (e.g., Arts, Business), can I still take engineering courses?

A: No - you are not permitted to take engineering courses during the RTW period.

Q15: If my appeal is unsuccessful, can I transfer to another engineering program at another Canadian university?

A: No - other universities honour the RTW conditions decided by another institution.

Q16: The Faculty of Engineering seems really mean about this whole RTW thing. Do they not understand that if I am withdrawn, what this will do to me? I will be embarrassed to tell my family. I will lose my scholarship. I will lose my study visa. I will lose all the money I or my family paid for me to study here. Why can't the Faculty just give me one more chance?

A: We are frequently asked these questions. The Faculty of Engineering understands that studying can be stressful, and that not everything in your degree will go perfectly. However, the Faculty must maintain a high quality of academic performance. You have chosen a profession that emphasizes public safety and you are expected to master the core subjects that will help you be a professional.

The Faculty recognizes that situations can arise that can impact your ability to perform well academically – that the purpose of the Appeals Committee and Process. The Faculty, however, cannot give you, an individual student, a chance that it cannot give to any other student: *in other words, the Faculty will attempt to be reasonable in its judgment about your appeal, but it must be fair to all students.*

The Appeals Process under the Senate governance emphasizes *extraordinary* circumstances that can impact your studies. In the vast majority of cases, the RTW situation does not occur suddenly; instead the decline in academic performance takes several semesters if not years. There are opportunities to seek help on how to address academic concerns *before* the Appeals Process. The Appeals Process is not to help you correct aspects that you had control over such as “I didn’t work hard enough”, or “I should have gone to class more often”.

Q17: Okay... I finished reading this Guide, what do I do now?

A: Complete the [Application for Appealing Form](#). Please follow the instructions very carefully.

Q18: I’ve submitted my completed forms. What happens now?

A: The committee will assess your written submission and if possible, will make a decision on your request to appeal. You will be notified of the decision as soon as possible. This will normally take place within several weeks after you have submitted your formal, typed appeal.

However, if the committee thinks it needs to meet with you in person to discuss and clarify your situation, you will be contacted to set up an appointment. *Not every student who submits a written appeal will necessarily meet with the committee in person.*