



THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD OF HARVARD COLLEGE

Information for students on exceptions to academic policies (petitions)

The vast majority of the Administrative Board's work involves evaluating requests for exceptions to academic rules or regulations, or for changes in enrollment or course registration. Many such requests, or petitions, are frequent, customary, or involve circumstances that are straightforward. Decisions of the Board take into account the best educational and personal interests of the student as well as the mission of the College.

Petitions handled by the Board include, but are not limited to, permission to:

- take a leave of absence
- register for courses after the deadline
- add or drop a course late or withdraw from a course after the deadline
- bracket or unbracket a course
- take a medical make-up or an *in-absentia* final examination or other final examination accommodation
- have an extension of time after the end of the term to complete written work in a course
- postpone the language requirement
- enroll in two courses that meet at the same time
- enroll in the College for a ninth term
- return to the College after a period of withdrawal or a leave of absence taken late in the term
- continue enrollment despite make-up examinations or extensions of time in two or more courses
- attend Harvard Summer School in advance of being readmitted, or allowed to return, to the College

All of the above petitions have clear guidelines that must be met before the Board can give its approval. These can be found in the *Handbook for Students*.

PROCEDURES FOR PETITIONS

All petitions are put forth at the request of the student. The process of petitioning the Board begins with a conversation between students and their Resident Dean of Freshmen or Allston Burr Assistant Dean, in which the reasons for the petition, the applicable rules of the College, and the circumstances that may or may not warrant its approval are all discussed.

- *Students may be encouraged to write a statement explaining their request and specific circumstances.*
- *The student's Resident Dean of Freshmen/Allston Burr Assistant Dean will prepare a "write-up" or summary of the request and forward the petition (along with the student's statement and other documentation, if necessary) to the Board. Students do not have the option to appear before a subcommittee of the Board when petitions are reviewed.*
- *After the Board discusses a student's petition, the chair or his or her designee will call for a vote. Many petitions are routine votes, such as a leave of absence, but in all cases the Board decides how to respond to petitions primarily on the basis of the request and the student's individual circumstances.*
- *Students will be informed of the Board's decision, along with any special instructions or necessary follow-up, in writing by their Resident Dean of Freshmen/Allston Burr Assistant Dean. A copy of the petition and the Dean's letter are placed in the student's College file.*

STANDARD RESPONSES

Petitions are either "approved" or "denied." Occasionally a petition is "bracketed," which means a decision is postponed pending receipt of additional information or documentation.

When a decision changes a student's status in the College, such as by granting a leave of absence, the Allston Burr Assistant Dean or Resident Dean of Freshmen is obligated to inform the student's parents or guardians.