



THE ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD OF HARVARD COLLEGE

General Information on Academic Review

After the end of each term, the Administrative Board reviews the records of all students who receive unsatisfactory grades or who fail to meet the College's minimum academic requirements. The Board also periodically reviews the records of students who have yet to complete certain degree requirements, such as the language requirement or the Expository Writing requirement, or who are working at a rate above or below the standard four courses per term.

PURPOSE OF ACADEMIC REVIEW

The academic review process serves an important purpose. It is a way to alert students and their advisers to academic difficulties in time to help students identify those areas where they might be experiencing problems and determine how best to address them. Students have only a limited number of terms at the College. As a community, we try to respond quickly when students have an unsatisfactory term so that students are aware and can take advantage of the resources and supports that might be useful to them. Students can find themselves with an unsatisfactory record for many different reasons, including educational, personal, financial, health-related, family-related, or other concerns. The College recognizes that there can be various challenges that make it difficult for students to take full advantage of the opportunities for intellectual, social, and personal transformation here. The College's commitment to students and their progress here shapes the structure of academic review and the responses to unsatisfactory records.

PROCEDURES FOR REVIEW OF ACADEMIC RECORDS

When students realize, or are told, that their record for a term is unsatisfactory, they should immediately contact their Resident Dean to discuss their academic situation.

- *Students whose records are unsatisfactory are encouraged to write a statement explaining their circumstances and reflecting on any changes they aim to make in their approach to their academic work.*
- *The student's Resident Dean will prepare and present a docket page (a summary of the student's academic record and of the Dean's understanding of the student's circumstances) to the Board. (Visit www.adboard.fas.harvard.edu for a sample docket page. Docket pages are also used for petitions and disciplinary cases.) Students do not have the option to appear before a subcommittee of the Board when their academic records are reviewed.*
- *After the Board members discuss a student's record and circumstances, the chair or their designee will call for a vote. The Board decides how to respond to unsatisfactory records primarily on the basis of the record itself. However, it carefully considers each case individually, taking into account the student's overall record and specific circumstances.*
- *The Resident Dean will inform students of the Board's decision, along with any special instructions or necessary follow-up, in writing. All documents relating to the Board's review of a student's academic record are placed in the student's College file.*

STANDARD RESPONSES TO UNSATISFACTORY RECORDS

- *Place on Academic Probation* is the standard response to a first unsatisfactory record, as defined in the *Handbook for Students*.

Academic probation puts the student on notice that their academic performance gives considerable cause for concern. A student on academic probation is expected to pay especially close attention to their course work. Academic probation is also an opportunity for students to develop a more structured advising relationship with their Resident Dean and their academic advisers.

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A student is relieved of academic probation provided they achieve a satisfactory record during the next term in the College. Academic probation is a formal action by the Board that changes a student's status in the College (from "in good standing" to "on academic probation") and is therefore disclosed to parents or guardians.

Should a first unsatisfactory record result from especially compelling and well-documented extenuating circumstances, the Board could decide to *Take No Action* and warn a student about their academic record instead of placing them on academic probation. An unsatisfactory record remains so, however, regardless of the action taken by the Board. Therefore all students who have an unsatisfactory record must take care to ensure that they earn all satisfactory grades during their next term in the College.

- *Require to Withdraw* is the standard response to a second consecutive unsatisfactory record or for failing to meet the College's minimum academic requirements, as defined in the *Handbook for Students*.

A requirement to withdraw reflects the Board's judgment that the record indicates that the student should be given time to reassess academic goals and plans. Requirement to withdraw for academic reasons is an action designed to maximize the student's chances of completing their Harvard degree. The length of a requirement to withdraw is ordinarily two terms, although the Board may stipulate a longer period of time. Requirement to withdraw changes a student's status in the College (from "in good standing" or "on academic probation" to "required to withdraw") and is therefore disclosed to parents or guardians. A requirement to withdraw for academic reasons is also disclosed to graduate or professional schools under certain circumstances.

The process of being required to withdraw from the College seeks to accomplish several goals. First, it is meant to give students the time and space to address difficulties that have limited their ability to focus on their academic work at the College. Given that each student has only a limited number of terms, the Administrative Board seeks to intervene quickly when challenges arise. Second, the time away offers the opportunity for re-examining and re-evaluating a student's time at the College. Students in this situation often find that the time of reflection and exploration allows them to return with a more focused and directed approach to their studies. Third, students who enter this process benefit from intensive advising support, particularly upon their return to the College, when they return through the academic probation system.

Students can find themselves with a concerning academic record for many different reasons, whether educational, personal, financial, health-related, family, or other concerns. Once they return to the College, the vast majority of students who were required to withdraw for academic reasons have successful terms and report feeling more engaged in their studies.

There are certain expectations that the Faculty has put in place for a student to meet during their time away. These expectations are educational in nature and are meant to put students in a better position to succeed academically after they return to the College—these expectations are not meant as punishment nor are they meant to be obstacles to students' progress toward their degrees. They are in place to help students press pause long enough to reflect and recalibrate and then return to their studies with the sense of clarity and perspective that will enable them to participate more fully in their intellectual and creative lives. When a student is required to withdraw for academic reasons, the Board expects them to meet minimum general prerequisites for returning. These include leaving the Harvard community completely and holding a full-time, paid, non-academic job in a non-family owned or run business for at least six consecutive months before petitioning for readmission to the College.

Readmission to the College after a requirement to withdraw is not automatic and requires a vote of the full Administrative Board. Once a student has met the terms for returning, the College readily welcomes them back and supports them in their studies. (On rare occasions, students, for reasons of their own, decide not to return).

A student readmitted after a requirement to withdraw for academic reasons is readmitted on academic probation. Should such a student achieve an unsatisfactory record in the term immediately following readmission, they will ordinarily be required to withdraw a second time. A second requirement to withdraw (whether the result of academic difficulty or a disciplinary matter) is ordinarily final. A student must make an extraordinarily strong case in order to be readmitted a second time. The vast majority of students who are required to withdraw are readmitted in one year and successfully complete their Harvard degree.