

Dropping with a “W” - things to know

WHAT IF I NEED TO DROP MORE THAN 4 CREDITS?

If extenuating circumstances are causing difficulty with your academics, please contact me because there is help available on campus, and academic procedures to be followed, should you need assistance handling the academic consequences of a personal situation. It is better to “strategize” now, while you have options, than to wait and do nothing, hoping the situation will “right” itself.

WHAT IF I AM RECEIVING FINANCIAL AID?

Check with your Financial Aid counselor in the Lee Building NOW if dropping a course would put you below 12 credits. Most aid programs allow this provided you began the semester with 12 or more credits, but there may be a few that do not – and it can be expensive to make an incorrect assumption.

HOW DO I KNOW I “SHOULD” DROP A COURSE?

- **Is the coursework in the class so heavy, and/or the likelihood of passing it so slim, that it is taking away from other courses?** If the answer is “yes,” then it may be a good idea to drop the course. It is usually better to drop a course and earn A’s and B’s in 4 classes than one B, 3 C’s and an F in 5 classes.
- **Be honest with yourself.** Refer to your course syllabus to get a realistic idea regarding what percentage of your grade is already determined and how much improvement is mathematically possible. Remember that what is “mathematically” possible may not be “realistically” possible.
- **Speak to your instructor** to get his/her opinion.

Last, if you are worried about “getting behind” in your credits, remember that you could take a Winter Term or summer school class at a local community college to catch up.

ARE “W’S” BAD?

No, a few W’s over the course of an academic career are not “bad.” There will be no indication on your transcript whether you were failing or passing at the time of the drop, and W’s are not calculated into your GPA.

If, on the other hand, you withdraw from a course EVERY SEMESTER, you could lead an employer or graduate admissions committee to think you weren’t very good at setting reasonable goals for yourself... and this is not a good thing. Expectations are fairly lenient for first- and second-year students; and much less so for upper-level students.

IF I DROP BELOW 12 CREDITS, THAT MAKES ME PART-TIME. IS THAT BAD?

No – at this point in the semester, it won’t affect your residence hall status or your tuition. If you had dropped to part-time during the first 5 days of the semester, it would have changed your tuition bill and your eligibility for housing. At this point, it doesn’t change anything.

WHAT IF I REALLY DON’T WANT TO DROP THE COURSE?

If you want to hang in there with your course, develop a long-term (final 6-8 weeks) study plan and stick to it. Use all available help sources and strategies (see below). If you end up making the “wrong” decision and fail the course, the Repeat Policy allows:

- First year students to repeat at any time a course taken during the first 24 credits.
- Transfer student to repeat at any time a course taken during their first semester at UM.

-- In these two situations, only the higher grade will “count” in the GPA, however, both grades will remain on the transcript.

>>> After these "grace" periods, any failed course AND its subsequent repeat will "count" in the cumulative GPA.

HELP SOURCES:

- Your instructor: <https://www.umd.edu/directories>
- Study skills and tutorial support programs: <http://ensp.umd.edu/advising/study-skills-tutoring>
- UMD Learning Assistance Services: <http://www.counseling.umd.edu/las/>

USUALLY, the MOST IMPORTANT STRATEGY = INCREASE YOUR STUDY TIME:

-- **Aim to study at least 2 hours per credit hour carried**, e.g., 30 hours a week (or about 4 hours a day) for a 15-credit load.

-- “Study” in this context means: reading, note-taking, library research, tutorial help, group study, writing, self-quizzing, etc.

REMEMBER:

-- You do not need to do it all at one sitting.

-- You can take “days off” if you put extra hours in on other days.

-- You can find a “weekly planner” here, to help: <http://ensp.umd.edu/current-students/study-skills-tutoring>