**Academic Forgiveness Policy Proposal 9.20.17**

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7. **History & Overview**

In spring 2016, Kristin Woods, Director of Student Success and Retention, was working with a student to find the student’s best path to re-enrollment at the University. Current institutional policies and processes, including the Undergraduate Student Request process and the Committee for Admission, Readmission, and Retention were explored to support the student. The student questioned if the university had a re-start or forgiveness policy similar to University of Iowa or Iowa State. Kristin was encouraged by staff in the Registrar's Office and, then, Associate Provost Kavita Dhanwada, to gather a group of Academic Affairs staff and Student Affairs staff to explore university need for forgiveness policy. In addition, the CARR (Committee on Admission, Readmission and Retention) had been discussing the concept of academic forgiveness in response to the continuing evaluation of committee policies, procedures, and decision making with students. The committee has noted an increase of students seeking to return to UNI after a long(er) period of time and circumstances which make it more difficult to make decisions that are consistent and fair across students (especially those who have a second suspension).

Representatives from both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs met during summer 2016 and discussed the need for further exploration of this type of policy. With support from Provost Wohlpart, Administrative Fellow Chris Curran and Assistant Dean of Students Allyson Rafanello were asked to co-chair the development of the policy. David Marchesani, Director of Academic Advising, Mary Bauman, Associate Registrar, and Elaine Ehsbaugh, Associate Professor, worked as the Core Committee for the development of the policy during the 2016-2017 academic year. In the spring 2017 and fall 2017 semesters, an Advisory Committee consisting of faculty representation from each of the colleges, staff, and student representation, were involved in reviewing drafts of the policy to ensure it was written from an all-encompassing angle. Advisory committee members included: JD Cryer, Benjamin Dzaboff, Norman Ferguson, Karthik Iyer, Monica Johnson, Nick Sullivan, and Matthew Weedman.

The Core Committee is hopeful to pass the policy as early as possible in the 2017-2018 academic year to allow the Registrar’s Office the longest amount of time possible for implementation in fall 2018.

1. **Policy**

**Undergraduate Student Academic Forgiveness Program Policy DRAFT 5**

**9.20.17 – Not for Distribution**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide an option to undergraduate students to seek one semester of forgiveness for past academic coursework, after separation from the university, and subsequently delineate the prescribed process.

**Policy Statement**

Students who have been separated from the university for four or more years and who have experienced academic challenges affecting their grade point average, may wish to seek academic forgiveness as a means to restarting their academic career in order to graduate from the University of Northern Iowa.

Students seeking academic forgiveness are responsible for ensuring their eligibility, initiating the process, and understanding the impacts this policy may have on their academic record.

**Procedures**

1. **Eligibility**Eligibility for academic forgiveness requires that an individual
   1. is a former undergraduate student at the University of Northern Iowa for one or more semesters, and
   2. has been separated from the University of Northern Iowa (non-enrolled) for a four-year period (four consecutive calendar years or more), and
   3. has not already earned a degree from the University of Northern Iowa or another institution, and
   4. has completed an application to re-enroll at the University of Northern Iowa, or

is re-enrolled at the University of Northern Iowa following the designated separation and has submitted an application for Academic Forgiveness within one academic year of a return to the university, and

* 1. is free from unresolved holds placed on enrollment by any University offices, and
  2. is seeking academic forgiveness for a semester in which an academic ethics violation of level three or higher was not founded.

1. **General Qualifications**
   1. Academic forgiveness is a request to remove a semester of previously completed coursework from the university’s calculated grade point averages upon approval of the request.
   2. Academic forgiveness is applied to one identified semester of classes from the University of Northern Iowa, regardless of the number of credit hours in the semester, in the application for forgiveness.  All classes within the identified semester are included in the application of forgiveness. Forgiveness is not applicable to individual classes.
   3. Major or program exit requirements (e.g. student teaching, culminating major/program field experience or internship) may not be eligible for forgiveness consideration depending on Department/Program policies.
   4. The semester of requested academic forgiveness must apply to the individual’s previous academic enrollment prior to reentry to the university.
   5. Academic forgiveness can only be approved one time.
   6. Academic forgiveness is irreversible and final.
   7. Students must complete a minimum of 12 credit hours within two calendar years upon or after reentry to the university or the forgiveness approval will be void.
   8. Tuition refunds are not considered for an academic forgiveness semester.
2. **Academic Records, Standing and Financial Aid Awards**
   1. All courses taken and grades earned during the semester of academic forgiveness remain on the student’s official transcript. They will be marked to show they have been removed from the computation of the GPA.
   2. The academic hours earned during the forgiveness semester will not count toward the number of hours required for graduation.
   3. Any courses in the forgiveness semester that satisfied departmental major/minor requirements should be reviewed with the corresponding department by the student at the time of forgiveness application. It is the decision of the department if a previously completed course will count as fulfilling the requirement in question. The acceptance of previously completed requirements for the major/minor is not guaranteed.
   4. Liberal Arts Core Category requirements satisfied by courses taken during an approved forgiveness semester are not eligible for waiver through and undergraduate student request.
   5. A successfully completed sequence course in the major or minor impacted by academic forgiveness (i.e. during the semester forgiveness is requested) must be approved for waiver or substitution by the department for the major/minor degree requirements; all other courses must be repeated.
   6. Other universities and educational institutions may interpret transcripts and earned grade point averages differently. They may recalculate the grade point average to include all courses and semesters of earned credit.
   7. Financial aid eligibility may be impacted. Contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships prior to submitting a forgiveness application to determine potential impact on subsequent financial aid eligibility. Eligibility for specific academic scholarships is determined by the requirements of each academic scholarship program, including how GPA eligibility decisions are determined.

**3. Comparison to other institutional policies**

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|  | **Undergraduate Student Requests for Withdrawal From the University**  **(Office of the Provost)** | **Academic Suspension & CARR**  **(Committee on Admission, Readmission & Retention)** | **Academic Forgiveness**  **(Proposed Policy)** |
| **Purpose** | Provides an adjudicated review process for withdrawal from all classes after the deadline to withdraw without an “F” with approval from the Office of the Provost. Addresses (1) officially medically documented and/or (2) other substantive extenuating circumstances that impacts a student’s ability to address the essential academic functions in course(s) and withdraw by the deadline to withdraw without an “F.” Circumstances viewed as beyond one’s control. Alternatives and mechanisms in place are not sufficient for the specific medical/extenuating circumstance. | Provides a review process by university committee for the most extenuating circumstances to address readmittance following academic suspension prior to one academic year outlined by university policy. | Allows a former (inactive) undergraduate UNI student, separated from the university for four or more academic years, an opportunity to restart their academic career and take a new course of action for degree completion through academic forgiveness of one identified semester of coursework with minimal steps and intentional planning. |
| **Description** | Student Initiated request   1. Withdraw from a full semester of classes after the deadline to withdraw without an “F” with record/grade adjustment to W 2. Approval following documented and supported impact on successful completion of a course(s) in the identified period (semester) due to substantive factors (medical or extenuating circumstances) impacting academic performance or course completion 3. Includes process of advisor and department recommendation, other consultation(s), and due diligence in the review and decision process. 4. Review and approval decision by Associate Provost for Academic Affairs (or Administrative Fellow) | Student initiated request for readmittance following academic suspension   1. Has been suspended academically & seeks to be readmitted prior to the one year suspension period 2. Completes a written application which may include additional documentation 3. Can request a hearing with the CARR committee to support the information and documentation submitted 4. Written information and any additional provided documentation is reviewed by the committee | Student initiated one-time request for one semester of academic forgiveness of a single semester (all classes) of UNI coursework with application within one-year of return to UNI, meeting all eligibility considerations:   1. Includes a separation period of 4 or more years from UNI 2. Has not already earned a degree 3. Is free from unresolved holds 4. Semester of application does not include courses in which an academic ethics violation of level 3 or higher 5. Major or program exit requirements (e.g. student teaching, culminating major/program field experience or internship) may not be eligible for clemency consideration depending on Department/Program policy or decisions. 6. Must complete 12 hour more UNI credit hours upon return to UNI   Resulting in:   1. Credit hours forfeited for all course work during the semester of academic forgiveness. 2. Notation of the semester remains on official transcript with original grades noted. A notation would be made that the students GPA has been recalculated to reflect a semester of academic forgiveness |

**4. Comparison to peer institution policy**

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| [**University of Iowa**](https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook/restart) | [**Iowa State**](http://catalog.iastate.edu/academiclife/reinstatementrenewal/#academicrenewaltext) | **Proposed UNI Policy (summarized)** |
| ***ReStart*** is the academic forgiveness policy of the undergraduate colleges of the University of Iowa to address removal of one or more previously completed semesters (U of I coursework) from future GPA and satisfaction of degree requirements for students returning to U of I to complete their degree.  College specific practices and policies exist with some uniform agreements across colleges. | ***Academic Renewal*** is the policy used to remove one or more complete academic terms from future degree and GPA considerations at Iowa State for students who are returning to ISU to pursue an undergraduate degree after an extended absence.  . | ***Academic Forgiveness*** (AF) provides an option to undergraduate students to seek *one* semester of academic forgiveness for past academic coursework at UNI, after separation from the university, and subsequently delineate the prescribed process. This policy would allow former students, who have been separated from the university and who have experienced academic challenges impacting their grade point average, a means to restart their academic career in order to graduate from the University of Northern Iowa. |
| Ex: College of Liberal Arts & Sciences  **Eligibility:**   1. Extended absence 4 consecutive years or more 2. Has not graduated from U of I (cannot use for 2nd degree, teacher certification, other purpose) 3. Is free from any unresolved holds 4. Cannot have previously used ReStart   **Qualifications/Conditions**   1. Does not apply to individual courses but entire sessions’ enrollment. Does not apply to courses taken at another institution. 2. All courses taken/credits earned in ReStart semester remain on official transcript 3. Semesters hours earned in ReStart session are not counted toward the 120 hrs. for graduation 4. Acceptance of previously completed Gen Ed requirement in a ReStart session is not guaranteed. Case by case consideration. 5. Any course in ReStart session that met a major requirement require departmental review to determine if fulfills requirement in question. 6. Courses taken during ReStart and repeated after the return to UI are not counted as duplications 7. One time only option. 8. Once applied to record, not reversible 9. No tuition refunds for ReStart sessions   **Procedures**   1. Submission of an application and proposal statement and a proposed plan for degree completion 2. Option is not guaranteed. Requires review of record by Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum 3. Must be enrolled or file an application for re-entry 4. If dismissed for scholarship must meet with Associate Direct in Academic Programs and Student Development | **Eligibility**Extended absence of 5 consecutive years or moreHas not graduated from ISU (cannot use for 2nd degree or teacher certification)In good academic standing (if dismissed must be reinstated) and must enroll at ISU to activate petition **Qualifications/Conditions**   1. May not combine courses across multiple terms to comprise a semester dropped. Does not apply to courses taken at another institution. Only applies to courses taken prior to extended absence. 2. All courses and credits for the chosen terms will remain on the student's' academic record. 3. All courses and credits that were taken during the chosen terms will be removed from consideration for GPA and degree requirements 4. All courses/credits taken during the chosen terms removed from consideration of GPA and degree requirements. 5. Dropped degree requirements from a dropped term will ordinarily have to be repeated. 6. Does not apply to individual courses. Does not apply to courses taken at another institution. 7. All courses/grades for Drop Term remain on academic records. 8. Designated repeats, drops and P/NP options are reinstated for the terms dropped. 9. One time only option. 10. Must complete a minimum of 24 credit hours at ISU after granting of academic renewal.   **Procedures**   1. Discuss desire to pursue academic desire with advisor in the college in which student will enter 2. Submit a petition for academic renewal to the Office of the Registrar | **Eligibility**   1. Extended absence of 4 consecutive calendar years or more 2. Has not earned a degree from UNI; Is a former UNI student (one or more semesters) 3. Has completed an application to re-enroll/is re-enrolled at UNI 4. AF application submitted within 1 year of return to UNI 5. Is free from unresolved holds 6. May not apply for a semester of AF in which an academic ethics violation of Level 3 or higher was founded   **Qualifications**   1. Applies to 1 semester of coursework (all classes) from the determination of university calculated GPAs. Does not apply to individual classes. Applies to semester of courses taken prior to extended absence. 2. Academic hours earned during the AF semester do not count toward hours required for graduation. 3. Major or program exit requirements (e.g. student teaching, culminating program field experience or internship) may not be eligible for AF, depending on Department/Program decisions. 4. Must complete a minimum of 12 hours upon or after reentry to the university or the AF approval will be void. 5. No tuition refund consideration for an AF semester. 6. One time only option 7. Once applied is irreversible and final   **Academic Records, Standing, and Awards**   1. All courses taken and grades earned during AF semester remain on the official transcript (marked to show removed from computation of GPA) 2. On approval AF semester course grades are removed from students’ university GPA/degree requirement. Removed hours do not count toward # hours required for graduation. 3. Courses that satisfied departmental major/minor requirements in AF semester reviewed with corresponding Department at application. Decision of Department if previously completed coursework in AF semester count toward fulfilling a requirement of question. 4. Courses satisfying requirements for LAC during an approved AF semester are not eligible for waiver through the Undergraduate Student Request process. 5. A sequenced course in a major/minor impacted by AF (such as a prerequisite for a course later in the major/minor) must be approved for waiver or substitution by the Department. All other courses must be repeated. 6. Eligibility for Academic Hours based off UNI GPA of all courses (including the semester of AF). 7. Financial aid eligibility may be impacted.   **Suggested Process**   1. Contact Office of Academic Advising for Information on the AF policy eligibility and conditions. Referral to relevant departments for department related considerations RE major/minor or Program specific implications or information. 2. Application for AF submitted to the Office of the Registrar |

**5. Checklist**

The below text is intended to serve as draft text for the form submitted requesting Academic Forgiveness, to further ensure students have an understanding of the implications of the request they are making.

Students considering pursuing Academic Forgiveness must be aware of the implications of being granted Academic Forgiveness.

**In order to be eligible for Academic Forgiveness students must:**

* Have prior enrollment, without graduation, as an undergraduate student at UNI.
* Be non-enrolled for four consecutive calendar years or longer.
* Have a university account free from holds.

**I understand the following:** (*please initial/mark next to each)*

* Academic Forgiveness will remove previously completed coursework from the GPA of the semester I select.
* Academic Forgiveness is for one academic semester.
* I will only be considered for Academic Forgiveness once during my academic career.
* Academic Forgiveness is irreversible and final.
* I have read the Academic Forgiveness policy.
* I must complete 12 credit hours in my re-enrollment within two calendar years.
* I will not be considered for a tuition refund.

To be considered for Academic Forgiveness, I have taken the following steps (in order):

1. Met with the academic advisor in the Office of Academic Advising responsible for assisting students with Academic Forgiveness.
2. Met with the Office of Financial Aid to understand any impact Academic Forgiveness may have on my aid eligibility.
3. Met with the academic advisor for my major/minor and understand the implications on my coursework.
4. Met with the record analyst in the Office of the Registrar responsible for assisting students with Academic Forgiveness.

**VI. FAQs**

***1. What purpose does an Academic Forgiveness policy have?***

Academic Forgiveness serves as an opportunity for a focused “restart” for a semester of coursework after a time away from the institution of four years or longer.

***2. How does an Academic Forgiveness policy differ from other policies and practices currently at UNI?***

Academic forgiveness fills a void left by the Undergraduate Student Request process and students who are academically suspended from the institution. (See section III. Comparison to other institutional policies.)

The Undergraduate Student Request process requires students to submit documentation of their extenuating circumstances and entails a process of consultation and due diligence in an adjudicated review. Not all students with a poor academic performance went through a documented extenuating circumstance.

Students who are academically suspended from the University of Northern Iowa have the opportunity appeal to come back through the Committee on Admission, Readmission, and Retention. Admittance through this committee does not change any part of the students’ academic record, or provide them with any restart.

***3. How does the proposed UNI Academic Forgiveness policy differ from similar policies at other Regent’s institutions?***

Both the University of Iowa and Iowa State University have forgiveness (or other similarly named) policies. (See section IV. Comparison to peer institution policy). Some of the common elements across policies include identification of a separation period, former student status, future GPA impact, and one time only application. UNI’s proposed policy utilizes an articulated common path of clearly specified qualifications (e.g., single semester of coursework; LAC coursework impacts) and outlines specific considerations unique to UNI practices and policies. The intent is to create a clear and common pathway of consideration and minimize layers of review if meeting eligibility requirements and given clear information of the policy impact on academic degree completion.

***4.  Does an Academic Forgiveness Policy impact the academic integrity of our curriculum and programs at UNI****?*

The proposed academic forgiveness policy would not impact the permanent record of grades for the one semester of courses from an approved semester of forgiveness. Original grades will remain on the official transcript and a notation of academic forgiveness and the effective date noted.  Students will still be required to meet the 120 hours required for graduation and the credit hours earned in a forgiveness semester will not be counted towards this total.

Departments retain curricular decisions regarding courses in the forgiveness semester that satisfied departmental major or minor requirements. A successfully completed sequence course in the major or minor impacted by academic forgiveness (i.e. during the semester forgiveness is requested) must be approved for waiver or substitution by the department for the major/minor degree requirement.  End of program requirements (e.g. student teaching or culminating field experience) may not be eligible for forgiveness, dependent on the policies established by the programs/departments.

Academic forgiveness would not be considered in a semester in which a student has an Academic Ethics violation of level 3 or higher.

***5.  Why does the Academic Forgiveness proposed policy include a separation period of 4 years from the Institution?  What happens if the student attended another institution during the time of separation from UNI?***

A separation period of four years was identified as a period of time supporting maturation and/or focus supporting intention and informed decision-making for the returning student prior to return to UNI for degree completion. Other Regent’s institutions have identified similar separation periods (e.g. Iowa State, five years and University of Iowa College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, four years).

Students are eligible for Academic Forgiveness if they have completed at least one full-time semester as a UNI student and have met the separation period as well as the other eligibility requirements.   Attendance at another institution does not preclude a student from forgiveness consideration.  Students must, however, successfully complete a minimum of twelve hours within two calendar years following the forgiveness designation and complete their degree at UNI in order for Academic Forgiveness designation to remain in effect.

***6.  Why does the Academic Forgiveness proposed policy address a single semester of consideration versus a number of credit hours across semesters?***

One semester of coursework was selected to support a process of determination of forgiveness eligibility that is both intentional and streamlined in order for a student to restart their academic career in a timely manner.  All courses, regardless of grade, are applied in a semester of Academic Forgiveness. The complexity of other potential forgiveness considerations (e.g. packaging multiple courses across multiple semesters) would likely involve additional campus resources in the intake and additional advisement for students. With a more case-by-case versus common qualifications process, an adjudication or review process and resources would likely be needed to determine approval and or impact on the student’s degree completion with other academic university practices and policies, also impacting a decision timeline process.

***7. What implications are there for Academic Advising for students for degree completion for students who apply for Academic Forgiveness?***

Students seeking academic forgiveness are directed to start the process by meeting with an academic advisor from the Office of Academic Advising and then a representative of their major department to understand the implications for their specific academic record as well as to develop a plan towards degree completion.

***8.  Are there any implications for student academic planning for departments and academic programs resulting from the proposed Academic Forgiveness policy?***

Departments or programs will be consulted by returning students who are considering application for Academic Forgiveness to determine the impact of the policy on their degree completion in the major (minor) area or program. Departmental/program decisions/judgment related to courses taken during a semester of intended Academic Forgiveness consideration might involve areas related to: (1) completed courses in the proposed forgiveness semester that are prerequisite classes to subsequent courses in the program (e.g., recency of coursework; original grade of prerequisite class and future coursework requiring the prerequisite class, etc.); (2) experiential-based courses identified in a proposed forgiveness semester (e.g. policies or practices regarding exit or specific field-based courses such as student teaching, culminating or other internships, etc.); (3) consistency and process for departmental/program review or advisement for Academic Forgiveness inquiries.

***9.  How would the application process and decisions for Academic Forgiveness be addressed?***

The Office of the Registrar will undertake responsibility for the intake and recording of completed Academic Forgiveness applications.

The academic forgiveness policy was developed with the intention of being qualification driven rather than through an approval process, subject to one or more individual’s approval or an adjudicated review process. Informed process and impact information of the policy impact on an individual student’s academic planning/program completion is afforded to the student in advance of the application. If the student meets the criteria, as outlined in the policy, the student will be approved for academic forgiveness.

Decisions regarding individual courses will be made in alignment with the policy and other university policies.

***10.  Does UNI respect the forgiveness policies from other institutions upon admission?***

If the Academic Forgiveness (or related policy) is noted on the transcript of the granting institution, UNI will honor it at Admissions. Typically grades are removed from the semesters affected, however, each school has their own policy regarding this.