

# Troubleshooting Course Challenges: Considering Withdrawing from a Course

Welcome to the Troubleshooting Course Challenges series from the Student Success Centre. In this video, we meet Ingrid, who is wondering if she should withdraw from a course where her grade to date has been very low.

## Overview

This video will share what Ingrid's situation is and what steps Ingrid needs to take as she considers a withdrawal. Withdrawing from a course means that Ingrid would not be completing the course and would receive a W on her transcript. If you would like to learn more about withdrawals, you can follow the link to the calendar definitions in the resource section alongside this video. We will also talk about who can advise her in gathering this information. Lastly, we will discuss when it is important for Ingrid to take action and why it is important for Ingrid to explore her options in this circumstance.

## What is the situation?

'I am in my first year, living in residence. As a science major, I am taking five courses. I think that is too much for me. Math is a required course in my program. I am not currently at a passing grade and would like to withdraw from math, but I am worried about the impact of doing this'.

## Who can advise Ingrid?

Ingrid should first go see her faculty advisor to determine whether the course she is considering withdrawing from is a required course for her program and if it is a pre-requisite for future courses. If it is a required course for her program, her advisor can let her know if she needs permission from her faculty to withdraw from or repeat the course. An advisor can help her make a plan for completing the course in an upcoming term. She can also ask what grade she needs to achieve in the course to use the course as a pre-requisite. This is usually a grade of C-.

The last thing Ingrid should check with her faculty advisor about is whether or not a withdrawal from this course will affect her full-time status at the university and what the additional consequences might be if withdrawing from the course moves her to part-time status.

## Which student situations require full-time status?

Let's talk for a minute about full-time status as this is an important consideration when thinking of withdrawing from a course. Full-time status is nine units per term. This is usually equivalent to three courses; however some courses are structured a little differently. For example, some

courses have six units over two terms. International students here on a study permit are often required to maintain full-time status or three courses per semester.

Before moving to part-time status, it is extremely important that international students consult an immigration advisor at International Student Services or ISS to be sure that a study permit, visa, or post-graduation work permit are not jeopardized by their decision.

Student athletes on varsity teams are also required to have full-time status as are students living in residence. Depending on funding sources, students may need to maintain three or more courses to continue to receive scholarships, band funding, or Alberta and federal student aid. In each case, students must check with funders to be sure they are still eligible for funding if they reduce their course load.

Students considering graduate and professional programs should be aware that some programs require a certain course load for several years of the preceding undergraduate degree.

## **How will a withdrawal affect Ingrid?**

Ingrid is a domestic student, not an international student, so she does not need to consult with ISS about immigration concerns. Regardless, since Ingrid is in the Faculty of Science, she only needs to have three courses to maintain full-time status and withdrawing from one of her five courses will leave her still with four. This means that there would be no impacts to Residence or athletics. She does have a scholarship though so this is something she would need more information on. We will talk about the required steps to get that information next.

Lastly, the math course is a required course for Ingrid. So, as we mentioned earlier, making a plan to retake that course and subsequent courses with her faculty advisor is an important step to take before deciding to withdraw. To assess how withdrawing from a course might impact her scholarship, Ingrid should speak with an Enrolment Services Advisor and her scholarship provider to see if withdrawing from a course might impact her scholarship.

## **What other information does Ingrid need?**

Once Ingrid knows all the possible implications of withdrawing, she may want to determine her current grade in the course and decide if it is possible to achieve a passing grade or the required pre-requisite grade if she writes the final exam. If she is unsure about how to calculate this, she can meet with an advisor at the Student Success Centre to go over her grades and weightings.

## **Calculating Ingrid's Course Grade**

To calculate her course grade, Ingrid can first consult her course outline to be sure she is aware of all grading components and weightings. The outline will include a grading scale that will include both numeric and letter grades. Ingrid can record her own grades and determine how much of the course material is left to be assessed. She can then calculate what grade she will need on the final exam to achieve the grade she needs to clear the course as a pre-requisite to clear the course as a pre-requisite.

## **What Else Should Ingrid Know about Withdrawals?**

Students should be sure they know the withdrawal deadline. This will be the last day of classes in each semester for most courses. It may be possible for Ingrid to simply withdraw through her Student Centre. Since there are cases where a student will first need to obtain approval to withdraw from a course, it is wise to attempt the withdrawal a few days earlier in case it is necessary to speak with a faculty advisor about permission to withdraw.

Normally, students are allowed a maximum of 30 units or 10 courses of withdrawals within their degree program. If a student is getting close to this limit, they will need to speak with their faculty advisor. Many students repeat required courses in spring or summer or in the following fall or winter. An option course need not be repeated but can be replaced with another option.

## **A Word about Documentation**

In situations of course withdrawals and other circumstances where an exceptional request is needed, students may be asked for supporting documentation. This refers to documents such as medical documents, a reference from a relevant party or a statutory declaration. Students cannot be required to submit a specific form of documentation. Instead, students are encouraged to submit documentation that supports the circumstances of their request. More details on documentation are provided in the resources section alongside this video.

## **When Should Ingrid Take Action?**

Ingrid should not delay in gathering the information she needs to make a decision about course withdrawal. She can calculate her course grade and the grade needed on the final exam to pass the course and speak with a faculty advisor and her funder or Enrolment Services about her scholarship requirements. She has until the withdrawal deadline to withdraw but should consider doing so a little earlier. We have included links to faculty advising offices, Enrolment Services and ISS in the resource section.

## **Why Should Ingrid Take Action?**

The university has student services and processes in place to support you. Accessing help is an important step to support your ongoing learning and academic success. If an unanticipated challenge arises for you that may affect your learning, we encourage you to reach out to one of the many resources on campus for support. If you are not sure where to start, drop by the Student Success Centre in the Taylor Family Digital Library, book an appointment at [elevate.ucalgary.ca](http://elevate.ucalgary.ca) or email us a success at [success@ucalgary.ca](mailto:success@ucalgary.ca).