

# **THE VIEW IS BETTER FROM ABOVE “C” LEVEL!**

Tips for Academic Success for the Undergraduate Student  
At  
Eastern Michigan University

Produced by

**Academic Advising Center**  
Division of Enrollment Management  
Eastern Michigan University

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# Welcome!

What were **your first thoughts** when you received a letter notifying you of academic probation? Were you angry? Frustrated? And, when you explored your feelings, did you regard the letter and your probation status as a mistake or, possibly, as an invasion into your private life? Whatever your reaction was, the University's actual intention was to offer help and support. **Probation is intended as a form of communication**, alerting you to the need to change current patterns of performance through more productive techniques.

**Every student is different, as is every circumstance.** For some, a single warning is sufficient. For others, academic success will be gained only through time and commitment. **For all students, knowledge of policies, resources and strategies will be helpful.** For these reasons, this guide was developed.

## Why is it so important to act quickly to turn your performance around?

- Future employers likely will not be impressed by a significant pattern of poor grades and/or withdrawals.
- Graduate schools may not consider your application if your records show significant problems with grades, even when courses have been repeated.
- If you do not change your habits quickly, statistics show you will be less likely to improve over time.

**To improve, begin by exploring the true reasons for your academic performance issues.** There may be outside factors that have contributed to your ability to focus on school, but what really is at the heart of the problem. Examine the follow statements. **Which of these apply to you?**

- I really don't feel organized.
- I don't spend enough time preparing for my classes.
- I don't like most of my classes or I find the classes boring.
- I don't go to classes regularly.
- I'm really not sure of my major.
- I really don't know why I'm in school right now.
- I have a documented disability that hinders my efforts to succeed, but I am afraid to tell anyone for fear of labeling.

**These and other statements relate to student motivation.** Ask yourself why you are here in the first place. Do you have valid and defined reasons for being in college? Second, examine how you discipline yourself. Do you make yourself go to class? Do you keep up with your reading assignments? Do you review your notes regularly? Finally, how significant are such outside commitments as work, family, other relationships or hobbies in your daily activity? Is college really a priority?

**This isn't a quiz for which there is only one correct answer.** But your responses may uncover indicators that need to be addressed. Also, there is no one right way to approach your academic commitments. In reality, you will have to find approaches that work for you; each of us is a different style of learner with a diverse set of commitments. **The one important thing is to find a method of studying and an approach to organizing yourself that works!**

**On the following pages you will find some help in this.** These pages contain:

- An explanation of the Probation/Dismissal Policy.
- How to calculate your grade point deficit.
- Academic policies and Regulations important to know and understand.
- University Resources for the student on probation.

- Tips for successful time management and other study habits.
- Frequently-asked Questions (FAQs) for the student on probation.

## **University Policy on Probation/Dismissal/Readmission**

Effective fall 2002 Eastern Michigan University adopted a new probation/dismissal/readmission policy for undergraduates. The policy now reads:

If, at the end of any term of enrollment, an undergraduate's cumulative grade point average (GPA) falls below 2.00, having previously been at or above 2.00 (or if new to the University), that student will be placed on academic probation (PRB1). The student will then have three terms of enrollment (spring/summer count as one) to raise the cumulative GPA to 2.00 or higher. At any time that the student's cumulative GPA reaches 2.00, the student will be restored to good academic standing (GOOD). Unless the cumulative GPA has been raised to 2.00 by the end of the third term of probation (PRB3), the student will be subject to academic dismissal.

Exceptions to this policy are as follows:

1. Any student whose first term of probation is the result of a semester of all E's must earn better than 0.00 (all E's) in the first term of probation or face dismissal immediately.
2. Students who have been readmitted (READ is equivalent to PRB1) after a dismissal will be placed on PRB2 after their first term, if their cumulative GPA remains below 2.00. They will have two terms to raise their cumulative GPA average to 2.00 or they will face a second and final dismissal.
3. All initial dismissal actions are subject to an appeal. Procedures and deadlines for such appeals will be included in notices of academic dismissal, sent to students at the conclusion of a term of enrollment. If an appeal is successful, the student will be reinstated, which means the dismissal does not count. Students who are reinstated after an appeal will be given one more term to raise the GPA to 2.00 or they will be dismissed.

Students dismissed from the University for the first time must remain away from Eastern Michigan University for one calendar year. They can then apply for readmission through the Academic Advising Center. Procedures and deadlines for readmission are available in the Academic Advising Center (301 Pierce Hall); contact the Assistant Director for Academic Actions. Students dismissed more than once (excluding reinstatement) are usually not eligible to return to the University. On occasion, when students have been away from the University for at least 10 years, a request may be submitted, through the Assistant Director for Academic Actions, to the Academic Standards Committee, who will make the final decision in such a case. [Source: 2001-2003 Undergraduate Catalog]

### **Okay, but what does this really mean????!!**

Well, let's say you've just completed your first semester and your overall grade point average (GPA) has fallen below 2.0 for the first time. This means you have **three** terms of enrollment (this one plus two more) to raise your GPA back to 2.0 or higher. A semester GPA is important, but your combined (overall) GPA will determine your status. **Remember that you've got JUST 3 chances.** So, you will want to find the fastest way to raise your GPA.

To help with this, you need to forget about your GPA for the moment (and only for the moment!) and concentrate on something called **grade point deficits**. These determine exactly how close or how far you are from a 2.0 GPA.

## **GRADE POINT DEFICITS:**

To calculate grade point deficits, the University took the normal 4.0 grade point scale and modified it by subtracting 2 points from each grade point. As a result, these are the grade points you earn (multiply by the course's total credits) on the deficit scale:

A = +2 A- = +1.7 B+ = +1.3 B = +1 B- = +0.7 C+ = +0.3 C = 0 C- = -0.3 D+ = -0.7 D = -1 D- = -1.3 E = -2

Using this scale, **you can determine how many grade point deficits you have** (Yes, you have them or you wouldn't be on academic probation). For example, here are five classes with their credits and grades indicated. The total grade points earned using the scale above are in brackets following each.

ENGL 121 (3 cr.) B+ [+3.9]  
PSY 101 (3 cr.) D [-3]  
SPNH 121 (5 cr.) D [-5]  
MUSC 107 (2 cr.) C [0]  
PEGN 210 (2 cr.) C+ [+0.6]

As a result of this 15 credit academic load, this student has earned a total grade point deficit of -3.5. In order to get off academic probation, the student must remove that -3.5 deficit. This can be done through two means. First, if you noticed on this scale, **any grade above C earns plus points**; grades of C+ or higher will therefore remove deficit points. Another, sometimes faster way, is to **repeat** courses; when you repeat a course, the first grade no longer counts in your GPA. If this student repeated SPNH 121, for example, and received at least a C in each course in that semester, the deficit would be removed (since -5 would be removed due to the repeat).

**Does this make sense?** The strategy is quite simple. Remove significant deficit points (E's, D-'s, D's) by repeating the course(s) and work harder to earn grades of C+ or higher (even C's don't help; C- grades hurt).

**Want to calculate your current deficit?** Look at your online Academic Transcript. Toward the bottom, there is a section marked "Transcript Totals". Take the total number from "GPA Hours" and multiply this by 2. Then, subtract that from the number under "Quality Points". That will be your current deficit.

It is far easier to develop a specific plan when you focus on removing deficit points. Setting **GOALS** is very important, but more about that later.

**Questions so far?** If so, write to Charles Fulford at [charles.fulford@emich.edu](mailto:charles.fulford@emich.edu).

## **IMPORTANT RULES AND POLICIES AND RESOURCES:**

We have spoken of the repeat policy above, but you need to know both how it works and what restrictions or conditions exist. First, when you repeat a course, remember that the most recent grade is the only one calculated into the GPA (not the best grade, as students sometimes hope). Both grades still appear on your transcript, but the repeat is noted. Second, there are **some guidelines and restrictions for repeating courses**. These are:

- 1.No course may be taken more than three times, except by permission of the head of the department in which the course is offered.
- 2.No student may repeat more than 10 different courses in the process of completing a baccalaureate degree, except by permission of the Academic Standards Committee. Contact is made through the Academic Advising Center.
- 3.All grades earned by a student will be retained on the student's permanent record and repeats will be indicated.
- 4.Only the grade received the last time the course is taken will be used in compiling graduation credits and in determining the cumulative grade point average.
- 5.A course failed at Eastern Michigan University may not be repeated at another accredited college or university to satisfy Eastern Michigan University requirements without prior written approval of the director of Records and Registration.

In addition to the repeat policy, you should be aware of your withdrawal options. There may be situations in which withdrawing from a course, or from the term, is better than to complete the course at this time with the expected grade results. Remember that there are conditions and deadlines; always keep and refer to your schedule book for both updates on policies/procedures and for specific policy deadlines (see the green section of your schedule book).

### **The withdrawal options are:**

1. **Automatic Withdrawals for Individual Classes**: this option is available for the first two-thirds of the course offering (10 weeks for regular 15-week classes). No conditions are attached, but you must process this using the current course adjustment system. If there are any holds restricting your access to the registration system, you must contact Records/Registration (303 Pierce Hall; 734-487-2300) to withdraw. Be sure to verify that your withdrawal has been processed as soon as you can (it always is best to get a new printout from Registration to prove this). **This is your best option for resolving poor grade performance.**
2. **Administrative Withdrawals for Individual Classes**: this option is very restricted and is intended to handle emergency circumstances only. During the final one-third of the course offering (prior to final examinations), you may withdraw from an individual class only if you can document special extenuating circumstances outside of class that clearly affect your ability to complete the course work as planned. Such circumstances normally are restricted to significant illness; mandatory change of work schedule; recent family crisis. It is very difficult to get a withdrawal during this period and such requests never are approved simply because of poor grades. **Don't rely on this as an option.**
3. **Total Term Withdrawals for a Semester**: this option is for students who must withdraw from the entire term, regardless of the circumstances. There are no conditions and the deadline is the day before final examinations begin (the same deadline as for administrative withdrawals). However, students must process this either by filling out a form in Records/Registration or by mailing in a form found in the schedule book (be sure to document your request was received by sending it through registered mail).

## **IMPORTANT RESOURCES:**

In addition to these policies, you have access to a number of departments as resources in your efforts to improve your academic performance. Consider any and all of these:

- **Holman Learning Center** (G-04 Halle Library/487-2133): they assist you with study skills strategies, other learning needs, and they provide workshops and tutorial assistance. In addition, as a student on academic probation, you can meet with an individual graduate assistant to develop a plan of action.
- **Career Services Center** (200 McKenny Hall/487-0400): they assist you in defining your career and educational goals, as well as providing guidance in preparing for success in employment efforts, both as a student and as a graduate. See them for various personality/interest testing.
- **Counseling Services Center** (3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Snow Health Center/487-1118): they provide you with personal, individual mental/emotional health counseling, as well as workshops and group activities dealing with a variety of issues faced by students in college.
- **Students With Disabilities Office** (240K Student Center/487-2470): they provide you with advice and support, if you have any kind of documented learning needs.
- **Academic Advising Center** (301 Pierce Hall/487-2171): the academic advisors in this office provide advice and assistance to you as a student on probation. The Assistant Director for Academic Actions is available through walk-ins or through e-mail ([charles.fulford@emich.edu](mailto:charles.fulford@emich.edu)) or by telephone (734-487-3148) to assist you as well. The Academic Advising Center staff will help you to evaluate your objectives in getting off probation, clarify various policies (including graduation requirements), explore degree/major options, and help you to develop realistic goals in improving your performance and moving toward completion of your degree.

Many other departments, beyond these mentioned, provide various kinds of assistance. Take full advantage of all your resources. You may contact the Assistant Director for Academic Actions in the Academic Advising Center, if you ever are confused about where or how to begin.

Again, any questions? If so, write to Charles Fulford at [charles.fulford@emich.edu](mailto:charles.fulford@emich.edu).

## **TIPS FOR IMPROVING YOUR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE:**

What can you do to improve your performance and get off academic probation? Several things, really. Most are common sense concepts, but they require **commitment** and **self-discipline**. Here's what you should do:

- **Clearly define your goals.**
- **Get Organized.**
- **Create a system for studying, as well as a proper environment.**
- **Create a reward system.**
- **Develop a resource network.**

## Clearly define your goals.

The first step is to ask: “why am I here?” Evaluate your current program of study, your time spent on school, as well as other commitments. Consider the following:

1. **What do you see yourself doing 5 or 10 years from now?** Does your current major (if you have declared one) fit with that goal? Is it also the right fit for you personally or are there other options? If you are not sure of these questions, explore your interests through the Career Services Center and follow up with a professional advisor in the Academic Advising Center in Pierce Hall (including the Assistant Director for Academic Actions). In selecting a program of study, make sure that you consider all of the program requirements, including pre-requisites, sequencing of courses, etc.
2. **What are your goals for this semester?** Most students would answer by saying that they want to earn a 4.0. Fine, but is that realistic and is it necessary. First, determine your grade point deficit and what you should do to raise your GPA. Also, examine each course carefully to assess your likely level of performance. Consider the types of assignments and examinations. Do these reflect your strengths or could there be problems (are you more effective with essay or objective exams, for example)? Having established a grade goal for the course, review your performance level at the mid-semester and determine what you will need to do either to maintain your current level or to raise it. Also, consider whether your performance level is at a level where a withdrawal may be necessary.
3. **What are your commitments outside of the classroom?** Have you established a realistic course load in relation to outside commitments (remember the formula: two hours of study per credit hour of class)? Do you really need to be involved in other activities? Are you working too many hours or can you afford a reduced number of hours to put more time into school?
4. **Do you want to be successful?** Again, while the answer may be “yes”, it also requires a commitment to produce results such as attending class all the time. Others will not hear information the way you will and your presence will impress your instructor with your sincere desire to improve.

## Get Organized.

There are many aspects to time management. You need to consider each of the following as part of your plan:

1. **Create a semester calendar.** Put it up on the wall somewhere visible to you each day. Day-planners are fine, but they often are out of sight (and, therefore, out of mind). Record important dates, including due dates for exams, papers, reading assignments, etc. Also, list deadlines such as for withdrawals. Use color-coding to distinguish each type of assignment and each important date. Be sure to add positive events, such as winter break or an upcoming social event. This helps to put the semester as a whole in perspective. It also serves to **remind** you of your commitments.
2. **Create a weekly study schedule.** Create a weekly grid of your days (yes, all seven days). Block in times for class meetings and other regularly scheduled activities (ones you really must participate in). Again, color-coding is helpful (classes one color, meals another, etc.). Set up a study schedule block or blocks each day (see below for more on this). Put this on the wall by your calendar to serve as an additional reminder of commitments.
3. **Define your study time.** Often, students do not study enough. It is possible, however, to spend too much time studying at one time. Research has shown that most of us cannot process information as

effectively after a period of time; usually a two-hour study block followed by some change of activity results in the most successful retention of information. Therefore, create both a beginning and ending time for your study time. This will help you to study more efficiently and it will increase your productivity.

4. **Stick with your schedule.** This is where commitment definitely comes in. Make sure that you don't change your study schedule to suit other activities. Your commitment to studying, as well as class attendance, is essential to your success.

### **Create a system for studying, as well as a proper environment.**

1. **Once you have organized when you study, you must also organize how you study.** Each of us is a different learner, with different needs. There are important elements for all of us. You need to determine how best to study. Evaluate what has brought you success in the past.
2. **Block out distractions.** Make sure that you are not distracted by sources of interference such as the television, loud music, or people talking. Background music sometimes can be positive (some research has indicated that classical music, such as Mozart, can actually improve your receptiveness when studying, as it will induce a more relaxed state of mind). For the most part, however, you need to be able to focus entirely on your homework.
3. **Study in a position that reminds you to study.** In other words, don't lie on your bed or spread out on the floor. Sit upright, either at a desk or in a comfortable chair, or at least sit up on your bed. Make sure that you can take notes comfortably in this position. Be comfortable, but not too relaxed. Also, make sure your study environment is properly lit (especially during winter months, a brighter room will create a more positive learning environment).
4. **Take a brief break after studying for a while.** Get up and stretch for a moment or two. Get a drink of water. Do something to give your mind a moment to summarize what you read or reviewed. However, don't allow yourself too much time.
5. **Organize your studying.** Study subjects of least interest first. This gives you something positive to look forward to. Also, do more "passive" work first, such as reading. Save writing, math, or artwork to be done later in your study time. Because these are more active forms of studying, you will find yourself less tired during that time.
6. **In addition to studying alone, explore other possible ways to study.** One of the most beneficial follow-ups to individual reading is to share your information with others. Conversation and interaction often serve to reinforce your understanding and can help you to identify areas still not clear. For many of us, social interaction, such as through study groups, promotes more effective understanding because you move beyond your textbook and notes. Having others quiz you will help you to see how well you've studied.

## **Create a reward system.**

1. **Find enjoyable things to do right after a study session.** This is important as a means of motivating yourself to study; you'll have something to look forward to. It could be a favorite program on television, a visit with friends, quiet reading time, or exercise. Use whatever works as a reward.
2. **Do special activities on the weekend.** Break away for a little while and do something as a treat. Again, this delivers a message to your mind that you have worked hard and you deserve a break.
3. **Target a day once a month as a "study-free" day.** Plan ahead (put it on your calendar) and give yourself a "pat-on-the-back" with a day where you don't open the books (make sure, of course, that you've allowed for this in your normal study plan).
4. **Make a list of special rewards to refer to when you feel stressed or under-motivated.** You then can refer to your list any time you want.

## **Develop a resource network.**

1. **All of us need help from time to time- remember that.** In addition to the resources listed in this packet, develop your own network of contacts. These can be faculty/staff mentors, fellow students, former students, fellow workers or employers. Many people have had college experiences that will enable them to offer you advice or assistance. It is important to consider who they are and how well they can help you, given a particular need or concern.
2. **Make timely contacts with your instructors.** Early each term, visit with your instructors during their office hours (or contact them immediately after class to arrange an alternative time). Introduce yourself and express your desire to do well. Ask them if they have any tips or advice. Most instructors want to help and encourage students and will provide significant support to you. An additional advantage to early contact is that, if you later need to return to discuss something more specific, such as a grade on an exam, they will remember that you met with them early.
3. **Establish links to Mentors.** Contact faculty advisors for your major/minor and develop a routine of interacting with them each term. Mentors who have regular interaction with students often will write letters of recommendation or reference and can provide insights into their profession. Often, if you just need someone to listen, these mentors can be very helpful.
4. **Attend campus activities.** Many campus events will introduce you to people who have had success in various enterprises and you may profit from hearing their insights and experiences. Their comments may inspire you in some special way. You also will encounter fellow students with similar interests and can use such opportunities to develop a network among your peers.

## Just the FAQs, please.

Many probation students have questions in common. Below are some “frequently asked questions” and responses.

- 1. Who do I see for advising?** Students with a declared major should meet regularly with a faculty advisor for each area of major and minor subjects. Students who have not selected a major should meet with an advisor in the Academic Advising Center. In addition to these options, any student on academic probation may meet with advisors in the Academic Advising Center, as well as the Assistant Director for Academic Actions.
- 2. Do I have to see an advisor?** All freshmen must visit the Freshman Advising Review (FAR) website through the Academic Advising Center’s website ([www.emich.edu/aac](http://www.emich.edu/aac)). In addition, some programs of study require regular contact; clarify that with your department. Otherwise, EMU does not require advising after your first semester. However, one risk of “self-advising” is that you may make an error. Since it was not a University error, it may not be resolved in your favor. .
- 3. Do I need an advisor’s permission to withdraw from a course?** No. Only first semester freshmen are required to meet with the Academic Advising Center before withdrawing during the Automatic Withdrawal Period.
- 4. What effect does withdrawing from all my classes have on my financial aid?** Some students who withdraw from all classes before the end of the semester, and who have received federal or state aid, may be required to repay aid which had been paid previously toward tuition, fees, room-and-board, and personal costs. Financial aid is used for expenses incurred while attending school. Any portion allocated to the weeks the student did not attend classes prior to the 60% enrollment period must be repaid. Students are notified when funds are returned to their lender and/or when they are required to repay aid. Consult the Office of Financial Aid (734-487-0455) before dropping a class or withdrawing from all classes to determine whether aid must be repaid, reduced, or cancelled.
- 5. What do I do if I have been living on campus and find it necessary to move out?** Should you plan on leaving EMU and currently live in the residence halls, you will need to contact your Area Complex Director to fill out a contract release form and check out properly.
- 6. Why do you keep sending me letters?** Notices of Academic Probation are an important and necessary means of communication. We want to provide you a full understanding of your academic status and what is expected of you. Partly, this is expected as part of our commitment to our students. However, it is primarily because we would like to see you succeed.
- 7. Who cares if I succeed or fail?** That’s the easiest question to answer: we all do. Why? First, because student success reflects well on EMU (and failure does not), as well as on you. Second, because this is why we exist as an institution: to provide students an opportunity to pursue their educational goals. Finally, because employees of EMU truly want students to have a rewarding and successful experience.

## COMMENTS?

Please feel free to send your comments and suggestions regarding the contents of this handout to the Assistant Director for Academic Actions.

Send them to Charles Fulford at [charles.fulford@emich.edu](mailto:charles.fulford@emich.edu).