



# California Community Colleges

## MEMORANDUM

January 28, 2019

ES 19-01 | Via Email

TO: Chief Executive Officers  
Chief Instructional Officers  
Chief Student Services Officers  
Academic Senate Presidents  
Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

FROM: Alice Perez  
Vice Chancellor, Educational Services  
Rhonda Mohr  
Vice Chancellor, Educational Services

RE: Guidelines for Excused Withdrawal

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In January 2018, the Board of Governors passed Title 5, section 55024 regulation changes to add the Excused Withdrawal (EW) symbol. The purpose of the EW non-evaluative symbol is to permit a student to withdraw from a course for reasons beyond their control. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide districts/colleges background and guidelines for the EW non-evaluative symbol.

### BACKGROUND

A community college student who withdraws from an academic course after the specified drop period consistent with district policy receives a notation of “W” on their academic record/transcript. In some instances, students must withdraw from a course under circumstances beyond their control, yet their transcripts would show a “W” for each withdrawal. The “W” notation is then used to calculate progress probation and dismissal; however, it is not included in the grade point average calculation. The Chancellor’s Office was asked to develop regulations allowing a non-evaluative symbol to reflect the fact that some students withdraw from a course compelled by circumstances beyond his or her control. The non-evaluative symbol permits the district/college to avoid penalizing students by excluding them from progress probation and dismissal calculations. The intent of the law is to allow students the ability to drop courses without penalty due to extenuating circumstances. For this reason, the Excused Withdrawal symbol “EW” has been adopted.

### ACCEPTABLE REASONS FOR AN EXCUSED WITHDRAW

In accordance with Title 5, section 55024(e), the governing board of a district shall adopt an EW procedure based upon verifiable documentation supporting the request.

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Chancellor’s Office, Educational Services

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An EW is acceptable when a student withdraws from a course(s) due to reasons beyond their control, which include but are not limited to, the following:

- Job transfer outside the geographical region;
- Illness in the family where the student is the primary caregiver;
- An incarcerated student in a California State Prison or County Jail is released from custody or involuntarily transferred before the end of the term (In the case of an incarcerated student, an excused withdrawal cannot be applied if the failure to complete the course(s) was the result of a student's behavioral violation or if the student requested and was granted a mid-semester transfer);
- The student is the subject of an immigration action;
- Death of an immediate family member;
- Chronic or acute illness;
- Verifiable accidents; or
- Natural disasters directly affecting the student.

Verifiable documentation can include, but is not limited to a note from a doctor stating the student is not currently able to complete the work due to illness, employment verification of a new job, a booking report, police report of an accident, or any other documentation that proves the student's completion of a course is impractical. The Chancellor's Office defines impractical as impossible due to reasons beyond the student's control. The determination shall be made by the local college's admissions and records office.

A student may request to use an EW for only one course or all courses in a term depending on the reason for the request. It is possible a student, based on an illness for example, is not able to participate in an in-person course but is able to continue with online courses. Colleges should use individual case facts to determine the continuity of some courses and not others.

### **REIMBURSEMENT FOR EW**

A student with an approved EW grade may file a petition with the district requesting a refund of the enrollment fee. Therefore, the governing board of a district shall adopt a procedure for refunding the entire fee for the petition of an approved EW grade, unless the student is awarded academic credit or they received the California College Promise Grant or a waiver of fees from AB 19 funds. Units for courses assigned an EW grade may be included in FTES calculations and reporting.

### **ADDITIONAL STIPULATIONS**

In accordance to Title 5, section 55024 (e), an EW symbol may be requested by the student at any time during the semester and no later than the date when the district/college policy allows a grade change. Excused Withdraw shall not be counted in progress probation or dismissal calculations nor shall it be counted towards the

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permitted number of withdrawals or counted as an enrollment attempt. The financial aid of a student may be affected depending on individual circumstance. A student should consult with the financial aid staff regarding any impact. These guidelines are to be effective immediately. All districts shall communicate the option of an EW to all students in the same method other withdraw options are communicated. This can be via grading policy publications, website postings, course catalog, and/or petition forms.

cc: Chancellor's Office Raul Arambula, Dean of Intersegmental Support, Chancellor's Office Mia Keeley, Dean of Educational Services and Support, Virginia Guleff, Vice President of Instruction at Butte College and Co-chair of 5C, Ginni May, Treasure of ASCCC and Co-chair of 5C, Niruba Srinivasan, College Registrar at College of San Mateo and President of CACCRAO.