



## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Executive Committee of Faculty Council (November 19, 2024)  
Faculty Council (December 18, 2024)

**From:** Professor Vladimiro Papangelakis  
Chair, Undergraduate Assessment Committee

**Date:** November 8, 2024

**Re:** **Formalization of “Magic File” to Conditional Decision Regulation**

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### REPORT CLASSIFICATION

This is a routine or minor policy matter that will be considered by the Executive Committee for approving and forwarding to Faculty Council to receive for information.

### BACKGROUND

“Magic file” refers to a decision for Special Considerations petitions when the request is a term withdrawal from a failed term. This decision is made when the committee is sympathetic to the circumstances outlined by the petition but is not fully convinced by:

1. the reasoning for sustained student underperformance; and/or
2. the evidence (documentation) to support the petition.

By this decision, the student is not granted the term withdrawal immediately and the official decision is “deny.” However, the case is stored in a hypothetical “magic file,” and the student is granted probation relief (if needed) to retake the term. The retroactive withdrawal is granted after a successful retake and completion of the affected term triggered by another student petition to re-activate the “magic file.”

Concerns have been raised about this approach, by both students and Undergraduate Assessment Committee (UAC) members:

1. “Magic file” relies on the student re-petitioning after some time has passed and puts the onus on the student to judge their fitness for reevaluation. Thus, students that don't do so, are disadvantaged.
2. “Magic file” administration increases the adjudication time, it requires the UAC to reconsider the case, often when committee members who heard the original petition are no longer UAC members.

This process is not documented and is not transparent. The conditions for approving the repetition are not specified and can potentially lead to equity issues. The process is not within the UAC operating manual. Without a formal written decision, this process relies on the Academic Advisors to communicate the outcome and process to the student

## **PROPOSED**

Going forward, the UAC will formalize the “Magic File” outcome:

- It will become an official decision, renamed a “conditional decision” and added as an outcome in the petition system;
- The conditions for granting the withdrawal will be articulated to the student in their petition decision;
- This outcome will remove the requirement for re-petition. If the student meets the conditions, the withdrawal will be processed by the Registrar’s Office without another petition; and
- The process and the conditions for demonstrating mastery will be outlined in the UAC operating manual. The committee interprets 60% term average as the minimum average to demonstrate mastery, to be consistent with faculty promotion regulations.

Conditions (default options):

1. Achieves a minimum average of 60% in each of 2 consecutive terms with full course loads and with no failed courses;
2. Achieves a minimum average of 60% in a single repeated term with a full course load and with no failed courses;
3. Other.

Default wording for “Conditional Decision”:

“The Committee acknowledges the situation described in your petition. At this time, no modification will be made to your academic record. If, however, you fulfil the requirements outlined in the decision details, this petition to withdraw will be granted. If necessary, the Committee will also grant temporary probation relief for you to continue to be enrolled. Details are outlined in the comments section.”

## **CONSULTATION PROCESS**

These changes have been reviewed and approved by the UAC, which is comprised of representatives from each undergraduate program, undergraduate students, the Vice-Dean, Undergraduate, the Vice-Dean, First Year, and the Registrar’s Office.

## **RECOMMENDATION FOR COUNCIL**

For information.