

GUIDELINES ON ACADEMIC CLEMENCY

Act 1000 of 1991 directs the State Board of Higher Education to develop guidelines for the establishment of institutional policies on academic clemency. The law describes academic clemency as a second chance for those students who performed poorly early in their academic careers and who wish to return to college after having gained an appreciation of the benefits of higher education. Under the provisions of a clemency policy, students "may petition . . . to have previously earned grades and credits removed from the calculations of their cumulative grade point averages."

Institutional policies on academic clemency should contain specific provisions based on the following general guidelines:

1. Academic clemency may be granted to returning students who have not been enrolled in any institution of higher education for a specified period of time. This minimum period should be set between two years and ten, depending upon the manner in which the policy on clemency relates to other institutional policies regarding calculation of grade point averages.
2. Institutional policy may allow returning students to petition for clemency upon application for admission, upon enrollment, or following a validation period during which time students must demonstrate their resolve to succeed academically.
3. While grade point averages would not reflect the credits for which students are granted clemency and while those forgiven credits would not count toward graduation, transcripts must contain students' comprehensive academic records.
4. Clemency should cover all credits earned during the terms for which it is granted. A policy on grade renewal, which Act 1000 does not address, might more effectively allow those students whose records reflect both failing and passing efforts to amend past academic shortcomings.
5. In the interest of consistent application of clemency policy across the college or university, students should be required to submit petitions for academic clemency to the chief academic officer of the institution.
6. No institution should be compelled to honor clemency granted by another institution; nevertheless, transfer students who received clemency at another institution should be allowed to petition for clemency under the provisions established by the receiving institution.
7. Under Act 1000, clemency policies apply to undergraduate academic records only.

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