

# UASH

## **Undergraduate Academic Standards and Honors Committee**

### **Handbook for Students**

This Handbook has been prepared by the UASH committee to provide students with information about how to prepare petitions for submission to UASH and to inform them of some important changes to UASH procedures. Please take a moment to read this information, and keep it in a safe place for future consultation. If you need another copy of this Handbook, it is available from the Registrar's Office and the Dean's Office, or you can find it on the Caltech Web at: <http://www.registrar.caltech.edu/uash/handbook.htm>

**As of January 1, 2001, students who submit petitions to UASH will be expected to have read and complied with the Guidelines for Preparing and Submitting UASH Petitions in §§3, 4 and 6 below.**

**Students should take special note of the changes to UASH procedures for handling Reinstatement petitions (§ 4 below )**

### **§ 1. What is UASH?**

UASH is the Undergraduate Academic Standards and Honors committee, composed of around 8 professors elected by the Caltech faculty, 6 students (4 voting, 2 alternate) selected by the IHC, the Registrar, and the Undergraduate Deans.

As its name suggests, its task is twofold. First, it is responsible for awarding a variety of academic honors (e.g., graduation with Honors, and the Green, Frohlich and Sigma Xi prizes). Secondly, it is responsible for ensuring that a consistent set of standards and rules is applied in academic matters involving undergraduates. UASH does not deal with financial matters (such as requests for financial aid or assistance), nor with matters concerning students' behavior or conduct (except insofar as that conduct affects their academic performance).

## **§ 2. Getting UASHed -- how it can happen**

Students can come to the attention of UASH in any of four ways.

1. First, they might be nominated for a prize or for graduation with Honors. UASH then considers whether they should be awarded the prize or honor based on the nominating letter(s) and supporting material supplied by the student. This Handbook does not deal with this aspect of UASH's business.
2. Secondly, they might submit a petition to the UASH committee, asking it to allow a change in some aspect of their academic status. These petitions are of four types (see §3 below):
  - (A) Late Add/ Drop Petitions. These are petitions asking the Committee to make a change on your transcript so that it reflects the courses you actually took. Late Add petitions ask that a course be added to your transcript; Late Drop petitions ask that a course be removed.
  - (B) Grade Change Petitions. These are petitions asking UASH to correct a grade that has been erroneously recorded on your transcript.
  - (C) Further Work Petitions. These are petitions asking the Committee to allow you to stay on at Caltech beyond the normal twelve terms so as to finish the courses you need for graduation.
  - (D) Underload Petitions. These are petitions asking that you be allowed to take fewer than the usual minimum courseload of 36 units in the coming term.  
→ NOTE: The Deans can grant a first-time underload of not fewer than 27 units. However, students must petition UASH to ask for further underloads, or if they wish to take fewer than 27 units.
3. Third, students might become academically ineligible, that is, unable to register for classes, usually because of poor academic performance (e.g., too many E's or F's, too few units completed, etc.). In order to be reinstated at Caltech and continue their academic work, students must submit a Reinstatement petition to the Committee, which will then decide whether the student is ready to resume academic work (see §4 below).  
→ NOTE: The Deans can reinstate a student after his/her first ineligibility. However, students who become ineligible more than once must petition UASH for further reinstatements.
4. Fourth, students might wish to Appeal the decision made by UASH concerning an earlier Reinstatement petition. UASH hears appeals on the Friday of the first week of term (see §6 below).

- ❖ This Handbook is designed to help students to prepare UASH petitions and appeals, to make clear UASH procedures, and to explain the basis for UASH's decisions.
- ❖ Instructions for preparing Late Add/Drop, Grade Change, Further Work and Underload petitions are given in §3 below.
- ❖ Instructions for preparing Reinstatement petitions are given in §4.
- ❖ §6 discusses the UASH Appeals process.

### **§ 3. Guidelines for Preparing and Submitting Late Add/Drop, Grade Change, Further Work and Underload Petitions to UASH**

- All petitions must be submitted on the appropriate form, obtainable from the Registrar's of Dean's Office. Forms may also be downloaded from the Caltech Web at <http://www.registrar.caltech.edu/uash/>
- Be sure to fill out the relevant form completely, and attach supporting documentation as required.
- Improperly prepared petitions will be denied.
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#### **\* A Note about Confidentiality**

**All the information you submit to UASH in your petitions is confidential, and will not be shared with anyone other than members of the UASH committee. All UASH documents pertaining to a particular student are destroyed when the student graduates or withdraws permanently from Caltech.**

#### **3-A Late Add/Drop petitions**

- ❖ Usually, the reason that you would need to submit a Late Add or Late Drop petition is that you were unable to turn in your signed Add/Drop card by add day or drop day. However, sometimes you might need to submit a Late Add/Drop petition because of an error made by a faculty member or in the Registrar's office.

- ❖ UASH grants Late Add/Drop petitions ONLY when there has been a genuine mistake made in the recording of your classes. It does not grant these petitions when it appears that a student is "grade shopping" -- i.e., holding out on adding/dropping a course until he/she knows what grade is likely to be forthcoming.
- ❖ Late Add/Drop Petitions must be submitted on the appropriate form, available from the Deans' or Registrar's office, or downloadable from the Caltech web at: <http://www.registrar.caltech.edu/uash/>
- ❖ UASH considers Late Add/Drop Petitions at its regular meetings. In order to be considered in a given term, your petition and all supporting materials, together with ONE COPY of your petition and all supporting materials, must be submitted to the Registrar's office by 1 p.m. on the day before the UASH meeting. Late submissions will not be accepted.

### **How to Complete your Late Add/Drop Petition Form**

**\*\*Be sure to sign and date your petition!\*\***

Question 1 asks you to list the courses you wish to add or drop.

Question 2 asks you to explain *in detail* the reason for your request. E.g., if the reason is that you didn't turn in you Add/Drop card by the appropriate date, you should fully explain *why* you were unable to do this. In the case of a Late Drop based on your inability to continue working in the class, you should also explain why you were unable to continue your work in the course you wish to drop.

Question 3 reminds you to be sure to have included the following with your petition:

- A completed Advisor Comment Form (available from the Dean's or Registrar's office, or downloadable from the Caltech web at <http://www.registrar.caltech.edu/uash/>)
- A completed Add/Drop card that has been signed by the instructors of the course(s) you wish to add or drop and by your advisor, and stamped and dated by the Registrar's office.
- A note signed by the Instructor of the class you wish to add or drop, stating either that you attended the class and have completed the work for the class (for a Late Add) or that you didn't take the class or ceased doing the work for it early in the term (for a Late Drop).

- Other relevant information. Any further information you can give that supports your request is helpful to UASH in assessing your request for a Late Add or Drop. E.g., if you were unable to turn in a Drop card by drop day because the instructor was unavailable to sign it, you should provide a note from the Instructor confirming that he/she was unavailable at that time. Or, if you were unable to continue working in the class because of medical problems, you might provide a note from the health center, counseling center or your doctor confirming that you were sick and unable to do your work.

### **3-B Grade Change Petitions**

- ❖ Grade Change petitions are granted **ONLY** when either the Registrar or the Instructor of the class has made an error in recording your grade.
- ❖ Grade Change Petitions must be submitted on the appropriate form, available from the Deans' or Registrar's office, or downloadable from the Caltech web at: <http://www.registrar.caltech.edu/uash/>.
- ❖ UASH considers Grade Change Petitions at its regular meetings. In order to be considered in a given term, your petition and all supporting materials, together with ONE COPY of your petition and all supporting materials, must be submitted to the Registrar's office by 1 p.m. on the day before the UASH meeting. Late submissions will not be accepted.

### **How to Complete your Grade Change Petition Form**

**\*\*Be sure to sign and date your petition!\*\***

Question 1 asks you to list the courses for which you are requesting a grade change.

Question 2 asks you to explain in detail why you think your grade should be changed. Give as much information about the circumstances in which the error was made as you can.

Question 3 asks you to be sure that you have included with your petition

- A signed note from the Instructor of the course for which you are requesting a grade change, which gives the correct grade and *states explicitly that either the Instructor or the Registrar has made a*

*mistake in calculating or recording your grade.*

→ NOTE: If the instructor merely says that the grade should be changed, without stating explicitly that an error has been made either by him/her or the Registrar, your request will not be granted.

### **3-C Further Work Petitions**

- ❖ You will need to petition for further work if you have already completed 12 terms at Caltech, but need to stay on for another term (or terms) in order to complete your degree.
- ❖ Even if you will need more than one extra term to complete your requirements, *petitions are only granted for the current term*, and you will need to re-petition UASH for each additional term.
- ❖ UASH grants Further Work Petitions **ONLY** to enable students to graduate in the shortest time possible. You will not be allowed further terms to complete a double major, nor to take additional courses that do not fulfill outstanding requirements.
- ❖ UASH considers Further Work Petitions at its regular meetings. In order to be considered in a given term, your petition and all supporting materials, together with ONE COPY of your petition and all supporting materials, must be submitted to the Registrar's office by 1 p.m. on the day before the UASH meeting. Late submissions will not be accepted.

### **How to Complete Further Work Petition Form**

**\*\*Be sure to sign and date your petition!\*\***

Question 1 asks you to list all courses you intend to take *for all the additional terms you think you will need*. (You should be sure that the course plan indicates how you plan to satisfy your remaining requirements!)

- NOTE (1): Even though you must submit a course plan for *all* the additional terms you think you will need, UASH can only grant a further work petition *for the coming term*. Therefore, you should bear in mind that you will need to submit a new petition *for each additional term*.
- NOTE (2): UASH does not grant Further Work petitions when it appears that students are deliberately choosing their courses so as to take longer to complete their degrees. E.g., if you *could* take a required course this term, but your Course Plan indicates that you don't intend to take it until *next* term (thus guaranteeing that you will need to submit another Further Work petition for

next term), UASH will grant you only one term of further work and demand that you take the required course in the present term. Thus, if you think that there is good reason for taking the required course next term rather than this term, you should make it clear in Question 2.

Question 2 asks you to explain why you need extra time to complete your degree.

Question 3 asks you to be sure that you have included with your petition

- A signed Advisor Comment form
- An Audit sheet from the Registrar

### **3-D Underload Petitions**

- ❖ Caltech does not allow students to study part-time. Therefore, UASH only allows underloads in certain cases, such as when a graduating senior needs to take fewer than the minimum number of units in order to complete his/her degree requirements; or when a student has medical or personal problems that would prevent him/her from successfully completing a full term's work; or when it is the view of the Committee that an underload would best enable a student to succeed in his/her coursework .
- ❖ If this is the first time you are requesting an underload, and if you are planning to take 27 or more units in the coming term, you should see the Deans rather than petitioning UASH. Subsequent requests for underloads, and requests for underloads of fewer than 27 units must be made to the UASH committee.
- ❖ UASH does NOT grant underloads to enable students to work part-time while continuing to pursue their studies. In these cases, the Committee recommends that students either consult with the Financial Aid office, or take a sabbatical in order to work and save whatever money they need in order to resume their studies full-time.
- ❖ UASH considers Underload Petitions at its regular meetings. In order to be considered in a given term, your petition and all supporting materials, together with ONE COPY of your petition and all supporting materials, must be submitted to the Registrar's office by 1 p.m. on the day before UASH meets. Late submissions will not be accepted.

### **How to Complete your Underload Petition Form**

**\*\*Be sure to sign and date your petition!\*\***

Question 1 asks you to list the courses you intend to take in the coming term, and the two terms following. (Graduating seniors need only list the courses they intend to take in their remaining terms at Caltech. They should be sure that their course plan indicates how they intend to satisfy outstanding graduation requirements.)

Question 2 asks you to explain why you need an underload for this term. Be as specific as you can as to the reasons for your request.

Question 3 asks you to be sure that you have included the following with your petition:

- A signed Advisor comment form in which your advisor indicates that he/she agrees that an underload is warranted in your case
- An Audit sheet from the Registrar showing what progress you have made towards your degree.
- Supporting documents, if relevant. Any further evidence that you can provide regarding the reasons for your request for an underload is very helpful to the Committee in assessing your petition. E.g., if your request is based on the fact that you have medical or personal problems that will interfere with your ability to take a full course load, you should try to provide a note from the health center, counseling center, your doctor, a parent/guardian, or anyone else who understands your situation, explaining why, in their opinion, an underload is needed.

#### **§ 4. Reinstatement Petitions**

- ❖ A student who is academically ineligible must be formally reinstated, either by the Deans or by UASH, in order to resume classes. See the 'Scholastic Requirements' subsection of the 'Undergraduate Information' section of the Caltech Catalog for the rules on maintaining eligibility.
- ❖ Reinstatement following a student's first ineligibility is dealt with by the Deans. Therefore, if this is your first ineligibility, you should make an appointment to see one of the Deans as soon as possible.
- ❖ However, if a student becomes ineligible again, he/she must petition UASH for further reinstatement(s).
- ❖ UASH's sole criterion in assessing a student's Reinstatement petition is *whether the student is capable of successfully completing his/her classes in the coming term.*
  - Note: One of the most common reasons why students fall behind in their coursework is that they are spending their time completing E's or I's from previous terms. Therefore, UASH generally does not grant readmission to

students with outstanding E's or I's. If there is some reason why you could not complete an outstanding E or I before petitioning UASH, you should make this clear in your petition (Question 10).

- ❖ UASH considers Reinstatement Petitions on the second day of each term. In order to be considered in a given term, your petition and all supporting materials, together with ONE COPY of your petition and all supporting materials, must be submitted to the Registrar's office by 1 p.m. on the first day of term. Late submissions will not be accepted.
- ❖ NOTE: petitioning students should attend classes on the first and second days of the term (and during the rest of the first week, in case of an Appeal) so as not to be disadvantaged should they be reinstated. Students whose Reinstatement and/or Appeal Petitions are denied will not be charged for attending classes pending hearing of their case.

### **How to Complete your Reinstatement Petition Form**

**\*\*Be sure to sign and date your petition!\*\***

- REMEMBER: *Your answers to the questions on the Reinstatement Petition form are your only chance to plead your case to the Committee. You should make them as comprehensive and persuasive as you can. At the same time, you should try to make your answers as concise as is compatible with these goals.*

Question 1 asks you to state the reason(s) you are ineligible. If you are in doubt as to the reasons for your ineligibility, you should consult the Registrar's Office.

Question 2 asks you to list the factors that contributed to your ineligibility – i.e., it asks you to tell the committee what, in your opinion, went wrong with your last term at Caltech. (Note: be brief here – you will have a chance to say more in Question 13.)

Question 3 asks you to list any documents you have that might support your statements in Question 2. E.g., if the reason you are ineligible is that you were sick and unable to finish your work in a class, you might provide a note from the Health Center confirming that you were sick during the relevant period.

Question 4 applies to people who are seeking readmission after a period of absence (more than one quarter) from Caltech, and asks them to explain the main ways that they occupied their time while they were away.

Question 5 asks you to attach any documents that support your statements in Question 4. Relevant here could be:

- Letters from employers, stating position held, length of time position held, and commenting on your performance of your work.

- Transcripts from other universities where you have taken courses.
- Accounts of private study undertaken.
- Letters from family members or friends commenting on how you spent your time while absent from Caltech.

Question 6 asks for evidence of compliance with previous UASH suggestions. If you have been denied reinstatement by UASH before, the Committee may have offered you advice on what to do in order to prepare yourself for resuming work at Caltech. For example, it may have suggested that you take courses elsewhere to demonstrate that you are able to cope with a full academic workload. Or, it may have suggested that you work on completing outstanding coursework (E's or Is). Or, it may have suggested that you simply take time off and think about whether you really want to be at Caltech. If this is your situation, you should either provide evidence that you have made a good faith attempt to do the things that UASH advised you to do, or else be sure to explain why you did not follow the Committee's advice.

Question 7 asks you to explain what you think has changed about you, your situation, your work habits, your motivation and/or your goals, such that you are now ready to come back and succeed at Caltech.

Question 8 asks you to list any concrete strategies, actions or changes that you intend to implement so as to succeed in your intention to do well in the coming term.

Question 9 asks you to list any attached documents that would support your statements in questions 6, 7, and 8. You should provide as much evidence as you can in support of your claim that you are now ready to come back to Caltech and resume work. UASH will not grant petitions based on unsubstantiated promises to "do better." Many different kinds of evidence could be relevant here. For example, you could include:

- letters from advisors, professors, or TAs explaining what went wrong in the past and why they think the Committee should approve your petition to return to Caltech now.
- letters from counselors, therapists, doctors, members of the clergy, parents, roommates or friends in support of your contention that you are now ready to resume work.
- letters from employers explaining what work you did while away from Caltech and commenting on how well you performed it.
- transcripts from other colleges or universities showing what courses you took and what grades you got for them (or, if it's too early to get a transcript, you should provide signed letters from your professors giving this information).

- any other information about your state of mind, motivation or goals that you think would be helpful to UASH in determining whether you are ready to come back and succeed in your coursework.

Question 10 applies to people who have outstanding E's or I's on their transcripts and asks for evidence that outstanding work has been completed. Students often fall behind in their classes because they are busy completing outstanding work (E's or I's) from previous terms. Because UASH is concerned solely to determine the likelihood that the petitioning student will succeed in the coming term, it is highly unlikely to readmit students who still have work outstanding. Therefore, if you are academically ineligible, you should finish all outstanding work before petitioning UASH for reinstatement. If any Is or Es still appear on your transcript, you should provide notes from Instructors or TAs stating that any outstanding work for earlier courses has been completed and specifying what grade you will receive. If there is some compelling reason why you could not finish outstanding E's or I's before submitting your petition, you should make this clear in your answer to Question 10.

Question 11 asks for a course plan for the next three terms. Be sure that your plan makes clear how you intend to fulfill outstanding requirements and make progress towards your degree.

- HINT: It is probably best not to attempt too much at first, but rather to give yourself time to readjust to Caltech life. It is better to plan on getting good grades in 36 units than to attempt to make up for lost time by taking more. (Students who are ineligible because of completing too few units in the preceding 3 terms should not feel that they have to take a huge courseload in order to acquire units quickly. Students who have done well in fewer classes are more likely than students who have done badly in more classes to be reinstated in case of future ineligibilities.)

Question 12 asks you whether your advisor supports your petition and reminds you to attach an advisor comment form to your petition.

Question 13 is an invitation to you to provide the Committee with any additional information, not already contained in your answers to Questions 1-12, that you think is relevant to your situation.

Question 14 asks you to be sure to include the following with your petition:

- Audit Sheet from the Registrar's office showing what courses you still need to take to complete your degree. (Note: Your course outline in Question 11 should make clear how you are intending to make progress towards completing your remaining requirements.)
- A signed UASH Advisor's Comment form in which your Advisor states

that he/she has spoken to you about your situation and agrees that you are ready to resume work at Caltech.

- All relevant supporting documents

## **§ 5 How UASH will inform you of its Decision.**

- ❖ The Registrar's Office will inform students by email of UASH's decision regarding their petitions no more than one day after the UASH meeting. Students will be told the reasons for a denial and (if appropriate) given advice on what they might do to improve the chance that their petition will be granted, should they decide to petition again or make an Appeal (see §6 below).
- ❖ Additionally, in the case of students whose Reinstatement Petitions are denied, a follow-up letter will be sent to their permanent address within two weeks of the Committee's decision.
- ❖ *If you prefer that UASH use some other method for informing you of its decision, be sure to fill in the appropriate section on the first page of your Petition form.*

## **§ 6 Appeals**

### **A. Late Add/Drop, Grade Change, Further Work and Underload Petitions**

- ❖ No appeal from UASH's decision on these petitions is allowed. However, students may always gather additional relevant evidence and resubmit their petition at a future time.

### **B. Reinstatement Petitions**

- ❖ Students whose Reinstatement Petition has been denied may appeal the Committee's decision. Appeals will be considered on the Monday of the second week of term.
- ❖ A UASH Appeals Form is available from the Registrar's or Dean's Office, or at <http://www.registrar.caltech.edu/uash/>. On it, students should clearly state the reason for their appeal and include any further information and/or supporting documents that they think the Committee should know about when it considers their appeal.
- ❖ Appeals that provide no additional relevant information will be denied.
- ❖ In the case of appeals, UASH allows students to appear personally before the Committee in order to answer the Committee's questions and further argue their case for reinstatement. If you are appealing and wish to appear personally before

the Committee, you should check the appropriate box on the UASH Appeals form, and make yourself available for an interview from 9 a.m. in the lobby of the Center for Student Services. You should wait there until the Committee asks to see you.

- ❖ UASH hears appeals on the Monday of the second week of the term. Your appeal, together with all supporting materials and ONE COPY of your appeal and all other materials, must be turned in to the Registrar's Office by 1 p.m. on the first Friday of the term. Appeals that are turned in late will not be heard until the following term.
- ❖ The Committee's decision on appeals is final, though students may always submit new petitions for Reinstatement in future terms.