

Thinking About Dropping Out?

Students withdraw from college or university for a variety of reasons, including financial problems, lack of interest or motivation, inadequate study skills, conflicting commitments to work or family, and difficulty adjusting to new demands and expectations. If you are thinking about withdrawing from your courses, be sure that you have considered all of your options before you make up your mind. The following suggestions may give you some alternatives to think about, and help you to make an informed decision.

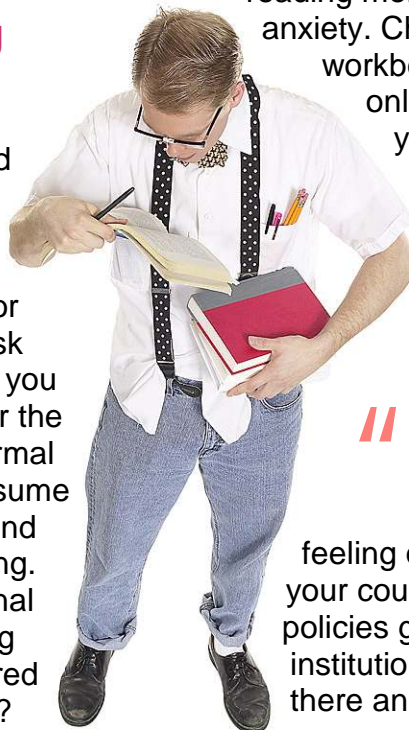
"I just can't seem to make ends meet."
Seek advice from your campus awards and financial aid office. There may be loans, scholarships or bursaries available to you. Staff in the awards office can often help you set up a budget as well. Ask your campus career counselor for information on part time employment opportunities. See if you can make arrangements with the accounting office to pay your tuition in instalments. Will you be eligible for a refund if you withdraw, or have you missed a deadline? Will this have any bearing on your decision to withdraw?

"I think I'm taking the wrong courses."
There are many possible reasons for being dissatisfied with a particular course or program. Maybe you are having a hard time seeing the relevance of a course to your future career plans, or maybe the content is too difficult. Ask yourself the following questions. Do you have the necessary prerequisites for the course? Even when there are no formal prerequisites, the instructor may assume that students have certain background knowledge, which you may be lacking. Is tutoring available? Would additional reading enhance your understanding of the material? Is this course required for your program, or is it an elective?

Do you need this course in order to progress within your major or program, or can you take it later? Your academic advisor or career counselor can help you establish some long term goals that reflect your interests and abilities. Be sure that your goals are your own. Have you chosen a career based on other people's expectations for you, or because you believe it would lead to financial security? Think about what you really want to do, and follow your heart. Allow yourself some time to explore a variety of areas, and to adjust and refine your goals along the way.

"The courses are just too hard."
Students often make the mistake of assuming that the study techniques they used in high school will be equally effective in university or college. However, the volume of material which must be mastered is often greater and more complex, and students must become more self directed in monitoring their progress. Find out if there are study skills workshops available on your campus. A study skills course can help you with everything from taking notes in a lecture and reading more efficiently, to coping with exam anxiety. Check the bookstore for study skills workbooks, and browse the internet for online resources as well. Meet with your instructor during office hours to seek clarification on course content. Form a study group with others in your class. Make it a priority to learn good study habits, and apply them consistently.

"The workload is too heavy."
Good time management skills are essential to succeeding in college or university. If you are feeling overwhelmed, consider reducing your course load. Inform yourself on the policies governing withdrawal at your institution. Is there a withdrawal deadline? Is there an appeal process which might allow



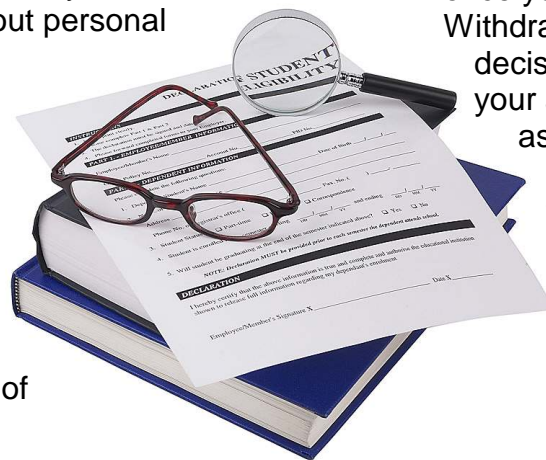
you to withdraw after that date? Can you ask your instructor for extensions on assignments? Are there extracurricular activities that you could limit or eliminate? It is not always easy to strike a balance between studies and other obligations. If you must work full time or if you have family responsibilities, consider taking courses on a part time basis. Find out if there are distance education opportunities available. Online or correspondence courses can give you greater flexibility in planning your schedule.

// don't belong here."

Like any new experience, attending college or university for the first time can be stressful. You may be learning to live on your own for the first time, and missing your family and friends. You may be a seasoned professional upgrading your skills, and feeling that you have little in common with your classmates. Reach out to others, and try to get to know at least one person in each of your classes. Get involved in campus activities. Attend orientations and other events specifically designed for freshmen or mature students. Remember that meaningful relationships take time to develop. Be patient, and give yourself plenty of time to adjust to your new environment.

// have too many other things on my mind."

Personal well-being is important to your success as a student. It can be difficult to concentrate on your studies if you are besieged with worries about personal problems. You may be experiencing relationship difficulties, family conflict, depression, anxiety, or stress. Your campus counseling center is staffed with trained professionals, who can offer confidential support and guidance on a range of emotional issues.



Once you have examined all of your options, you may still conclude that withdrawing is in your best interests at this time. Be aware of the implications of your choice. Consider the following points before making your final decision:

- What are the financial consequences of withdrawing? If you have taken out a student loan, will dropping out affect repayment or future eligibility?
- Will there be any academic penalty for withdrawing? Students often leave without thinking about the impact of having "F's" recorded on their transcripts. You may be closing the door on opportunities for jobs or entry into academic programs that depend on your grades. If it is too late to withdraw, find out about appeal options before you leave. It will be much more difficult to appeal later, when records on your attendance and performance may no longer be available.
- If you are in a competitive program with limited enrolment, withdrawing may affect your chances of being readmitted in the future. Find out if you can take a leave of absence, and still maintain your standing in the program.
- Tie up loose ends. Return library books, turn in lab materials, ensure that outstanding accounts are paid. If you do plan to return in the future, you won't want to have any "holds" on your file.
- What will you do now? Be sure that you have clearly thought about what you will do once you have left college or university. Withdrawing from your courses is a major decision. Don't act on impulse. Talk to your advisor, and get as much information as possible. Remember that the best decisions are made in light of all of the facts.