



Fairness Toolkit: How to Prepare an Effective Chronology

Your chronology or timeline is a written record that should help you to express what happened, when it happened and how it affected you.



Know your audience.

- Provide the overall content upfront by framing the issue in one paragraph
- Think of it as a roadmap to guide your reader
 - What is the fundamental essence of your concern?
 - Why are you presenting a chronology?
 - What are your goals? What are you asking for?
- Know the authority of your reader
 - What can he/she realistically change?

Organize your details.

- Not every incident, conversation or email will be relevant.
- Provide a straightforward account. State facts objectively and succinctly
- Don't over-chronicle (most dates are unimportant)
- Avoid story-telling (list the facts, actions, decisions and outcomes)
- Use thematic headings to guide the reader, if needed.
- Do not include assumptions about others' motivations or intentions
 - Describe behavior, not personality traits
 - Instead "He always harasses me because he is an arrogant and aggressive bully" say "He spoke in a loud voice, stood over me and said that my work was useless."
- Include relevant department policies from student handbooks or university regulations in a separate appendix
- Include supporting documents (emails, medical notes, letters of support, etc. in a separate appendix)

Keep it brief.

- Use very short paragraphs or bullet points
- Use natural or plain English
- One word is usually enough
 - Instead of "due to the fact that" use "because"
 - Instead of "prior to" use "before"
- Avoid exaggerating
 - Instead of "shocked and appalled" use "surprised"
 - Instead of "the vast majority" use "most"



Office of the Ombudsperson for Students

Sample Chronology

The information provided here outlines the key events leading up to my Failed Year – Required to withdraw status in the Faculty of XXX. I am requesting that my special circumstances be considered and that I be permitted to continue my studies in September.

YEAR 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GPA 75% - no failed courses
YEAR 2/TERM 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• GPA 62% with 2 failed courses – extenuating family/financial circumstances• I was required by my family to help look after my grandmother after her stroke in October. I was one of her main caretakers from Oct to Dec. Part of my care duties was to be at home with my grandmother, particularly in the mornings. (letter from my parents is enclosed)• I was absent from about 25% of my two morning courses and missed two midterms from those courses (UNIV 222 and UNIV 223).
NOV 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I talked to Professor X and Professor Y. They agreed to discount my midterm and re-weigh my final exam. I did not go to the Advising Office or ask for a concession because I thought I could handle the coursework and get back on track.
DEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I couldn't catch up and I failed those two courses.
TERM 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My family was no longer able to help me with tuition in Term 2 because of the cost of my grandmother's care. (see invoice from "Nurse Next Door")
JAN 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I dropped one class and found a part-time job (see letter from my employer).
FEB	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My work life and school life was not balanced. I wasn't able to keep up with assignments and did not hand in two major papers.
FEB 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I emailed my professors and asked for more time (see email #1 and #2).
FEB 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My professors both referred me to the Advising Office.
MAR 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I visited the Advising Office and asked for an extension. My advisor, Ms. Y, told me that I was not eligible for a concession because I wasn't in good standing according to the Faculty policy (See policy #4).
MAR 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I appealed the denial to the Director of Advising (see appeal letter).
MAR 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My appeal was denied (see response letter) and it was too late to hand in my papers. I received 0% which led to my failing grades in UNIV 224 and UNIV 245.
APR 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Registered for two summer courses
MAY 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• My family arranged for long-term affordable care for my grandmother.
MAY 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Received letter from Enrolment Services informing me that I was required to withdraw – GPA 48%
MAY 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduced part-time job hours (see revised work schedule)
JUN 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Took a time management workshop at the Learning Center (see certificate of completion)
MAY-JUN TERM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completed two summer courses – GPA 85%
JUN – JULY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visited Counselling Services and found strategies to help me communicate my needs to my parents (see letter from counsellor)
JULY 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spoke with an Academic Advisor to work on a graduation plan with an extra year so that I can maintain a strong GPA (see screenshot)• Submitted appeal letter to Dean's Office, requesting permission to continue