



# WIREGRASS

GEORGIA TECHNICAL COLLEGE®

## **PROCEDURE: 6.4.3p.L1**

### **WGTC Qualifying Emergency Definition**

**Adopted: March 14, 2020**

#### **Purpose**

This procedure is based on the guidance from the Department of Education/Office of Postsecondary Education. This definition will be used to address student academic records in regards to the response to the public health crisis in relation to COVID-19 during Financial Aid award year 2019-2020 and the Financial Aid award year 2020-2021.

A world-wide pandemic known as Coronavirus (COVID-19) began affecting the United States in Spring Semester 2020. As a result of the virus and the National State of Emergency declared by the President of the United States and the State of Emergency Declared by the Governor of Georgia, WGTC moved all Spring Semester 2020 (202014) courses to an online/distance education format and closed the college to the public beginning on March 16, 2020. Summer Semester 2020 began in an online format and later transitioned to some face-to-face instruction as permitted under state and federal guidelines. Fall Semester 2020 is scheduled to begin in a face-to-face format following all federal and state guidelines. However, the college is prepared for shifts in instruction in response to COVID-19 and the public health emergency as it continues.

The Department of Education released guidance to rules for administering federal financial aid during the federally declared major disaster, as defined in the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act in 42 U.S.C. § 5122(2) (Stafford Act).

In the guidance, each college was directed to establish the definition of a “qualifying emergency” and apply that definition to the response implemented when assisting students through the pandemic in terms of academic progression and distribution of federal financial aid as well as emergency financial assistance provided during and up to one year after the pandemic.

#### **Qualifying Emergency Definition**

WGTC, hereby, establishes the following definition for a qualifying emergency:

A qualifying emergency is defined by WGTC as a change to the normal operations of the college due to an event that affects not only the college but the communities it serves in such a manner as to greatly alter day to day operations. This includes changes to the delivery of the academic coursework that affects every class and every student enrolled, changes to the ability to provide face to face service to students and the public, and the widespread disruption of general services as a result of a declared national state of emergency or state issued state of emergency.

WGTC understands that students enrolled in Spring Semester 2020 are highly likely to be experiencing one or more of the below challenges in relations to COVID-19 responses from the College and in their personal lives.

1. Difficulty accessing coursework due to lack of reliable internet services
2. Difficulty accessing coursework due to access to a computer, tablet or other electronic device suitable for class
3. Inability to complete required lab hours as required for program due to college closure or any of the issues below
4. Loss of childcare
5. Loss of personal income or family income as a result of COVID-19
6. Works in an essential job capacity and work shifts have increased
7. Personal exposure or positive case of COVID-19
8. Taking care of family exposed to COVID-19
9. Taking care of family that are most at risk for COVID-19 and ordered to shelter in place
10. Loss of access to medical and mental health treatment due to shelter in place
11. National Guard and Reservist activated in response to COVID-19
12. Other hardships that can be directly related to COVID-19

Understanding that WGTC cannot collect documentation for all difficulties that students are facing in relation to COVID-19, WTGC will provide a waiver to all students who withdraw or stop attending as of March 16, 2020 during Spring Semester 2020 for the return of federal financial aid funds not earned at the time of the withdrawal and the completion rate calculation for Satisfactory Academic Progress.

WGTC understands that beginning with Summer Semester 2020, students may continue to face the above listed challenges in relation to COVID-19 responses from the College and in their personal lives. To assist students during this ongoing national and state public health crisis, students will be able to submit documentation attesting to withdrawals related to COVID-19 for Summer Semester 2020 and Fall Semester 2020. In those cases, a nonpunitive grade may be assigned to the student's record for the course(s) withdrawn from due to the public health crisis.

### **Responsibility**

The Vice President for Enrollment Management has the overall responsibility of ensuring this procedure is implemented.

### **References**

Proclamation on Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-declaring-national-emergency-concerning-novel-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-outbreak/>

## 2020 State of Georgia Executive Orders

<https://gov.georgia.gov/executive-action/executive-orders/2020-executive-orders>

3/14/2020	Georgia Declaration of Public Health State of Emergency
3/16/2020	School Closures to Stop Spread of COVID-19
3/26/2020	Extended School Closures to Stop Spread of COVID-19
4/02/2020	Closing Public Elementary and Secondary Schools through the end of 2019-2020 school year to stop the spread of COVID-19
4/02/2020	Issuing a statewide shelter in place to stop the spread of COVID-19
4/09/2020	Extended statewide shelter in place through May 1, 2020
4/30/2020	Renewing the Public Health State of Emergency
5/28/20	Renewing the Public Health State of Emergency
6/11/20	Providing additional guidance and empowering a healthy Georgia in response to COVID-19
6/29/20	Providing additional guidance and empowering a healthy Georgia in response to COVID-19
7/15/20	Providing additional guidance for Empowering a Healthy Georgia in response to COVID-19

TCSG Policy 6.4.3. National Emergencies

TCSG Procedure 6.4.3p. National Emergencies