

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
GOVERNING COUNCIL**

Report #344 of the Academic Appeals Committee
September 1, 2010

To the Academic Board
University of Toronto

Your Committee reports that it held a hearing on Wednesday, June 23, 2010, at which the following members were present:

Professor L. Sossin (Chair)
Mr. John Stewart
Professor Ellen Hodnett
Dr. Joel Kirsh
Ms. Jemy Joseph

Secretary: Ms. Natalie Ramtahal, Coordinator, Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances

Appearances:

For the Student Appellant:

Mr. I.S. (the Student)

For the University of Toronto at Mississauga:

Professor Angela Lange

I. The Appeal

This is an appeal from a decision the Academic Appeals Board ("AAB") of the University of Toronto at Mississauga ("UTM") dated September 12, 2008, which refused to allow the Student permission to withdraw without penalty from POL203Y5 "American Government" (2007/2008).

II. The Facts

The Student submits that he had experienced stress and a family situation which prevented him from focusing on his studies. In the midst of this situation, the Student travelled to his cousin's wedding. This trip overlapped with the deadline for withdrawal without penalty. The Student indicates that due to "airline complications" on the return flight from the wedding, he

missed the deadline for withdrawal (Sunday, February 17, 2008). The Student attempted to withdraw two days after the deadline, on Tuesday, February 19, 2008, and was refused permission to do so. The Student did not submit further work for the course or write the exam. Rather, he appealed the decision to deny his application for late withdrawal.

The Student adds that he had received only 20% of his grade by the deadline for withdrawal, which in his view, prevented him from making an informed decision about dropping the course.

Finally, the Student pointed out that he had been able to withdraw without penalty in an earlier class notwithstanding that the deadline had passed. The representative for UTM subsequently confirmed that after 2008, a policy was put in practice permitting students to withdraw late in up to three classes. While this policy was not in place at the time the Student sought to withdraw, a student in his position today would have been able to withdraw late without penalty.

The AAB concluded that the Student “did not have a compelling case for an exemption from the University regulations.” The AAB further found that the evidence provided by the Student (a partial boarding pass, a blurry picture taken at the wedding, and a letter from his cousin attesting to his attendance at her wedding) constituted “weak and inconclusive” support for the Student’s assertion that flight delays prevented him from withdrawing by the deadline. Finally, the AAB observed that given the Student’s poor performance on the graded work returned prior to the deadline for withdrawal, there was no reason for the Student to leave withdrawing from the course to the last minute.

III. Decision

There is no indication that UTM treated the Student unfairly. That said, the apparent practice of permitting late withdrawals in the past, and the current policy permitting a limited number of late withdrawals, creates a perception of inconsistency. The Committee encourages UTM to ensure clear and consistent communication of its policies and practices in the future.

This Committee agrees with this conclusion reached by the AAB. While the Student’s belief that he should have been permitted the late withdrawal based on his situation is rooted in compelling circumstances, UTM’s posted withdrawal deadline was known to the student, and it was not unreasonable for the AAB to find that the Student’s excuse for missing the deadline was not persuasive.

For these reasons, the appeal is dismissed.