

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

**THE GOVERNING COUNCIL**

**REPORT NUMBER 231 OF THE ACADEMIC APPEALS COMMITTEE**

**June 12, 1998**

To the Academic Board,  
University of Toronto.

Your Committee reports that it held a hearing on Friday, June 12, 1998, at which the following were present:

Professor Emeritus Alan Mewett, Acting Chair  
Mrs. Ruth Alexander  
Ms Sally Safa  
Professor Emmet Robbins  
Professor Stuart Smith

Ms Rosanne Lopers-Sweetman, Secretary, Academic Appeals Committee

In Attendance:

Ms M.B., the Appellant  
Associate Dean Ian McDonald, Scarborough College

The student appeals a decision of the College's Sub-committee on Academic Appeals dismissing her appeal from a decision of the Sub-committee on Standing which denied her petition to withdraw without academic penalty from POLB 92Y after the last date for withdrawing from a course. At the same hearing the Sub-committee on Standing had granted the student's petition to write a deferred examination in ECOB07Y, but that decision is not the subject of this appeal.

The student suffers from irritable bowel syndrome and this committee wishes to make it clear at the outset that it does not deny the debilitating nature of this disorder and has much sympathy with the student in her efforts to cope with this illness, but this, in itself, is not sufficient to dispose of this appeal.

The student was registered in the relevant course for the year 96/97, offered as a single two-hour lecture weekly. Evaluation was:

## Report Number 231 of the Academic Appeals Committee

Paper	(Dec. 4)	20%
Test	(Jan. 22)	30%
Paper	(Apr. 9)	20%
Final Exam	(May 2)	30%

The student's marks, as recorded, were:

Dec. 4	Paper	0
Jan. 22	Test	10
April 9	Paper	0
	Final Exam	0

Total mark for the course: 10/100 Grade F.

The student submitted her petition for late withdrawal on May 5, 1997. The Rule in effect at Scarborough is that students who wish to withdraw from a course must do so on or before the applicable date -- in this case, February 14, 1997, subject, of course, to a petition for relief from this Rule.

The case for relief was that the student was unable to assess her ability to complete the course by February 14, because her medical condition had only become extremely severe by mid-February. Prior to that time, she felt that since her condition was being controlled by drugs, she could continue in the course, though her condition had been diagnosed on November 4, 1996. However, in April 1997, she underwent a surgical procedure and did not present her petition until May 5.

The student did not meet with the instructor until late March or early April, at which time she was not only informed of her 10/30 mark in the January test, but was also advised that the instructor had never received the paper due in December and as a result she had received 0/20 on that. Her explanation is that she had handed in the paper in class the day it was due but was not informed until January 22, the date of the term test, by the Teaching Assistant, that her December paper had never been received. She asked her younger brother to take a copy of the paper to the instructor, but since he was not in his office, the brother, apparently, left it under his door. Again, the instructor failed to receive it -- a fact that the student was unaware of until, as stated, late March or early April.

At that time, the student states that she was "advised" by the instructor to petition to drop the course and that she and he "agreed" that she would do so. She states that the "mutual understanding" was that she was no longer in the course as of that date. There is considerable doubt about what was actually said at this meeting, what the instructor actually advised and what the overall understanding was. In any case, until a petition for late withdrawal has been granted by the College, the student remains registered in the course -- a fact that should have been well known to the student.

The marks for the December paper were actually available within the first weeks of January and it is odd that the student was not aware until January 22 that her paper had never been received. It is also odd that she was unaware until "late March or early April" that her

**Report Number 231 of the Academic Appeals Committee**

second attempt to deliver the paper to the instructor via her brother sometime shortly after January 22 had been unsuccessful. Had she known of all these factors, she would, of course, have been in a position to assess her chances of completing the course before the drop date of February 14. While there is no doubt that the student was suffering from this debilitating disorder during this period, she does admit that she was on the campus sporadically throughout this time and her explanation of why these facts had not come to her attention sooner is not convincing.

The reason for the withdrawal date rule is a sound one to avoid after-the-fact withdrawals. Relief from it should be granted only in clearly deserving cases. The Committee concludes that Scarborough College made no error in its decision.

The appeal is dismissed.

Rosanne Lopers-Sweetman  
Secretary

Alan Mewett  
Acting Chairman

June 12, 1998