

**UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
GOVERNING COUNCIL**

REPORT NUMBER 238 OF THE ACADEMIC APPEALS COMMITTEE

June 21, 1999

To the Academic Board,
University of Toronto.

Your Committee reports that it held a hearing on Monday, June 21, 1999, at which the following were present:

Professor Emeritus Alan Mewett, Acting Chairman
Professor Lori Anne Dolloff
Mr. Christian Holteng
Professor John Mayhall
Professor Ronald Venter

Ms Patti Seaman, Secretary, Academic Appeals Committee

In Attendance:

the Appellant, Mrs. D.L.K., did not appear in person
Dr. David Booth, OISE/UT

The student appeals a decision of the Divisional Appeals Committee, dated December 2, 1998, dismissing an appeal from a decision of the Appeals Committee of the Faculty Council of OISE/UT dismissing her appeal from a decision of the Department Chairman rejecting her petition to review the grade of 'F' she had received on a term paper in the course EDU 1101H in the Fall Term of 1997.

EDU 1101H is a course on teaching/learning methodology in the Language Arts at the Intermediate level. The Instructor gave the basic requirements of the course as "to research the topic in depth and explore its practical application in the classroom and to share strategy for teaching English/Language Arts effectively." The topic in question was any topic chosen by the student and approved by the Instructor. Mrs. K. chose the topic "politically correct language in the classroom" and this was duly approved.

The Instructor refused to accept the student's first essay, but permitted her to re-submit it. The Instructor gave the student detailed reasons why her first essay was unacceptable and specifically pointed out to her that "EDU 1101H is a teaching methods course. The purpose is to share with participants strategies for teaching English/Language Arts effectively." In her opinion, the essay failed to meet these requirements and she went on to explain to the student how the essay had to be improved to meet the requirements of the course. When the student handed in the second, revised, essay, the Instructor was again of the view that it

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failed to meet the requirements of the course and was, rather, merely an exposition of the views of the student on the two specific topics of abortion and homosexuality. That the Instructor was surprised that the student had failed to grasp the requirements of the course is evident from the fact that she sought the advice of three of her colleagues before making this final decision.

At all subsequent appeal levels the decision of the Instructor was upheld and the student now appeals to your Committee.

It is not the function of your Committee to re-mark examinations or essays, even if it were competent to do so, but rather to determine whether the student has been fairly treated, whether all the proper safeguards have been observed and whether the rules governing the processes are themselves fair. In the course of this student's appeal, her paper has been read by some fifteen people, all of whom concur with the decision of the Instructor, but this would not deter your Committee from allowing the appeal if there were any indication in the material provided of any unfairness or lack of due process.

Your Committee did not find any indication of such unfairness. On the contrary, in its opinion the student has been treated with every consideration and fairness. She seems unwilling or unable to accept the fact that the reason for her failure was not her lack of writing skill but the content of her paper which simply did not meet the requirement of the course as it had been explained to her. It was not, as it should have been, a paper on the methodology of teaching but a paper illustrating her view that recourse to politically correct language has the effect of distorting the truth in the two areas she chose for illustration. The issue is not whether she is right or wrong in her views, but how she would propose to deal with those topics in the classroom. This has been explained to her not only by the Instructor but also at all levels of appeal

Your Committee can see no grounds for reversing the decision of the Divisional Appeals Committee and the appeal is accordingly dismissed.

Patti Seaman
Secretary

Alan Mewett
Acting Chairman

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