

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
THE GOVERNING COUNCIL**

Report #356 of the Academic Appeals Committee
July 26, 2011

To the Academic Board
University of Toronto

Your Committee reports that it held a hearing on Friday, June 24, 2011, at which the following members were present:

Professor Markus Dubber, Chair
Professor Elizabeth Smyth
Mr. James Park

Secretary: Christopher Lang, Director, Appeals, Discipline and Faculty
Grievances

Appearances:

For the Student Appellant:

Ms. Roxanne Joseph, ("the Student")

For the University of Toronto:

Ms. Cheryl Shook, Registrar, Woodsworth College, University of Toronto
Professor Anne-Marie Brousseau, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Programs,
Faculty of Arts & Science, University of Toronto

I. Appeal

The Student appeals a decision of the Faculty of Arts & Science Appeals Committee, dated October 18, 2010, denying her appeal from a decision by the Principal of Woodsworth College of September 28, 2009, which in turn had confirmed the decision by the Academic Bridging Special Considerations Committee at Woodsworth College of June 30, 2009, not to allow her to rewrite the final examination in ENG185Y1– Introduction to the Study of Literature (June 9, 2009).

The Student seeks the remedy of being permitted to rewrite sections B and C of the exam.

II. Facts

The Student was enrolled in the Woodsworth College Academic Bridging Program. The exam in question was the final examination in the Bridging Program course ENG185Y1. The exam consisted of three parts (A, B, C); the Student completed only part A, worth one-third of the final mark of the exam, receiving a mark of 16 out of 33, or 48%. The Student's rewrite request, at various stages, has been based on four grounds: (1) the exam tested materials not covered in the class, (2) the "unregulated environment" of the exam, including loud noises and the "unmannerly" conduct of other students, (3) unspecified security reasons, and (4) her status as an overachiever.

At the hearing before your Committee, the Student primarily addressed her second argument. In support, the Student has produced three University of Toronto Medical Certificates, dated October 22, 2009 (#1), November 2, 2009 (#2), and October 4, 2010 (#3), respectively. None of these certificates was available to the persons and committees who considered the case previously, including most recently the Faculty of Arts & Science Academic Appeals Board; the third and final medical certificate was entered into the record at the oral hearing before the Academic Appeal Committee.

III. Decision

This case was considered with great care by the Academic Bridging Program at Woodsworth College, the Principal of Woodsworth College, and eventually the Faculty of Arts & Science Academic Appeals Board. We see no reason to disturb the findings and conclusions reached by those who already have so ably and sympathetically weighed the merits of this matter. Woodsworth College attempted to address the Student's concerns on the day of the exam, and suggested that she petition for a deferral of the exam in the event she found their efforts unsatisfactory at the time. No other student among the 150 or so taking the exam on that day lodged a complaint about exam conditions. A subsequent investigation into the circumstances surrounding the exam did not produce evidence of inappropriately disruptive conditions.

The medical certificates, all submitted since the decision of the Faculty of Arts & Science Academic Appeals Board, do not affect our decision. As the Student herself repeatedly emphasized during the oral hearing, they do not indicate a medical condition of sufficient severity that was either present at the beginning of the exam or developed during the exam that would have warranted a deferral on medical grounds. They document diagnoses of headaches in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 (#1), in 2005 (#2), and in 2004 (#3), respectively, significantly before the exam in question.

The Academic Bridging Program is designed to prepare students to function within the regular curriculum in the Faculty of Arts & Science. The Student has been offered the option of taking an additional course in the Academic Bridging Program to qualify for admission in the Faculty of Arts & Science. While students in the Academic Bridging Program are not permitted to retake a course, the Registrar of Woodsworth College suggested that the Student instead enroll in another course, which would allow her to

explore her interest in literature. Her performance in that course, then, would allow her to demonstrate the requisite academic maturity and skills to join FAS programs.

While we dismiss the Student's appeal, we are extremely sympathetic to her case and strongly encourage her to avail herself of the support offered by the excellent academic support staff of the Academic Bridging Program at Woodsworth College. In this way, she will have an opportunity to continue on her journey to maximizing and fulfilling her potential.