

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
THE GOVERNING COUNCIL**

**Report #378 of the Academic Appeals Committee
July 3, 2015**

To the Academic Board
University of Toronto

Your Committee reports that it held a hearing on May 26, 2015 (the “Hearing”) at which the following members were present:

Ms. Emily Orchard, Chair
Professor Elizabeth Smyth, Faculty Governor, Governing Council
Ms. Susan Froom, Student Governor, Governing Council

Secretary: Mr. Christopher Lang, Director, Office of Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances

Appearances:

For the Student:

Ms. V. O. (The Student)

For the University of Toronto at Mississauga:

Ms. Michelle Kraus, Office of the Registrar, Petitions, University of Toronto Mississauga
Professor Kelly Hannah-Moffat, Vice-Dean Undergraduate, University of Toronto
Mississauga

The Appeal

The student, Ms. O, appeals from the decision of the Academic Appeals Subcommittee of the University of Toronto at Mississauga (“UTM”) dated September 17, 2014, which refused her appeal for an exemption to the degree requirement to earn a CGPA of at least 1.85 in order to graduate with an Honours degree.

The Facts

The Student commenced her studies at UTM in the Fall of 2009. She registered for 4.0 credits, but only completed 3.5 credits, earning a CGPA of 1.33. As a result of her low grades, she was placed on academic probation. In the 2010/2011 Fall/Winter session, the Student completed an additional 5.5 credits. Her CGPA at the end of the academic year was 1.49, as a result of which she was placed on academic suspension for one year. She petitioned for, and was granted, relief from the one year

suspension on May 26, 2011, and was allowed to register for courses during the 2011/2012 Fall/Winter Session on a reduced course load of no more than 3.0 credits.

The Student registered for 3.0 credits in the 2011/2012 Fall/Winter term, completing the year with a CGPA of 1.70. At the end of the 2012 Winter term her academic status was reassessed as being of good standing.

The Student registered for a course during the Summer 2012 session, but failed the 0.5 credit, dropping her CGPA to 1.63. During the 2012/2013 Fall/Winter session, the Student completed 4.5 credits with a CGPA of 1.6. During her final year, the Student completed 3.5 credits with a CGPA of 1.73.

On December 22, 2013, the Student confirmed her graduation request on ROSI. She was assessed as ineligible to graduate with an Honours Bachelor of Arts/Science at the end of April 2014. Instead, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in June 2014.

During the 2014-2015 academic year, the Student attended the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) and earned a Bachelor of Education and a specialization in French. She will be commencing her first teaching position in September 2015.

Committee's Decision

The Academic Appeals Subcommittee concluded that the Student did not have a compelling case to justify an exemption from university regulations. Your Committee agrees. Although this Committee applauds the Student's attempts to increase her CGPA while registered at UTM, she neglected to present any compelling grounds on which to grant the relief sought. The Student has been advised by the Office of the Registrar that if she enrolls in 2.0 credits and attains a final grade of 77 percent, she can raise her cumulative grade point average (CGPA) to the 1.85 required to earn an Honours degree. She was provided with this information before graduating and at each stage of the appeal process. During the hearing of this matter, this Committee confirmed that:

- there would be no restrictions on the courses in which the Student can enroll,
- she can take elective courses because she has already earned her degree;
- she can complete the courses during any academic session (during the day or in the evening);
- all divisional support and resources will be available to her; and
- there is no temporal limit on when she may complete the 2.0 credits.

In other words, the Student *literally* has the rest of her life in which to complete the required credits. She need merely register with UTM, complete the required 2.0 credits, and submit a request in writing to the Registrar's Office to upgrade her degree to an Honours Bachelor of Arts. The Student acknowledged that she is well aware of the options available to her, but advised the Committee that she does not see any value in pursuing undergraduate courses. Indeed, rather than

completing the required 2.0 credits immediately following graduation, she opted to complete her Bachelor of Education in the final year before the program became a two-year undertaking. Having now earned her B.Ed., the Student would prefer to focus her efforts on earning additional specialist certifications, which she claims will be of greater professional value to her. The Committee doesn't take a position on where the Student's professional development efforts are best directed. This is clearly a decision that the Student alone is in a position to make. However, the panel members were struck by the contradiction between the Student's submissions that she doesn't want her failure to earn an Honours degree to affect her career, and her simultaneous unwillingness to invest the time and effort required to earn said degree.

After a lengthy history of poor academic performance, the Student has simply not met the academic standards that the university has set in order to award an Honours degree. The requirement of a cumulative GPA of 1.85 is a minimum threshold that Your Committee can only envision being waived in the most extraordinary of circumstances, if ever. Unfortunately, the Student's belief that hard work alone justifies the granting of an Honours degree is simply not justified and cannot be the basis upon which this Committee grants a petition to waive a fundamental degree requirement. The Student has been provided with a very clear explanation of the steps she needs to take in order to earn an Honours degree. She can complete these steps whenever she is ready to do so and can take as little or as much time as she wishes. Your Committee notes that the Student should be very proud of her accomplishments and understands her inclination to focus her efforts on her teaching career at this stage. However, her desire to "move on with life" does not justify the granting of extraordinary relief. As noted by this Committee in Report Number 295, the University's academic standards are established for sound reasons of academic policy and cannot simply be waived by this Committee for reasons extraneous to the university environment.

For all of these reasons, the Committee rejects the Student's appeal.