



POLICY ON ACADEMIC APPEALS WITHIN DIVISIONS

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1. Guiding Principles: The implementation of all academic appeals within the University across all divisions should be informed by the following principles:

- i. **Diversity, Equity, and Accommodation:** Consistent with the University's commitment to diversity, equity and accommodation, and its accompanying institutional policies, every division should be sensitive to issues of diversity, equity, and accommodation in the academic appeals process.
- ii. **Consistency:** The purpose of the Policy on Academic Appeals within Divisions is to formalize University wide principles to ensure effective procedures for the academic appeals process are in place within divisions. The Policy is designed to set minimum standards and consistent procedures across the University.
- iii. **Flexibility:** While the Policy is intended to establish certain essential features of a division's academic appeal system, it recognizes that divisional size and complexity of issues have a bearing on divisional needs in this regard.
- iv. **Transparency and timeliness:** The University ensures that information on procedures for academic appeals are well publicized, accurate, clearly presented, and readily accessible to students, instructors, and staff. Student academic appeals should be addressed in a timely manner, using appropriate, fair and transparent procedures.
- v. **Fairness and Confidentiality:** Throughout the process, students should have the opportunity to raise matters of proper concern to them without fear of disadvantage and in the knowledge that privacy and confidentiality will be appropriately respected. Both formal and informal resolutions for academic appeals should be available to the student.
- vi. **Academic Standards and Regulations:** The academic appeals process and principles should be applied in a manner that maintains academic standards and contributes to the University goal of academic excellence. Detailed information about the University of Toronto's Academic Regulations and Requirements can be found in relevant University Policies regarding academic regulations and requirements such as the *Grading Practices Policy*, as amended from time to time.

2. The Academic Appeal

- i. An academic appeal is an appeal by a student of the University:
 - (a) against a University decision as to his or her success or failure in meeting an academic standard or other academic requirement of the University; or,
 - (b) as to the applicability to his or her case of any academic regulation of the University; however,
 - (c) no appeal lies from any admissions decision.
- ii. The standard of review of an academic appeal is reasonableness.

3. Guidelines for divisional processes for academic appeals

- i. Divisions should decide how best to implement this policy and what additional principles, structures and procedures, not inconsistent with the spirit of this policy, may be required.¹
- ii. Divisional processes should be broadly communicated and available in print form and electronic form.
- iii. Divisional processes should offer opportunities for early resolutions and should provide informal lines of communication throughout the process. Students should be encouraged to resort to these alternatives before launching formal appeals.
- iv. Divisional processes should recommend informal mediation throughout the process and parties should be encouraged to consider the possibility of resolution throughout the process.
- v. Divisional processes should encourage a student's confidential disclosure of appropriate information at the earliest possible stage particularly with respect to diversity, accommodation and other personal issues that may be relevant to the disposition of the appeal.
- vi. Divisional processes should set timelines for administrative decision making and student response throughout the process. Timelines should include sufficient flexibility and discretion to accommodate the particular circumstances of the appeal and to avoid inappropriate prejudice to the student or to the University.
- vii. Divisional processes should provide a mechanism for periodic internal review and a reporting mechanism for an annual report to the division's governing body.
- viii. Divisional processes should refer to the fact that throughout the process, students should have the opportunity to raise matters of proper concern to them without fear of disadvantage.
- ix. Divisional processes should provide a clear mechanism for responding to academic appeals. Guidelines for divisional processes should delegate the authority to determine divisional appeals to a standing committee of reasonable size ("the divisional appeals committee"). This committee should report to the division's governing body for information. This committee should include members of the teaching staff and student body. The selection process for student members should be done with a view toward diversity and transparency.

¹ The minimum procedural standards set out in this policy are not meant to prevent divisions from establishing procedures that permit immediate action such as the suspension of a student or the restrictions of a student's participation in clinical or practice related activities where such action is appropriate to address health and safety issues or to fulfill professional or regulatory obligations.

- x. Divisional processes should provide that students commencing a divisional appeal do so by a written notice that states the nature and grounds of the appeal, and which includes copies of any documents relied upon in support of the appeal.
- xi. Divisional processes should ensure that the student has the right to a hearing before the divisional appeals committee in person, with or without counsel or other advisor, and to call evidence and present argument in person or by counsel.
- xii. Divisional processes should ensure that divisional appeals committees give appellants a written statement of reasons for the decision at the time the decision is handed down.

4. Right of Appeal to the Academic Appeals Committee of the Academic Board of Governing Council

- i. Divisional processes should require that any student whose appeal has been denied must be advised of a further right of appeal of the decision of the divisional appeals committee to the Academic Appeals Committee of the Academic Board of Governing Council. The existence of this right of appeal should be clearly communicated, in writing, to students for whom the appeal was denied at the divisional level.
- ii. The procedures for appeals to the Academic Appeals Committee are set out in the Committee's Terms of Reference.²

5. Implementation and Monitoring

- i. So as to provide for the fair and effective disposition of academic appeals, every division of the University is required to maintain processes for academic appeals that are consistent with this Policy.
- ii. The Office of the Provost will establish a framework for the divisional academic appeal processes which reflects best practices and incorporates the principles and minimum standards set out in this policy.
- iii. The Office of the Provost is responsible for monitoring the implementation of divisional appeals processes that are in compliance with this Policy. The Office of the Provost is also responsible for facilitating a periodic review of divisional processes for consistency to the Policy, for facilitating effective communication of the Policy and divisional processes, and for conveying information to the divisions about suggested best practices.
- iv. The Office of the Provost will undertake to ensure that information about divisional processes is communicated in technologically relevant, up-to-date and easily accessible ways.

Approved by Governing Council on December 12, 2005 to replace *Guidelines for Academic Appeals within Divisions* (approved June 19, 1975), effective September 1, 2006.

² <http://www.utoronto.ca/govcncl/bac/details/aa/aator.pdf>