



University of Toronto

OFFICE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT AND PROVOST

TO: Committee on Academic Policy and Programs

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AGENDA ITEM: 4

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

University of Toronto at Scarborough: Proposed changes to the academic regulations concerning deferral of exams

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The Committee has authority to approve amendments to examination divisional practices and policies which are consistent with the University-wide policy but have a major impact on the division.

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

HIGHLIGHTS:

The University of Toronto at Scarborough (UTSC) proposes changes to the regulations for deferred examinations. Experience has found that requests for deferred examinations often reflect students' own assessment of their inadequate preparation in the subject. They view a deferral as providing additional time to prepare, but may not fully realize the effect their decision may have on their performance in other courses and on their academic standing in general. The attached proposal to change the regulations for deferral has three parts:

Part 1: Examinations deferred for the first time

At present, students petition to sit deferred examinations, and, in most cases, provide medical documentation to support their request. The first part of the proposal recommends that students be allowed to defer one or more examination once per session without having to petition, provided that they indicate their intention to do so by no later than one week after the last day of the relevant examination period and that they pay the appropriate deferred examination fee by a given deadline. Deferred examinations will be held, as they are at present, in the next examination period.

Students applying for a deferral will have to confirm that they have read through a list of warnings of the possible consequences of deferring an exam. They will be strongly advised to speak with an academic advisor about the consequences of deferring an exam. Allowing students to request deferred exams without petitioning will allow them to make use of their time to plan for the next session rather than having to wait until they know the outcome of the petition. This will be combined with a greater awareness of their academic responsibilities and direction to confer with an academic advisory.

Part 2: Course load restrictions when sitting deferred examinations

Students who request deferred examinations frequently do so because of inadequate preparation in the subject. They may not be well-equipped to cope with examinations resulting from an average course load plus the additional burden of deferred examinations. At present, there are no restrictions on the number of courses in which students may enrol while awaiting deferred examinations. Limiting the number of courses they may take in the following term will provide them to focus on their course.

Hence, the second part of the proposal recommends that students who sit three or more deferred examinations may enroll in no more than three courses in that session. If a student exceeds this course load restriction, the student will be given until the end of the first week of classes to make appropriate adjustments and failure to do so will result in the cancellation of all courses in the session.

In discussions at UTSC about changes to the process for deferral of exams, the argument most frequently raised against Part One was that it would result in a large increase in the number of deferred exams. Some were concerned that, rather than feeling they are unprepared for an exam, students who plan to apply for professional programs may defer an exam in the hope of achieving a better grade four months later. At present there is no clear evidence to indicate that such consequences may result. However, the recommendation of the proposal to limit the number of deferred exams allowed is designed to assist in minimizing potential misuse of the procedure.

Part 3: Extension of time to sit deferred examinations

At present, students who petition successfully to sit a deferred examination are informed that they will be given one opportunity only to write the examination and that, if they miss it, a petition for an extension of time will be considered only in truly exceptional circumstances. The proposed amendment to the regulation aims to more clearly state what is required for an extension of time to sit on a deferred exam.

Petitions for an extension of time to sit a deferred examination (i.e., to defer the examination a second time) will be considered only if the student will be required to provide evidence of a significant medical or other emergency.

There has been extensive consultation on this proposal with Department Chairs, the Tri-Campus Decanal Committee and the Tri-Campus Undergraduate Issues Committee. The proposal has approved received full support from these constituencies. The University of Toronto Mississauga and Faculty of Arts and Science, St. George, will consider introducing a similar process in the future once the proposed changes have shown to be positive. The proposal was approved by the U of T Scarborough Academic Committee at its meeting on December 4, 2007.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

There are no new/additional financial resources required. The implementation for the changes in regulation is outlined in the proposal. UTSC will communicate the proposed changes to students in several ways.

- The Registrar's office will send an e-mail to all students notifying them of the changes and will post a notice of the changes on the registrarial web site, on student notice boards, and in the UTSC electronic calendar.
- The Vice-President, Academic of the Scarborough Campus Students' Union is aware of the proposed changes and will assist to disseminate the information to students.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Committee on Academic Policy and Programs approve:

The changes to the academic regulations concerning deferral of exams at the University of Toronto at Scarborough, as outlined in the attached proposal, effective for the 2008 Summer Session.