

November 15, 2007

To: Members of the Academic Committee

From: The Sub-committee on Standing

Re: Deferred Examination Proposals

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.

Proposal 1:

- That students be allowed to defer one or more examinations 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.
 - U of T Scarborough deferred examinations will be held, as they are at present, in the next examination period.
 - June & August examinations in December
 - December examinations in April/May
 - April/May examinations in August
 - Students who miss examinations in courses on other campuses will sit the deferred examination according to the timetable of the division which owns the course.

Rationale:

It is very difficult to judge the validity of the documentation submitted in support of petitions. Allowing students to request deferred examinations without petitioning will:

- Considerably reduce the number of occasions on which it is necessary to attempt to do so.
- Allow students to make plans for the next session with full knowledge of their academic responsibilities rather than having to wait until they know the outcome of their petitions.
- Allow those making decisions on petitions to put their efforts into other types of requests which tend to get overwhelmed at the end of sessions by petitions to sit deferred examinations.

Course load restrictions for students sitting deferred examinations

At present, there are no restrictions on the number of courses in which students may enrol while awaiting deferred examinations.

Proposal 2:

- That students sitting three or more deferred examinations may enrol in no more than three courses in the upcoming session (e.g. a student sitting three deferred examinations in the December examination period, may enrol in no more than three courses in the Fall Session).
- That there be no course load restriction on students sitting one or two deferred examinations.
- That students who exceed these course load restrictions be given until the end of the first week of classes to make appropriate adjustments and that failure to do so result in the cancellation of all courses in the session.

Rationale:

As has already been mentioned, students who request deferred examinations frequently do so because of inadequate preparation in the subject and may not be well-equipped to cope with examinations resulting from an average course load plus the additional burden of deferred examinations. Limiting the number of courses they may take in the following term, will provide them with time to work on the material for the course.

However, mindful of the hardship that would be placed on some students should they lose their eligibility for OSAP, students will be advised to consider their course load carefully but will never be restricted to fewer than three courses.

Extensions 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. This not only sends a mixed message to students but it is very difficult to identify truly exceptional circumstances. As a result, students submit petitions and supporting documentation that are not very different from the first time round.

Proposal 3:

- That petitions for an extension of time to sit a deferred examination be considered only if the student provides evidence of a significant medical or other emergency.
 - In the case of deferred examinations missed on medical grounds, that the student presents strong and compelling medical documentation (e.g. that the student was hospitalized) that:
 - Indicates that the student was examined at the time of the illness.
 - Indicates the duration of the illness.
 - Gives the physician's professional opinion of whether or not the student's illness was sufficiently serious that he/she could not be expected to sit an examination.
 - The medical documentation is provided by a member of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario.
 - In the case of deferred examinations missed for other reasons, that the student presents compelling evidence that he/she had no alternative but to miss the examination.

Rationale:

This amendment states more forcefully what is required in order to make a case for an extension of time to sit a deferred examination. It also makes it clear that supporting medical documentation must be provided by someone licensed to practice medicine in Ontario, or, in cases where medical documentation originates from outside Ontario, by a similarly licensed practitioner in that jurisdiction.

Implementation**Deadlines**

The following deadlines will appear each session in the “Sessional Dates” section of the University of Toronto Scarborough *Calendar*:

- Last day to drop courses with no record of enrolment on the transcript.
- Last day to drop courses with a record of enrolment on the transcript and a grade of WDR.
- Last day to indicate intention to sit a deferred examination and payment deadline.
- Last day to adjust course load

The Registrar’s Office will send students who have requested deferred examinations reminders as the payment deadline and the deadline to adjust course load approach.

Deferred examinations

The section on deferred examinations in the *Calendar* will be amended to include a clear statement of the academic consequences of deferred examinations as well as the check list discussed below.

The Registrar’s Office will provide a mechanism in eService for students to indicate online their intention to sit a deferred examination. This will include a check list along the lines of the following that students must to complete in order to request a deferred examination:

“You are strongly advised to speak with an academic advisor about the possible consequences of deferring examinations.

U of T Scarborough deferred examinations will be held as follows:

- June & August examinations in December
- December examinations in April/May
- April/May examinations in August

Deferred examinations in courses on other campuses will be held according to the timetable of the division which owns the course.

Please read the following warnings and check each box to indicate that you have done so:

- I understand that I may be at a disadvantage sitting an examination four months after the end of the course.
- I understand that I may expect no special assistance from my instructor or from the examiner in preparing for the deferred examination.
- I understand that, if I am writing three or more deferred examinations, I may enrol in no more than three courses in the session leading up to the deferred examinations. (Please note that, although there is no such restriction if you are sitting one or two deferred examinations, you are, nevertheless, advised to consider your course load very carefully bearing in mind that you will also have to study for your deferred examinations.)
- I understand that if, at the end of the first week of classes of the session leading up to the deferred examinations, I am enrolled in more courses than allowed, I will be removed from all courses and that, if I try adding any back, there is no guarantee that a space will be still be available in them or in my preferred sections.
- I understand that I may not enrol, without the permission of the instructor, in any course if its prerequisite is the course in which I am sitting a deferred examination.
- I understand that sitting a deferred examination may affect my ability to gain access to courses and/or to limited enrolment programs.”

Petitioning

None of the proposals are intended to replace a student's right to petition should extenuating circumstances exist that make other forms of special consideration more appropriate or, for example, should circumstances warrant an easing of the course load restriction (Proposal 2 above). However, it should be noted that withdrawal without academic penalty from a course would not normally be considered an appropriate form of special consideration for a student who failed to make a case for an extension of time to sit a deferred examination.

Recommendation: That Proposals 1 to 3 as described above be approved.