

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
THE GOVERNING COUNCIL
REPORT NUMBER 135 OF THE COMMITTEE ON
ACADEMIC POLICY AND PROGRAMS

April 1, 2008

To the Academic Board,
University of Toronto.

Your Committee reports that it met on Tuesday, April 1, 2008 at 4:10 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Simcoe Hall, with the following present:

Professor Andrea Sass-Kortsak (Chair)	Ms Bonnie Goldberg
Professor Douglas McDougall (Vice-Chair)	Ms Emily Gregor
Professor Edith Hillan, Vice-Provost, Academic	Dr. Stefan Mathias Larson
Professor Cheryl Misak, Deputy Provost	Professor Louise Lemieux-Charles
Mr. Taufik Al-Sarraj	Professor Cheryl Regehr
Professor Derek Allen	Ms Lorenza Sisca
Professor Jan Angus	Miss Maureen Somerville
Professor Gage Averill	Professor Susan Pfeiffer, Vice-Provost, Graduate Education and Dean, School of Graduate Studies
Professor Ragnar Buchweitz	
Ms Tiffany Chow	Mr. Neil Dobbs, Secretary
Professor Elizabeth Cowper	
Professor Robert Gibbs	

Regrets:

Professor Katherine Berg	Dr. Chris Koenig-Woodyard
Ms Milka Ignjatovic	Professor Audrey Laporte
Mr. James Janeiro	Professor Suzanne Stevenson

In Attendance:

Professor John W. Browne, Acting Principal Woodsworth College
Professor Daniel Haas, Associate Dean, Clinical Sciences, Faculty of Dentistry
Professor Sue Howson, Vice-Dean, Undergraduate Education and Teaching, Faculty
of Arts and Science
Ms Jemy Joseph, former Vice-President, Academic, Scarborough Campus Students'
Union
Professor Bruce Kidd, Faculty of Physical Education and Health
Ms Helen Lasthiotakis, Director, Policy and Planning, Office of the Vice-President
and Provost
Professor John Scherk, Acting Vice-Dean, University of Toronto at Scarborough
Professor Scott Thomas, Associate Dean, Graduate Education and Research, Faculty
of Physical Education and Health

ALL ITEMS ARE REPORTED TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD FOR INFORMATION.

REPORT NUMBER 135 OF THE COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC POLICY AND PROGRAMS – April 1, 2008**1. Report of the Previous Meeting**

Report 134 (February 26, 2007) was revised to show the correct report number and to indicate that the report of the previous meeting was Report 133. The Report, as corrected, was approved.

2. Faculty of Arts and Science, University of Toronto at Mississauga, University of Toronto at Scarborough: Academic Regulations concerning Course Withdrawal

Professor Hillan said that the proposal was a joint one from the Arts and Science divisions on the three campuses. All three divisions had concerns about the process of petitions for withdrawal from courses without academic penalty after the published deadline for withdrawal. At present, students who requested special consideration owing to illness or other exceptional circumstances, and whose petitions were granted, were assigned a grade of WDR – withdrawn without academic penalty – on their transcript of their academic record. The grade had no effect on their grade point average or on their academic standing. It was proposed that in future sessions, students be permitted to withdraw from a course without petition until the last day of classes (for students registered on the St. George and Mississauga campuses) or until the day prior to the beginning of the examination period (for students registered at the University of Toronto at Scarborough - U.T.S.C.) The proposed provision would assist students who were struggling, had fallen irretrievably behind, or were overwhelmed by medical, personal or other circumstances. Students would be permitted to withdraw in this manner from a maximum of three full courses or equivalent. Their withdrawal would be recorded on their transcripts as LWD - late withdrawal after the drop date. There would again be no effect on the students' grade point average or on their academic status. If there was need for special consideration for late withdrawals beyond the usual limits, the petition process would be available. Such petitions would, however, be viewed much more strictly. Professor Hillan noted that the proposal came forward after extensive consultation including the department chairs, the Tri-Campus Decanal Committee and the Tri-Campus Undergraduate Curriculum Committee. It had been endorsed by the Councils of all three divisions.

Professor Howson stressed that the Deans of the three divisions were very pleased to send forward the same proposal. The lead in its development had been taken by U.T.S.C. It responded to a situation in which the divisions had faced a very large number of petitions for late withdrawal, and they had concluded that an alternative process would be appropriate in order to provide support and guidance to students. Professor Scherk added that all three divisions had been subject to similar concerns arising from the petitions for special consideration. That situation would also be a factor in the proposal under the next item on the agenda – a proposal concerning student requests for deferred examinations. He too was pleased that the three Arts and Science

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divisions had arrived at a common solution, and he thought that the support of all three divisions added to the strength of the proposal.

In the course of discussion, Professor Buchweitz recalled the conversation in the Academic Board arising from a report of the Academic Appeals Committee. At that time, members had expressed concern that students often did not, especially after only a few weeks in a half course, fully understand the issues that they faced, and they might quite understandably not have acted to withdraw from a course(s) in response to those issues. In response to a question, Professor Scherk said that the proposed provision was not aimed specifically at first-year students; it would be available to all students in the Arts and Science divisions.

Among the matters that arose in questions and discussion were the following.

(a) Transcript notations. In response to questions, Professor Howson confirmed that there would be two different notations made on student transcripts: WDR (withdrawn without academic penalty) for students who were permitted to withdraw for medical or other special reasons following a petition, and LWD (late withdrawal after the drop date) for students who made use of the proposed new provision. It was necessary to have the LWD designation in order to keep track of its use by any student to ensure that it was used only to the permitted limit of three full-course equivalents. This distinction would be explained on the transcript. In response to a question, Professor Scherk said that the Administrative Appendix to the Grading Practices Policy would be amended to add the new LWD notation.

Professor Averill added that it was deemed important to have some disincentive to using the late withdrawal provision. That was supplied by three factors, which required a record on student transcripts. First, there would be a limit to the use of the provision, which would discourage its use. Second, the use of the provision would be apparent to those responsible for admission to graduate and professional programs, who would presumably take into account any overuse. Third, information about use of the provision would be available to academic advisors, who would be able to counsel caution.

(b) Three full-course-equivalent limit. A member referred to the statement in the rationale for the proposal, which stated that approvals for late withdrawals “will be accompanied by appropriate advising, and students will be expected to learn from their experience so as not to repeat the behaviour that produced the problems” causing the need for late withdrawal. She observed that a student would be permitted to use the proposed provision to withdraw from up to six half courses. That appeared to be more

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than adequate opportunity to learn from experience. Professor Buchweitz noted that the provision applied to all campuses, and students on the St. George and Mississauga campuses were frequently enrolled in full year courses. They would have the opportunity to use the provision less frequently.

(c) Risk to students of overuse of the provision. A member noted that while she had been convinced to support the proposal, she had originally been very concerned about it and particularly about the potential for its overuse. She was particularly concerned that students might not be aware that overuse of the proposed provision for late withdrawal could damage their chances of success in applications for scholarships, graduate programs and professional programs.

(d) Retrospective evaluation of the proposed provision. A member urged that record be kept of the use of the provision and that the Committee evaluate the outcome of the proposal after a period of time on the basis of experience. Professor Buchweitz replied that Registrars would keep track of the use of the procedure for purposes of evaluation.

(e) Use of the provision and the petition process. In response to questions, Professor Buchweitz and Professor Scherk said that requests to Registrars to use the provision for late withdrawal, where they complied with the requirements and did not exceed the three-full-course limit, would be granted automatically. If students missed the deadline to use the provision, the petition process would still be required and available. Similarly, if students wished to withdraw late from all of their courses, where they were enrolled in more than three courses, the petition process would be required and available. Where petitions were submitted for late withdrawal after the proposed provision had been used for three full courses or equivalent, such petitions would be granted only according to a higher standard. At the present time, numerous petitions were submitted and the supporting medical evidence was often sketchy and open to question.

(f) Use of the provision in other divisions. In response to questions, Professor Buchweitz and Professor Howson said that the provision was intended only for the three Arts and Science divisions. If other divisions wished to have a similar provision, they would presumably make proposals to the Committee. A member noted that students in professional programs were often enrolled in a “year” system, with particular courses required for each year. For such students, there would be no real opportunity to withdraw from individual courses. Professor Pfeiffer noted that there had been some discussion of a late withdrawal provision from graduate courses, but the issues had been different in the different graduate divisions. The objective throughout, however, was to be supportive of student needs but rigorous in ensuring that any provision did not reduce

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academic standards. A member suggested that all divisions be notified about the precedent and invited to make a proposal where that was appropriate in a particular division. Another member suggested that it would be equally important to make it clear to students in divisions that did not adopt the provision that the option for late withdrawal without academic penalty was not available to them.

On motion duly made and seconded

YOUR COMMITTEE APPROVED

The changes of the academic regulations concerning withdrawal from courses in the Faculty of Arts and Science (as outlined in the document dated February 8, 2008), the University of Toronto at Mississauga (as outlined in the document dated February 28, 2008) and the University of Toronto at Scarborough (as stated in the amended motion provided in the document dated January 28, 2008), effective for the 2008 Summer Session.

The documentation containing the proposals is attached hereto as Appendix “A”.

3. University of Toronto at Scarborough: Academic Regulations concerning Deferral of Examinations

Professor Hillan said that students who wished to defer examinations were now permitted to do so only on petition supported by a medical certificate or other evidence of extenuating circumstances. The University of Toronto at Scarborough (U.T.S.C.) proposed to permit students to defer, without petition, one or more examinations until the next examination period. Such requests could be made only once per academic session and would have to be submitted within one week after the last day of the relevant examination period. Students would be required to pay the appropriate deferred examination fee. They would also be required to confirm that they had read a series of warnings about the possible consequences of deferring examinations. They would at the time of the request be strongly advised to speak with an academic advisor about the possible consequences of deferral. Finally, students who deferred three or more examinations would be permitted to enroll in no more than three courses in the following session. Examinations would most often be deferred by students with inadequate preparation in a subject, and they would not be well equipped both to complete a normal course load and to prepare for the three or more deferred examinations. Students in that

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situation who were enrolled in more than three courses by the end of the first week of classes in the following session would be withdrawn from all of their courses. Where students had used the proposed procedure to request deferral of an examination(s), they would not be permitted to request further deferral except by petition that demonstrated truly exceptional circumstances evidenced by unequivocal medical or other documentation.

Professor Hillan noted that the proposal concerned only students registered in U.T.S.C., but there had been extensive consultation with the Tri-Campus Undergraduate Issues Committee and the Tri-Campus Decanal Committee as well as with the Department Chairs. All groups supported the proposal, and the other Arts and Science divisions would consider adopting the proposed change if it the outcome was a positive one at U.T.S.C. The proposal had been endorsed by the Academic Committee at U.T.S.C. on December 4, 2007.

Professor Scherk added that the proposal addressed the same issues as those discussed in connection with the proposal to permit late withdrawal from courses. The current proposal too was based on the concern that the petition process was not working as intended. In the fall semester at U.T.S.C., there had been 360 petitions for deferred examinations. In some cases, the medical grounds stated were very difficult to assess, and almost without exception such petitions were granted. The integrity of the entire petition system could therefore be improved. While some members of U.T.S.C. were concerned about the proposal, it seemed appropriate, if medical certificates could be obtained readily in questionable circumstances, simply to permit students to defer examinations on a request once per session, provided that they acknowledged the negative consequences of doing so and provided that they were encouraged to seek academic advice. The Arts and Science faculties on all three campuses regarded this as an experiment, and the outcome would be evaluated in a year or so.

Discussion took place on the following topics.

(a) Medical certificates. In response to a question, Professor Buchweitz said, and a member confirmed, that some physicians did charge fees for medical certificates. Invited to comment, Ms Joseph said that she had seen lists of physicians who provided medical certificates and the prices they charged for them. Because that information was commonly available and medical certificates were apparently easy to obtain, the current system of petitions was in her view completely flawed. In response to a question, Professor Buchweitz noted that medical certificates presented under the current arrangements frequently did not meet the standards set out in the proposal for petitions beyond the permitted deferrals. In such cases, the medical certificate would have to state clearly: that the student had been examined and treated, that the student was ill

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from a given date to another, and that in the opinion of a practitioner licensed to practice by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, the student was unable for medical reasons to write the examination. The University also had reason to be concerned, from the point of view of the requirements of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), that it not require additional and extraneous information on medical certificates.

(b) Petitions in special circumstances. In response to a question, Professor Buchweitz confirmed that the proposal was not intended to replace the right of petition, where a student had truly exceptional circumstances and was prepared to present evidence that met the high standard set out in the proposal (and described above).

(c) Deferral of examinations and course-load restrictions. A member observed that a student would be permitted to defer all examinations until the end of the next session and still enroll in up to three courses in the following semester. Professor Buchweitz and Professor Scherk replied that students would be permitted to do so. It would be reasonable for students who had been ill throughout the late weeks of classes or the entire examination period to defer all examinations. Such students would be permitted to enroll in three courses in the following session, but they would not be compelled to do so. It was important that all students be permitted to enroll in the three-course minimum to retain their eligibility for Ontario Student Assistance. It was true that such students would risk real problems arising from the need to write eight final examinations at the end of the following semester. Again, however, if there were clearly extenuating circumstances supported by proper evidence, students could submit petitions and U.T.S.C. would, as usual, seek ways to accommodate those special needs.

On motion duly made and seconded

YOUR COMMITTEE APPROVED

The changes to the academic regulations concerning deferral of exams at the University of Toronto at Scarborough, as outlined in the proposal dated November 15, 2007, effective for the 2008 Summer Session.

The documentation containing the proposal is attached hereto as Appendix "B".

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4. Reviews of Academic Units and Programs 2006-07 – Annual Report, Part I, Provostial Reviews

The Chair reminded members that governance, led by this Committee, was charged to ensure “that University administration is monitoring the quality of academic programs and units and is taking the necessary steps to address problems and achieve improvements.” The record of the Committee’s consideration of the reviews would be forwarded to the Academic Board’s Agenda Committee, which would review it and determine whether the Academic Board should discuss any issues of academic importance arising from the reviews. Each team of members who served as lead readers had been asked to deal with the following questions:

- (a) Did the summary accurately reflect the review report?
- (b) Did the administrative response address the issues identified?
- (c) Were there any questions/comments/issues for the Committee?

Officers from the three academic units were in attendance to respond to any questions or concerns the lead readers or other members might raise. If the Committee’s lead readers were satisfied that the summary was complete and that all issues had been dealt with, they were asked simply to report that. There would no need to comment further. If, on the other hand, the Committee took the view that there were unresolved issues that should be considered by the Agenda Committee, the Chair would make that conclusion clear and have it reflected in the Committee’s Report. The Committee would at this meeting deal with the three Provostial reviews. It would at the next meeting consider about 25 departmental reviews.

(a) Faculty of Dentistry

One of the lead readers, speaking on behalf of the team, said that the summary did accurately reflect the review and that the administrative response had addressed the issues raised. The lead readers commended Dean Mock (i) for his establishment of student-service offices in response to issues raised by the review, and (ii) for his exploration of ways to improve the Faculty’s relationship with the teaching hospitals. The member noted that the question of new space for the Faculty had been a continuing theme that arose in the review. The reading team would be grateful to have an update on the matter.

Professor Hass replied that Dean Mock was investing almost all of his time in seeking a new physical location that would enable the Faculty to achieve its academic mission. That was an on-going effort, and there was no progress to be reported at this time.

The Chair concluded that there was no need to draw any unresolved matter(s) to the attention of the Agenda Committee or the Academic Board.

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One of the lead readers reported that she and her colleagues had found the summary to be consistent with the review. There was a very minor difference in the view expressed by the summary that the Faculty's Stepping UP plan would require regular updating. The review itself spoke of a perception of the need for updating to demonstrate that progress had been made. The administrative response was appropriate, acknowledging certain concerns and appreciating the corresponding recommendations. The response did not accept all of the critiques contained in the review, but it did not in all cases provide good evidence to support the view that those critiques were not appropriate. There were no matters, however, that would require the attention of the Academic Board. The review saw both the undergraduate and the graduate programs of the Faculty in a positive light. Further efforts would be required to enhance the financial resources and the facilities of the Faculty and to enhance the research efforts of its academic staff. A slightly different senior administrative structure might be required in the Faculty to give the new Dean time to concentrate on those aspects.

There being no further comments, the Chair concluded that there were no matters in the review that had not been dealt with appropriately and that would require the attention of the Agenda Committee or the Academic Board.

(c) Woodsworth College

One of the lead readers noted that Woodsworth College was the newest of the Arts and Science Colleges of the University. She thought that the summary may not have given sufficient stress to a number of elements in the review. First, Woodsworth College had been founded as a part-time, undergraduate college, and that history should be stressed in the work of the College. Part-time students should not be made to feel secondary at the College. There should also be more stress on the recommendation that the College continue to stress its undergraduate role. The review contained a concern, not reflected in the summary, concerning residence fees. It was intended that residence costs be covered entirely by residence fees, and there was some concern that that was not the case. The summary could have given more stress to concerns in the review about the move of the Criminology program from the Robarts Library to the Canadiana Building, increasing the distance between the program and the College. Finally the review had stressed that Woodsworth should do everything it currently did very well before moving to expand its course offerings. There had been some concern in the review about the staffing of certain courses.

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4. Reviews of Academic Units and Programs 2006-07 – Annual Report, Part I, Provostial Reviews (Cont'd)

(c) Woodsworth College (Cont'd)

Another of the lead readers added that he did not understand the statement in the review that said that the College was financially sound and managed well. Did that mean that the College was ahead of schedule in its payments on the loan for its residence or simply that it was breaking even? There was a comment that the College should give priority to generating summer business for its residence. That comment appeared to call into question the security of the finances for the residence. The member also requested further information about the non-credit course offered to graduate students in Teaching in Higher Education (THE 500), which he described as an excellent course. He thought it very appropriate that the course be given more attention and upgraded.

Professor Browne said that while Woodsworth College was the newest College in the University, it (and the School of Continuing Studies) had succeeded the Division of University Extension, which was one of the older units in the University. The College had been founded in response to the wish of part-time students for a College of their own. Full-time students would register in one of the other colleges and part-time students at Woodsworth. The distinction between part-time and full-time study had, however, been quite appropriately softened over the years, and Woodsworth had decided to move closer to the role of the other Colleges. In particular, it had constructed its residence building and had begun to admit students to full-time study directly from secondary schools.

Professor Browne responded to some of the points made in the readers' comments. Among the matters that arose in those responses and in discussion were the following.

(i) Residence fees and repayment of the loan on the residence. The Chair noted that while it was appropriate to mention differences in the summary and the review, the matter of residence plans and residence fees was within the jurisdiction of the University Affairs Board.

(ii) Criminology program. Professor Browne said that while the Graduate Centre of Criminology had moved from the Robarts Library to the Canadiana Building, all undergraduate courses were taught at Woodsworth College. The partnership between the Graduate Centre and Woodsworth was a very strong one. Because there was no undergraduate department of criminology, the relationship was like that within a department with both graduate and undergraduate programs. Consultation took place on a regular basis, and interactions were smooth. Faculty in the Graduate Centre remained strongly committed to the undergraduate program. The College and the Graduate Centre made joint appointments, with the Woodsworth College budget supplying 40% of the joint appointments. The outcome was an excellent college program. The situation was

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4. Reviews of Academic Units and Programs 2006-07 – Annual Report, Part I, Provostial Reviews (Cont'd)

(c) Woodsworth College (Cont'd)

similar with respect to cooperation between the College and the Graduate Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources.

(iii) Stipendiary teaching in Woodsworth College programs. In response to concerns about the amount of stipendiary teaching, Professor Browne noted that there had been two tenure-stream appointments made in Criminology and one pending in Employment Relations. All of the appointments were very strong ones. The appointees would spend a part of their time teaching undergraduate courses now taught by stipendiary instructors. Professor Browne stressed, however, that it was entirely appropriate that some of the Woodsworth courses be taught by practitioners. In the Employment Relations program, for example, most of the regular faculty consisted of labour economists. It was therefore highly advantageous to students to be taught labour law by a practicing lawyer who was a participant in the system. The Graduate Coordinators were also responsible for the overall direction of the undergraduate programs, and they were very frank in expressing any concerns.

(iv) Expansion. Professor Browne referred to the concern that Woodsworth carry out all of its current activities well before expanding. He took the view that Woodsworth was carrying out all of its current work very well. Moreover, there was currently very little thought of expansion except in the Summer Abroad Program. That Program currently had about 1,000 students, and Professor Browne was in discussion with University authorities about expansion.

(v) Teaching in Higher Education 500. Professor Browne said that he had established a working group to review the THE 500 course. Professor Pfeiffer noted that graduate students took on many non-credit commitments, but their participation in THE 500 was the only one that had been recorded on their transcripts. That had been the outcome of an understanding between two individuals, and there had been requests that the completion of other commitments also be recorded on graduate students' transcripts. To ensure consistency, record of completion of THE 500 was no longer included on transcripts. The School of Graduate Studies and Woodsworth College continued to work on an approach to non-credit graduate training. Professor Pfeiffer was very grateful to Woodsworth College for its understanding and participation in this exercise.

(vi) Millie Rotman Shime Academic Bridging Program. A member referred to comments in the review concerning the relationship between Woodsworth College's Academic Bridging Program and the Transitional Year Program. Professor Browne said that questions concerning the relationship between the two programs had not yet been settled. The Task Force on Outreach had raised the question of how the University

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should bring together its access programs. There were many common elements between the programs, but there were also different institutional histories and wide cultural differences. He and Professor Rhonda Love, the Director of the Transitional Year program, had been working together on the matter. Professor Browne had in his response to the Woodsworth College review provided examples of cooperation. He was able to cite a further, very recent example. Donors to Woodsworth College planned to provide a scholarship to assist aboriginal students in the Academic Bridging Program. Professor Browne had highlighted for the donors the benefits for making the scholarship available to students either in the Academic Bridging Program or in the Transitional Year Program. The objective of the discussions involving the two programs was to provide for closer cooperation. That might be achieved by actions ranging from information sharing to some sort of organizational change. It was appropriate to allow those discussions to proceed and to reach a reasonable conclusion over time.

(vii) Diversity in Woodsworth College. A member noted the reference to “extraordinary diversity” in Woodsworth College. Professor Browne observed that, for example, the students in the Academic Bridging Program spoke many different languages as their first language and came from many ethnic backgrounds. However, other academic units were also very diverse in their student populations, reflecting the diverse nature of the population of the greater Toronto area.

The Chair concluded that the Committee had taken the view that there were no matters in the review that had not been dealt with appropriately and none that would require the attention of the Agenda Committee or the Academic Board.

The Chair thanked the members of the reading teams for their diligent work in participating in the Committee’s discharge of this very important responsibility. The process would continue at the next meeting. Members could expect to hear from the Secretary shortly concerning the assignment of lead readers. A member suggested that each team divide amongst themselves leadership for the reviews assigned to the team. The Chair said that the membership of the team would be the same for a group of reviews; therefore the proposed division of leadership would work well. She noted that the members of the teams that had been lead readers for the Provostial reviews at this meeting would remain together. While they might well have one fewer review than the other teams, they would be called upon again to serve as lead readers for the next meeting.

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7. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair reminded members that the next regular meeting, and the final regular meeting for the academic year, was scheduled for Tuesday, May 13, 2008 at 4:10 p.m. The main item will be the continued consideration of reviews of academic programs and units.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Secretary

Chair

April 16, 2008

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