

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

REPORT NUMBER 14 OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC APPEALS

To the Academic Affairs Committee,
University of Toronto.

Your Subcommittee reports that it held meetings on May 7th, 1975, at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Faculty of Pharmacy, and on May 13th, 1975, at 4:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Galbraith Building, at which the following were present:

Meeting of May 7th, 1975

Professor J.B. Dunlop (In the Chair)
Mr. John Creelman
Professor V.E. Graham
Dr. J.C. Laidlaw
Professor J.A. Sawyer
Mr. C. Ian P. Tate
Professor A.M. Wall
Miss M. Salter, (Secretary)

Meeting of May 13th, 1975

Professor J.B. Dunlop (In the Chair)
Mr. John Creelman
Professor V.E. Graham
Professor J.A. Sawyer
Mr. C. Ian P. Tate
Professor J.R. Vanstone
Professor A.M. Wall
Miss M. Salter (Secretary)

In Attendance, Meeting of May 13th, 1975:

Professor P.I.P. Boulton, Associate Dean, Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering

THE FOLLOWING ITEM IS PRESENTED FOR APPROVAL

1. Guidelines for Academic Appeals

At two meetings, on May 7th and May 13th, the Subcommittee considered responses from the academic divisions to the proposed "Guidelines for Academic Appeals" approved in principle by the Academic Affairs Committee in June, 1974. Revisions were made in the light of responses received and a copy of the revised document is attached hereto as Appendix "A".

Members noted that some misunderstanding was evident in the responses from divisions, in that it was assumed by some that the guidelines were intended to be exhaustive. It was felt that it should be made clear in the document that there was no intention to legislate a complete code of uniform practices and procedures throughout the University, given the variation in size and complexity of divisions, but simply to establish certain principles which would be implemented by the divisions in a variety of ways. Members agreed that a statement along these lines would appear as the first section of the document.

The Subcommittee considered a number of the comments and suggestions made and agreed to changes which, it was hoped, would further clarify the intent of the guidelines.

YOUR SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDS

THAT the "Guidelines for Academic Appeals", attached hereto as Appendix "A", be adopted and that academic divisions of the University be required to establish structures and procedures conforming to the spirit of these guidelines and submit them for approval.

The meetings adjourned at 5:45 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. respectively.

Secretary
May 26, 1975

Chairman

May 23, 1975

GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC APPEALS

1. These guidelines for academic appeals are not intended to constitute a complete code of practices and procedures. They are intended only to establish certain essential features of an appropriate appeal system. They recognize that divisional size and complexity have a bearing on divisional needs in this regard and it is therefore left to the divisions (a) how best to implement these guidelines and (b) what additional principles, structures and procedures, not inconsistent with the spirit of these guidelines, may be required.
2. An academic appeal is an appeal by a student (a) against a decision as to his or her success or failure in meeting an academic standard or other requirement or (b) as to the applicability to his or her case of any academic regulation.
3. So as to minimize the necessity for appeals to be taken, every division of the University in which decisions which may be the subject of appeal are made should adhere to certain general principles.
4. So as to provide for fair and effective disposition of appeals that nevertheless are taken, every division of the University in which an appeal may arise should establish certain structures and procedures.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

5. Regulations and requirements should be clear, precise and well publicized. Lack of information or understanding can be a significant source of grievance. The more important regulations and requirements should appear in the calendar along with notice of the existence and availability of other regulations.
6. Regulations and requirements should be established or approved by the appropriate authority within the division and should not be changed to the detriment of students who have made decisions, choices and commitments in reliance on them. Arbitrary decisions or amendments can also be a significant source of grievance.
7. Dates should be established for the determination and announcement by course instructors of the essays, tests, examinations and other work required for credit and the grading scheme. These dates should be well in advance of the deadline for withdrawal from courses or transfer to other courses. The announced work assignments and grading scheme should not thereafter be changed materially except in extraordinary circumstances and with the approval of the appropriate divisional authority.

STRUCTURES AND PROCEDURES

8. Each division should have the appropriate formal procedures and structures for considering academic appeals. Each division should also, however, seek to open informal lines of communication and encourage students to resort to them before launching formal appeals. Grievances often involve misunderstandings which can be informally

settled provided they are brought to the attention of the appropriate instructor or academic administrator.

9. While structures and procedures for dealing with petitions and appeals may vary from a single-level system in the smallest divisions to a multi-level system in the largest, at the level of final decision there should be a right of hearing. Each division should repose authority to determine appeals within the division in a standing committee of reasonable size which should report to the Faculty Council or other divisional governing body for information. This committee should include members of the teaching staff and student body.
10. The procedures available within a division for considering appeals should be well publicized, as should the existence of a further right of appeal to the Subcommittee on Academic Appeals of the Academic Affairs Committee of the Governing Council.
11. Appeals should be commenced by a written notice stating the nature and grounds of the appeal, which should be accompanied by copies of any documents relied upon in support of the appeal. Divisions should establish a suitable time limit for the launching of appeals.
12. Where it is apparent that an appeal is merely frivolous or vexatious, the committee may, by unanimous vote, decline to proceed further with the appeal.
13. The appellant should have the right to appear before the committee in person, with or without counsel or other advisor, and to call evidence and present argument in person or by counsel. Appellants frequently are not satisfied that they have been fairly dealt with until they have had a hearing. If they have no right to a hearing at the divisional level, they are more likely to appeal to the Subcommittee on Academic Appeals to obtain one. This provision will make it more likely that the divisional decision will be accepted by the appellant. The intention to be represented by counsel should be communicated to the committee in advance of the hearing, preferably in the notice of appeal.
14. In the case of an appeal against the grade assigned or credit given to any essay, test, examination or other written work, if the committee should have reason to believe that a significant error might have been made, the work should be referred to one or more outside experts in the field of study concerned whose opinion should be considered by the committee in deciding whether to allow the appeal. Divisions not already having a simple system of reviewing grades should consider the merits of establishing such a procedure.

MISCELLANEOUS

15. The Subcommittee on Academic Appeals will be pleased to assist any division with advice in the setting up of appeal structures and procedures.

J.B. Dunlop