

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

REPORT NUMBER 217 OF THE ACADEMIC APPEALS COMMITTEE

November 14, 1996

To the Academic Board,
University of Toronto.

Your Committee reports that it held a hearing on Thursday, November 14, 1996, at which the following were present:

Before: Professor Edmund Alexander, Acting Chair
 Mrs. Margo Coleman
 Professor Joseph Goering
 Professor John Mayhall
 Ms Ariane West-Pernica

Ms Rosanne Lopers-Sweetman, Secretary, Academic Appeals Committee

In attendance:
 Ms S.M., the Appellant
 Professor Ian McDonald, for Scarborough College

Ms S.M. was admitted to Scarborough College as a degree student in September, 1990. Because of her poor grades during the 1990 Winter Session she was placed on academic probation. Her grades during the 1991 Winter Session were equally poor. Under Scarborough College's academic regulations, she was suspended for one year. Ms S.M. returned to Scarborough College for the 1993 Winter Session, in which she took courses totaling 3-1/2 credits. She performed reasonably well, achieving a sessional G.P.A. of 2.17. However, her cumulative G.P.A. after three years at Scarborough College was only 1.13 and she remained on academic probation.

Ms S.M. enrolled in two courses in the Summer Session of 1994. She became ill towards the end of June, 1994. She did not recover fully until about the middle of October, 1994. In addition, during the same period her father became seriously ill and was forced to retire, with consequential financial problems for the family. On November 23, 1994, Ms S.M. petitioned the Scarborough College Sub-committee on Standing to withdraw from the two summer courses without academic penalty. The Sub-committee on Standing granted her petition on December 14, 1994. In their letter informing her of their decision, the Sub-committee on Standing said:

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This means that you are no longer liable for suspension. In order to avoid suspension at a later date, you must either raise your cumulative grade-point average to at least 1.60 in which case you will return to good standing or maintain a sessional grade point average of at least 1.60 in every session in which you register ... in which case you will be allowed to continue on academic probation. The Sub-committee strongly advises a reduced course load and that you assess your progress carefully at regular intervals, especially before the deadline dates for withdrawal from courses without academic penalty for you cannot expect similar consideration in the future.

In the fall term of the 1994 Winter Session, Ms S.M. took three half-year courses, one full-year course, and a credit performance course in music. In the spring term of the 1994 Winter Session, she took four half-year courses, as well as the full-year course and the credit course in music. Her G.P.A. for the 1994 Winter Session was 1.34. Because she did not meet the sessional G.P.A. requirement of 1.60, and because of her previous record, she was suspended for three years under Scarborough College's academic regulations.

On November 30, 1995, Ms S.M. petitioned the Scarborough College Sub-committee on Standing for a deferral of the three-year suspension. On December 18, 1995, the Sub-committee on Standing denied her petition on the basis that she had provided no documentation and no compelling grounds as to why the three-year suspension should be deferred. Ms S.M. appealed this decision to the Scarborough College Sub-committee on Academic Appeals. With her appeal, she included documentation in the form of a doctor's letter detailing her and her father's illnesses in the summer and fall of 1994 and the consequences for the family, particularly of her father's illness. On April 15, 1996, the Sub-committee on Academic Appeals dismissed her appeal. The Sub-committee on Academic Appeals recognized from the documentation that Ms S.M. experienced adverse circumstances beyond her control—resulting from her and her father's illnesses—which would have affected her academic performance during the 1994 Winter Session. However, she had been warned by the Sub-committee on Standing in their letter of December 14, 1994 about her precarious academic status and the precautions she should have taken to avoid suspension—primarily by reducing her course load. Despite her poor academic record, and the adverse circumstances she was facing, she exercised poor judgment and did not heed that advice.

On July 24, 1996, Ms S.M. appealed to the Academic Appeals Committee of Governing Council. At a hearing held on November 14, 1996, the Academic Appeals Committee dismissed her appeal for the reasons given by the Scarborough College Sub-committee on Academic Appeals.

Rosanne Lopers-Sweetman
Secretary

Edmund R. Alexander
Acting Chairman

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