



MEMORANDUM

To: Executive Committee of Faculty Council

From: Professor Tom Coyle
Chair, Examinations Committee

Date: April 12, 2011 for April 28, 2011 Faculty Council Meeting

Re: Deferred Final Examinations

REPORT CLASSIFICATION

This is a Major Policy Matter: Regular Motion that will be considered by the Executive Committee for endorsing and forwarding to Faculty Council for vote as a Regular Motion (requiring a simple majority of members voting to carry).

BACKGROUND

The number of petitions and the percentage of students who submit petitions have generally increased over the past several years as shown in the table below. The largest portion of these is from students who have missed one or more final examinations, for which the normal procedure is to assess a grade for the course based on the closely supervised term work. These data include a small number of students who submit a large number of petitions. The Committee on Examinations is concerned that the cumulative effect of a relatively large number of assessed grades puts the validity of the student's academic record in question.

Term	Registered Students (Non PEY)	# Students submitted petitions	% Students petitioning	# DNW's (Did not write final exam)	# Assessed Grades Granted	# Deferred Exams Granted (courses)
2007-9	4202	278	6.6%	151	104	
2008-1	4115	340	8.3%	NA	135	
2008-9	4155	308	7.4%	168	120	
2009-1	4082	383	9.4%	NA	133	
2009-9	4392	369	8.4%	279	181	
2010-1	4314	439	10.2%	NA	165	4
2010-9	4374	305	7.0%	219	180	6

When students have appealed decisions of the Committee on Examinations involving assessed grades to the University's Academic Appeals Committee (AAC), the decisions of the AAC have been uniformly highly critical of the Faculty's dependence on assessed grades and its reluctance to grant deferred exams. In almost all cases, the assessed marks were replaced by a retroactive withdrawal from the course or a grade of aegrotat, since at that point too much time had passed for the AAC's preferred accommodation of a deferred examination to be practical.

Although the practice of assessing course grades has worked well for the Faculty for a long time, and continues to do so in the vast majority of cases, APSE is the only faculty at the University to employ this practice. An informal survey of several other engineering faculties in Canada (Queen's, Waterloo, McMaster, U of Alberta and UBC) found that the practice in all cases was to offer deferred examinations when students missed final examinations under extenuating circumstances.

To address the concern regarding the large number of assessed grades accumulated by a small number of students and in response to the decisions of the AAC, the Committee on Examinations has developed criteria to guide deliberations regarding the awarding of deferred examinations. The objective is to minimize the number of deferred examinations, while identifying those cases similar to those which were the subjects of AAC decisions or of concern due to a large number of previously assessed grades. The guidelines resulting from the considerations and trials described above are attached. These are not proscriptive, but are intended to assist the Committee in maintaining consistency when considering the option of awarding a deferred examination. The guidelines may be modified by the Committee from time to time as experience warrants. Trials of the guidelines were undertaken the past two sessions, resulting in decisions to grant deferred examinations in four courses in 2009 Fall and in six courses in 2010 Winter.

The deferred examination should be held as soon as possible after the missed examination, especially when a student's academic standing may be affected by the result of the deferred examination. The preferred time is Reading Week for missed December examinations and May or June for missed April examinations.

PROPOSAL/MOTION

THAT the Faculty of Applied Science and Engineering formally introduce deferred examinations when warranted, according to guidelines developed and updated periodically by the Committee on Examinations as described in Report 3287 (Revised), with the addition of the following as the first activity under *General Procedures for First Deferred Examinations*:

“The Examinations Committee will recommend one of the following types of deferred examinations:

- (a) a regular deferred examination, to be given the next time the course is offered, or
- (b) a special deferred examination, to be given as soon as possible after the missed examination.”

Any changes to the guidelines will be reported to Council. This should take effect immediately.

GUIDELINES FOR GRANTING A DEFERRED EXAMINATION (SDF)

When a petition regarding a missed final examination has been accepted as valid and properly documented, assessment of a course grade based on closely supervised term work remains the preferred method of granting relief. In some situations, alternatives to an assessed grade may be preferable. A deferred examination will be **considered** when a student meets one or more of the following criteria:

1. The student has a minimum of two previous terms with at least one assessed mark in each term, for example: 2008-9: 1 to 3 assessed grades + 2010-1: 1 assessed grade.
2. The assessed grade would result in failure of the course (unless failure would result regardless of the mark on the final examination).
3. The student has completed an insufficient amount of supervised term work to allow a valid assessment/calculation of an assessed grade. This is most appropriate when the student had valid reasons for missing supervised term work (a major test) and final examination. The Committee, in making its final decision, may take into consideration any additional comments provided on the Term Work Report from the Course Instructor regarding the student's ability.
4. If deferred exams are being considered for more than two courses as a result of missed final exams and insufficient term work, a grade of aegrotat (AEG) for those courses or a retroactive withdrawal from the term may be accommodations that are more appropriate. A retroactive withdrawal (WDR) from a single course would be considered only in exceptional circumstances.
5. The assessed grade results in a term average that places the student near the cutoff ranges (depending on previous academic status) of 53-54.4 or 57-59.4 for academic probation (PRO1/PRO2) or permanent suspension (RFRG).

Timetable misread: Current practice for the first instance of a student missing a final examination due to misreading the timetable is to assess a course grade based on closely supervised term work, and then to apply a penalty of 10%. If application of the above guidelines leads to the granting of a deferred examination, the same penalty of 10% will be applied.

GENERAL PROCEDURE FOR FIRST DEFERRED EXAMINATION

Once a student has been granted a deferred examination (SDF), the following activities will occur:

1. The Examinations Committee will recommend one of the following types of deferred examinations:
 - (a) a regular deferred examination, to be given the next time the course is offered, or
 - (b) a special deferred examination, to be given as soon as possible after the missed examination.

2. The student's current grade (DNW – Did Not Write) will be changed to SDF (Deferred Examination) on ROSI
3. A deferred examination period will be set by the Registrar's Office (OFR) and the Committee on Examinations
4. OFR will notify the student, Course Instructor and the student's Counsellor
5. Course Instructor to submit a NEW examination to the OFR by a stated deadline
6. The OFR will notify the student of the time, date, and location of the deferred examination
7. If the examination is NOT written and no new petition is submitted by the student, the OFR will insert the original earned course mark from the Term Work Report
8. If a new petition is submitted regarding the missed deferred examination, the Committee on Examinations will decide on the new best course of action (see Second Deferral Procedure below)

SECOND DEFERRAL PROCEDURE

The Faculty will not normally offer a student a third chance to write their missed examination. The student will be required to submit a new petition for special consideration for their missed deferred examination and the Faculty will decide on the most appropriate course of action. The Faculty may ask the student to repeat the course or write the regularly scheduled examination when the course is next offered.

In the event that the student missed their deferred examination, the original earned grade will be inserted to replace the SDF grade and the student's academic standing will be re-assessed based on the original earned grade. Should that result in the student failing the term (PRO2/RFRG), the Committee on Examinations will decide on the most appropriate course of action.

RE-WRITE OR SUPPLEMENTAL EXAMINATION PROCEDURE

Students who wrote their original scheduled examination would not normally be considered for a supplementary examination. The Faculty will try not to penalize any students for trying their best to write the examination under sub-optimal conditions (mild-illness, distracted) but the Committee on Examinations will only consider granting a supplementary examination in very special situations. It would be reasonable for the Faculty to not provide any relief after the final examination when the student's performance in the final examination is consistent with term tests/quizzes or general performance in previous terms. When appropriate, the Faculty will take the student's entire academic performance into consideration.

Amended as per Faculty Council: April 28, 2011