



MEMORANDUM

To: Executive Committee of Faculty Council

From: Professor Tom Coyle
Chair, Committee on Examinations

Date: February 7, 2012 for March 7, 2012 Faculty Council Meeting

Item: **Graduation with Honours**

REPORT CLASSIFICATION

This is a *Major Policy Matter* 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

Over the past few years, the number of students who reach fourth year with excellent academic records, but whose transcripts include features such as international student exchange experience, advanced standing credits in first year, and additional courses to fulfill requirements for minors, has increased. The current criteria for graduation with honours are complex and difficult for students to understand, especially for students whose transcripts include attributes such as those mentioned above. At present, to qualify for graduation with honours, a student must:

- achieve honours standing carrying a full academic load in any four of the sessions 2F, 2W, 3F, 3W, 4F, 4W
- maintain a full academic load in one of 4F or 4W
- achieve a combined 4F & 4W weighted sessional average of 80% or greater

The possibility of changing the criteria for graduation with honours was raised in a meeting of the Committee on Examinations in March, 2011. The criteria for honours at graduation for a number of engineering faculties in Canada were subsequently reviewed, leading to a proposal to use a cumulative weighted average of all courses excluding 1st year core courses, extra courses, and repeated courses. The table below examines the possible impact to graduation with honours if the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering were to use the cumulative average rather than the current criteria. Transcripts for the past three years were reviewed to identify students who

graduated with honours and students with cumulative averages greater than 80% who graduated without honours. Reasons for failing to achieve graduation with honours included: study abroad for one term in either third or fourth year; fewer than 4 terms with honours standing; failure to achieve a combined 4F & 4W weighted sessional average of 80% in 4th year; and failure to carry a full load in at least one term of final year. The Committee concluded that criteria for graduation with honours based on the cumulative average over years 2, 3, and 4 provided a better reflection of a student's overall academic achievement than the current criteria. Such a criterion would also be easier for students to understand and more straightforward to implement. Concern regarding a hypothetical collapse in academic performance in 4th year led to an additional criterion of a minimum weighted average in 4th year.

Year*	2011	2010	2009
Actual Grads with Honours	231	229	214
Grads with Cum. Avg. ≥ 79.5	249	273	246
Grads with Cum. Avg. ≥ 79 But Not Grad. Honours	30	51	38
Actual Grads with Honours But Cum. Avg. < 79.5	12	7	6
Highest Cum. Avg. of Grad without Honours	85.5	84	84.2
Lowest Cum. Avg. of Grad with Honours	77.9	78.7	74.5

*Includes all graduation sessions – 2011 numbers exclude Fall Graduation numbers which were not available at the time this data was prepared.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends that the criteria for achieving graduation with honours be changed to the following:

To obtain honours standing on graduation, a student must achieve a cumulative average across years 2, 3 and 4 of 79.5% or higher and a weighted 4th year average of 74.5% or higher (regardless of load in individual sessions), excluding any required first year courses, repeated courses, and courses marked as EXT.

These new criteria will take effect by June 2012. Students graduating in June 2012 would also have the option of having the previous honours standing rules applied.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are none.

MOTION FOR FACULTY COUNCIL

“THAT the criteria for achieving graduation with honours be changed to the following:

‘To obtain honours standing on graduation, a student must achieve a cumulative average across years 2, 3 and 4 of 79.5% or higher and a weighted 4th year average of 74.5% or higher (regardless of load) excluding any required first year courses, repeated courses, and courses marked as EXT.’”