



MEMORANDUM

To: Executive Committee of Faculty Council (April 8, 2025),
Faculty Council (April 29, 2025)

From: Professor Vladimiro Papangelakis,
Chair, Undergraduate Assessment Committee (UAC)

Date: March 19, 2025

Re: Revised Assessed and Deferred Policy

REPORT CLASSIFICATION

This is a major policy matter that the Executive Committee will consider for endorsing and forwarding to the Faculty Council for vote as a regular motion (requiring a simple majority of members present and voting to carry).

BACKGROUND

The Undergraduate Assessment Committee (UAC) offers two types of accommodation for students missing a final exam for valid reasons with appropriate documentation: an assessed final exam mark or a deferred examination/assessment.

The Faculty has a long-standing practice of granting assessed marks. The Faculty's current assessed and deferred exam policy was introduced in 2011, with revisions in 2016. Under this policy, the UAC would grant either a deferred exam (SDF), allowing the student a second chance to write the final exam at a later date, or an assessed mark. The assessed mark is an estimated value of the final exam mark calculated by the Boocock-Will formula. It is based on "sufficient" closely supervised term work completed. The assessed final exam mark produces an estimated course grade based on the composition of the final course mark (COFM) as submitted by the instructor and approved by their Department and the UAC. Under the current rules, the number of course grades assessed for a student cannot exceed three in any term, for a maximum of two terms, that is a maximum total of six during the completion of the program degree. The Boocock-Will Formula for assessed final exam marks is:

$$AFE = ECS/CACS * CAFE$$

where: AFE = Assessed Final Exam Mark

ECS = Earned Closely Supervised Term Work

CACS = Class Average Closely Supervised Term Work

CAFE = Class Average Final Exam Mark

When the AFE results in a mark that is higher than other courses in the term, it is capped at the highest technical course grade earned in the recent two terms. The default method of assigning a course grade to students missing a final exam with valid reasoning thus became the assessed grade.

The 2016 revision established a regulation regarding a time limit to write a deferred exam, which was two opportunities or until the beginning of the third term following the original exam date. This revision was made because it was challenging to enforce the timing of the deferred exam date, with limited options for the UAC to accommodate a missed deferred exam with valid documentation, except to provide a retroactive withdrawal from the course, wasting administrative resources and annulling the pedagogical element of the granting of the SDF in the first place.

In recent years, there has been an increase in final exam petitions for students not writing the final exam (DNW) and, consequently, an increase in both the number of assessed course grades and deferred exams, as shown in Tables 1 and 2 below. During the COVID pandemic, in particular, it became necessary for instructors to declare their final exams as 'mandatory' if they wanted students to not receive an assessed course grade but rather earn it through a final exam. This has created some confusion among instructors that has lasted to today. Following the pandemic, the rates of missed final exams and consequential numbers of deferred exams and assessed final exam marks did not drop as quickly as hoped, leading to concerns about a new normal becoming established, one which may also contribute to marks inflation.

Table 1. Assessed Final Exam Marks – Assessed Course Grades

Term	# of Assessed Marks	# of Students Who Received Two Assessed Marks	# of Students Who Received Three Assessed Marks
2024-9, VOI	119	4	7
2024-1, VOI	127	16	2
2023-9, VOI	128	20	3
2023-1, No VOI	317	39	11
2022-9, No VOI	267	39	10
2020-1 to 2022-5 (COVID-19)	Not Accurate		
2019-9, VOI	108	10	5
2019-1	106	12	1
2018-9	114	11	5
2018-1	86	15	1
2017-9	110	15	5
2017-1	90	6	3
2016-9	119	12	4
2016-1	102	10	3
2015-9	113	13	7

Table 2. Deferred Exams per Term*

Year of study	20179	20181	20189	20191	20199	20201	20209	20211	20219	20221	20229	20231	20239	20241	20249
1	1	5	4	4	7	4	22	14	71	362	21	36	13	29	16
2	14	25	6	15	22	1	15	14	201	417	91	130	19	41	25
3	17	34	8	21	15	9	17	26	106	481	50	87	40	72	29
4	21	22	18	34	25	4	16	7	38	71	35	47	23	38	20
N/A			1		1					1	2				
Total	53	86	37	74	70	18	70	61	416	1332	199	300	95	180	90

*During the period from 2020-1 to 2023-1, protocols put in place due to COVID eliminated the requirement for a Verification of Illness for missed exams. From 2020-1 to 2021-1 exams moved online due to COVID. In 2021-9 and 2022-1, the exam period was again disrupted due to COVID.

It is worth noting that the current policy was instituted when most courses had their grades determined by closely supervised work, amounting to 75% of the total course grade. This has changed since around 2019 with many courses incorporating more projects and other non-closely supervised term work. In certain cases where a student has missed the entire final exam period due to illness, the UAC faces the problem of having to grant more than three deferred exams than the petitioning student could reasonably handle in one period (e.g., February sitting). These cases, and other complex ones, may result in Aegrotat (AEG) rulings and an overall adjudication burden that is often at the limit of being unmanageable within the time allotted by the UAC and Academic Advisors. This situation compromises the ability of UAC to resolve petitions promptly, thus affecting student academic standing, including prerequisite requirements for progression to the next term.

In addition, and as a result of the current implementation of the regulations:

1. Assessed marks may allow students to proceed to follow-on courses with uncertain mastery of prerequisite course material.
2. What constitutes “sufficient” closely supervised term work to grant an assessed mark is undefined, resulting in ambiguity and therefore inequity.
3. When deferred exams are offered, students proceed to the next term with unclear academic standing; this is a particular concern with courses that act as prerequisites to follow-on courses.
4. The mandatory or non-mandatory designation of the final exams creates confusion among students and instructors, the majority of whom seem to consider that final exams are, by default, mandatory. This confusion creates ambiguities when the UAC adjudicates a missed final exam petition.

Consequently, there is a need to a) increase consistency, b) create more certainty and transparency for the students (i.e., clarify the expectations), and c) ensure that student grades reflect actual and individual knowledge of the course material. The proposed policy revision is intended to ensure that all students in the program are adequately prepared to proceed successfully to the following terms and courses. It also aims at improving the adjudication efficiency of the UAC so that it can resolve difficult and urgent cases in a timely manner.

There is also a need to formalize the default deferred exam periods for the Faculty during Winter Reading Week (for the immediately preceding Fall Term exams) and the first week of the Fall Term (for the immediately preceding Winter Term exams). The committee may also decide to grant a deferred exam to be taken at the next offering of the same course.

The revised policy rests on the principle that assessed marks are only possible when a student has completed a sufficient amount of closely supervised term work and the instructor has deemed that an assessed mark is an appropriate outcome in their course. Final exams are expected to be **summative** and certify students on a comprehensive understanding of the course material. Final exams play a crucial role in the testing process; missing a final exam should be a rare event.

PROPOSED POLICY

- Where a student has petitioned and provided valid documentation for their absence within seven calendar days of a missed exam, **the default remedy will be a deferred exam.**

REVISED RULES FOR GRANTING AN ASSESSED FINAL EXAM MARK

Where a student has petitioned and provided valid documentation for their absence within seven calendar days of a missed exam, the student will be allowed to write a deferred exam. However, an assessed mark using the Boocock-Will formula also can be considered when **all** conditions below are met:

1. The instructor indicated that an assessed mark is acceptable on the required CIS submission.
2. The student has **not previously** received assessed marks in a maximum of two terms with a maximum of two courses assessed in each term during the entire duration of the degree program (e.g., years 1 to 4).
3. The assessed final exam mark would not result in an assessed mark that either leads to Repeat Probation (PRO2) or Refused Further Registration (RFRG) status or course failure.
4. The student has completed at least 90% of closely supervised term work as shown in the COFM breakdown in the Term Work Report (TWR).
5. The student has achieved at least 60% in the closely supervised term work component as per the COFM.
6. The closely supervised component of the term work in the COFM is worth at least 30% of the final grade.

In all other cases, a deferred exam will be offered, and a Standing Deferred (SDF) will be inserted on ROSI. The CIS and TWR will be modified to reflect the above information.

In the case that it is mathematically impossible for the student to meet condition 3 above, even with a 100% in a deferred exam, the UAC will decide on the best course of action.

REVISED RULES FOR CLEARING SDF STANDING DUE TO A MISSED FINAL EXAM

Missed Final Exam: Students with valid documentation and valid reasoning shall be offered deferred exams for up to three missed final exams in a term. The UAC will take into consideration additional comments provided on the Term Work Report from the Course Instructor regarding the student's mastery of the entire course material. In cases where a student misses more than three final exams, a remedy other than deferred exams including AEG or term withdrawal may be more appropriate.

Missed Deferred Exam: Student must submit a petition with valid documentation within 7 days. The UAC will decide the best course of action for students who provide valid documentation.

Timetable Misread or oversleeping: A deferred exam will be offered with a penalty that subtracts 10 marks from the final course grade only once during a student's degree due to a misreading of the final exam timetable. The same penalty will be applied if an assessed final exam mark is granted.

Re-Write or Supplemental Examination: Students who completed their originally scheduled or deferred exam would not be considered for a supplementary examination.

PROCEDURES FOR DEFERRED EXAMINATIONS

Once a student has been granted a deferred exam, the following would occur:

1. The Undergraduate Assessment Committee (UAC) determines whether the exam will be written during the next deferred exam period or the final exam of the next standard offering of the course.
2. The Registrar's Office will notify the student, Course Instructor and the student's Academic Advisor of the decision, as well as the time, date, and location of the deferred examination.
3. The Course Instructor will submit an examination paper to the Registrar's Office by a requested date. The new examination must be of the same exam type and format as the original final exam.
4. For students who missed or failed their deferred exam, the Registrar's Office will insert the earned course grade on ROSI, and the student's academic standing will be re-assessed based on that grade. If the student is placed on repeat probation (PRO2) or refused further registration (RFRG), their registration will be cancelled, effective immediately.
5. If a new petition is submitted regarding the missed deferred examination, the UAC will decide on the best course of action.

Deferred Examination Periods: A deferred exam period will be held during Winter Reading Week for missed Fall Term exams and the first week of the Fall Term for missed Winter Term exams. Students with deferred exams are expected to be in Toronto during this time, and – as with the regular final exam period – travel plans will not be accommodated.

Graduating Students: Where possible, consideration will be given for a special deferred exam in May.

Prerequisite Courses During SDF Standing: If the student has a deferred exam for a prerequisite course, the student must immediately seek permission from their department to continue in the course while their prerequisite standing is pending. The department has the option to allow or refuse the student to proceed in the course and should notify the student and the Registrar's Office as soon as possible. If the student misses or fails the deferred exam, they will be immediately removed from any courses for which the said course was a prerequisite. To minimize any delays, the instructor of the deferred exam must return the deferred exam mark and the resulting course grade to the Registrar's Office within 7 calendar days.

Academic Standing During SDF Status: Students who would otherwise be required to withdraw due to their academic performance (PRO2/RFRG) will not be permitted to continue due to an SDF status. However, they will be permitted to write their deferred exams while not registered.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

This proposal was approved after extensive deliberations by the Undergraduate Assessment Committee on March 18, 2025.

RECOMMENDATION FOR COUNCIL

THAT the proposal to update the regulations for granting assessed marks and deferred exams as described in Report 3783 is approved, effective the Fall 2025 term.