



MEMORANDUM

To: Faculty Council of October 13, 2022

From: Professor Donald Kirk
Chair, Academic Appeals Board (Undergraduate)

Date: September 20, 2022

Re: **Annual Report of the Academic Appeals Board (Undergraduate) for the Period of September 1, 2021 to September 1, 2022**

REPORT CLASSIFICATION

The Academic Appeals Board (Undergraduate) reports directly to Faculty Council. This is a routine matter for Faculty Council's information.

ACADEMIC APPEALS BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES

To hear appeals of U of T Engineering undergraduate students against decisions of the Standing Committees of Council relating to petitions for exemptions from the application of academic regulations or standards and to make rulings on such appeals.

The AAB (Undergraduate) shall report annually to Council at the regular fall meeting indicating the number of appeals brought in the previous year and the disposition of those appeals. No information identifying appellants may be included in the annual report.

SUMMARY OF APPEALS & DISPOSITIONS

During the 2021-2022 academic year, the AAB(U) considered 23 appeals on decisions made by the Undergraduate Assessment Committee (UAC), which is up from the 10 considered during the previous cycle.

In addition to the 23 appeals considered by the AAB(U), five appeals (up from two the previous cycle) were resolved at the UAC level (each appeal is first sent back to the UAC for a second review before proceeding to the AAB(U) if the UAC's original decision stands).

The table below shows the number of appeals heard over the past eight academic years:

Academic Year	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
Number of appeals	20	24	13	10	20	18	10	23

Table 1 – Number of Appeals Per Academic Year

The appeals considered during the 2021-2022 academic year can be further categorized as the following:

- Two for considerations on final examinations.
- Twenty-one for special consideration regarding Faculty policies.

In nine of the 23 appeals, many of which introduced new documentation or elicited additional information during the hearing, the AAB(U) found cause to intervene. The specific remedies granted were:

- Further deferral of final examination (1).
- Retroactive withdrawal (“WDR”) from a term or course(s) (4).
- Retroactive withdrawal with probation relief (1).
- A change from late withdrawal (“LWD”) to aegrotat (“AEG”) status (1).
- Co-op credit granted (1).
- Retaining a credit in a repeat probation term and changing the status to “Repeat Probation – Continue” (1).

The AAB(U) found insufficient grounds to intervene in the remaining 14 appeals and rendered decisions of “no action” in these instances.

In the last academic year, one appeal to an AAB(U) decision was considered by the University’s Governing Council Academic Appeal Committee (AAC). The AAC appeal is pending review.

UPDATES, TRENDS & OBSERVATIONS WITHIN ACADEMIC APPEALS

Remote Work Changes Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The AAB(U) is continuing to conduct its hearings online as it has since March 2020. Hearings are currently held via Microsoft Teams meetings (using both audio and video). Decisions are being communicated to students via PDFs delivered by email instead of hard copies sent by mail.

Pre-closure, AAB(U) hearings lasted a half-hour each, and, often, two hearings could be scheduled during a one-hour period. The AAB(U) has found that it now needs a full hour

to consider each case. This is likely the result of the change of process and technology, as well as the complexity of the cases. As such, each case is scheduled for a one-hour period, which has increased the number of hearing dates.

It is important to note that there has been an increase in the number of appeals received in August and September and an increase in the number of requests for expedited hearings/decisions, which strains the ability of the AAB(U) to respond in a timely manner.

Membership Turnover Timelines

The Board continues to struggle to schedule hearings during the Summer Session and into September of the new academic year. The membership turnover date for the AAB(U) is September 1 each year. Faculty members are often identified on or before that date. However, due to the nature of the academic year, the Engineering Society is often not able to confirm new student representatives until August or September.

In the past, the AAB(U) has asked departing student representatives if they are able to serve on the Board throughout the summer to address the gap, however due to other obligations, understandably, students are not always able to participate through the summer months. The AAB(U) continues to work with Faculty governance to determine a solution.

Additionally, the Board has difficulties in scheduling hearings that achieve quorum due to conflicting availability and conflicts of interest. We have had very appreciated participation by Professors Fae Azhari (MIE), Francis Dawson (ECE), Harry Ruda (MSE), Elham Marzi (ISTEP) and Khandker Nurul Habib (CivMin). It should be noted that there is no Faculty representative from the Division of Engineering Science. Additionally, we appreciate the active participation of the student representatives from the 2021-2022 membership list, including Mike Le (Year 2 CivE), Saskia van Beers (PEY EngSci) and Vashish Ramoutar (PEY ChemE).

Continued Increase in Case Communication & Complexity

In line with the update from last year, increases in case communication and complexity are likely due to the efforts of the UAC to resolve student appeals within that committee. As such, the cases heard by the AAB(U) have become subjectively more complex. This has impacted the time taken at hearings and the amount of preparation undertaken by the Secretary and the Registrar's Office.

Since the cases from the end of August 2022, we have begun asking for more supporting documentation from the appellant, such as their course syllabus and grading details. This is to help the appellant be better prepared for any questions the AAB(U) may ask during the hearing. The request for additional supporting documentation is currently communicated by the Recording Secretary and is sent to the Academic Advisor. However,

the intention is to update the “Intention to Appeal” form and request the supporting documentation directly in the form.

AAB(U) Manual

The Board is currently operating under the revised manual that was approved by Faculty Council on December 16, 2021.

RECOMMENDATION FOR FACULTY COUNCIL

For information.