

REPORT NUMBER 67 OF THE ACADEMIC APPEALS BOARD

To the Academic Affairs Committee,
University of Toronto.

Your Board reports that it held a meeting on Thursday, July 2nd, 1981 at 2:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Faculty of Pharmacy, at which the following were present:

Professor J.B. Dunlop (In the Chair)
Professor Margaret C. Cahoon
Professor W.G. Grasham
Professor Kenneth G. McNeill

Mrs. Joan R. Randall
Ms. Christine M. Vercoe
Miss M. Salter, Secretary

In Attendance:

Mr. S.

Dean A.R. Ten Cate
Faculty of Dentistry

Mr. Joel Kachuck

Professor T. McNabb
Department of Biochemistry

Professor A. Bennick
Department of Biochemistry

Mr. Orest Blaschuk
Faculty of Dentistry

THE MEETING WAS HELD IN CLOSED SESSION

THE FOLLOWING ITEM IS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION

1. Mr. S.

At a meeting on July 2nd, 1981 the Academic Appeals Board heard the appeal of Mr. S. against a decision of the Appeals Committee of the Faculty of Dentistry refusing to grant his request that a grade of 59.5 in General Biochemistry be raised to 60, which is the passing grade in the Faculty of Dentistry, so that he would not be required to write a supplementary examination in the subject. The decision of the Board is that the appeal should be allowed.

The Board is not persuaded of the wisdom of a marking system that permits of a final mark half a point below the passing mark as it implies a claim to a precision of marking that is probably not justified but, of course, a regulation establishing such a system is not something with which the Board could interfere. The Board notes, however, that the Faculty of Dentistry's regulations do not seem to contemplate such a mark. The Faculty's grading scale provides that a mark of 60 is a C, which is labelled adequate and a mark of 59 or under is a failure. Apart from this, the evidence suggested that the appellant's mark should have been higher.

The total mark was based on two term tests, a final examination and a laboratory mark. In one of the term tests there was a question on a topic which the instructor had said would not be covered by the test. The instructor told the Board that it was an easy question and that the majority had got it right, but the appellant got it wrong. There was another question which was altered during the course of the test by an oral announcement which the appellant did not hear. Another student who appeared as a witness said that he and others had not heard it either, although a majority apparently did. The appellant's answer was the correct one to the question as originally formulated but, of course, was wrong as a response to the amended question.

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1. Mr. S. (Cont'd)

It is the Board's view that when the scope of an examination or test has been announced to a class it ought not to be changed without notice. The fact an offending question is easy and not of great value does not make the departure from this principle acceptable. This wrong answer should not have counted against the appellant. It is also the Board's view that where an amendment is announced during an examination it must be brought home to all examinees. The announcement in this case evidently was not adequate to accomplish this purpose. While the appellant's answer was ignored in computing his average it is the Board's view that it should have been treated as correct.

The evidence disclosed that the appellant had been in one of four laboratory sections and that the mark given to him by the demonstrator had been adjusted upward because the average mark for that section was below the mean for all sections, but had been adjusted downward to an even greater extent by the application of a standard deviation of plus or minus 10. The Board was not persuaded that the assumption as to the accuracy of the standard deviation was justified.

None of these matters has a great effect on the overall mark. Each suggests only the slightest of under evaluations. Since, however, the case involves a mark .5% below a pass, together they are enough to justify the conclusion that the appellant is entitled to a C grade in General Biochemistry.

Appeal allowed.

Secretary
August 14th, 1981

Chairman