DATE: December 19, 2008

TO: R. Sigurdson, Dean, Faculty of Arts

FROM: J. Nickels, Chair, Faculty of Arts Academic Regulations Policy Committee

SUBJECT: Report of the Faculty of Arts Academic Regulations Policy Committee

Preamble

The above committee met on December 5, 2008. The terms of reference of the Committee stipulate that it shall recommend to Faculty Council, through the Arts Executive Committee, with respect to undergraduate regulations relating to admission, General, Advanced and Honours degree programs, examinations, grading systems required performance levels, and all requirements for receiving degrees.

The committee considered the following matters:

1. **Establishing a deadline to submit an appeal for an authorized/late withdrawal from a course(s) and/or an appeal of an academic regulation.**

Observations

The Faculty of Arts does not currently have a statute of limitations or deadline date by which a student must submit an appeal of an academic regulation or for a late or authorized withdrawal from a course. Students may therefore submit an appeal for a late or authorized withdrawal many many years after a course was initially taken or an academic regulation applied. Since there is no time limit on completion of an Arts degree, it is not uncommon for the Dean’s Office to receive a request from a student 10 to 20 years after a course was taken for a late or authorized withdrawal. As a result it is very difficult for the staff in the Dean’s Office and members of the Academic Regulations Appeals Committee (ARAC) to make informed decision on appeals of such matters particularly those involving courses.

The Committee reviewed survey data on statute of limitations policies at other Canadian universities. The Committee agreed that in order to institute a statute of limitation policy on appeals it would be necessary to have a faculty policy with respect to retention by faculty members of a student’s performance information in a course.
Recommendations

It was unanimously RECOMMENDED that:

1) Students who intend to appeal matters concerning regulations or decisions of the Faculty which may affect their registration must arrange to submit a written appeal including all pertinent documentation to the secretary normally within 3 months following the term in which the course was taken or from the date of the academic decision. Appeals will not be considered beyond 3 years after the end of the course or from the date of the academic decision.

2) The Faculty of Arts Regulations for the Academic Evaluation Undergraduate Student Course Work Part E: SPECIFIC, I Method of Student Evaluation, be modified to included the following new entry with respect to retention by faculty members of a student’s performance information in a course:

Information regarding the breakdown of grades assigned to a student in a given course [i.e., grades assigned for term work, class participation, final examination, etc.] must be retained by the instructor and/or the respective department for three years following the end of term in which the course was taken.

2. Establishing Faculty policies regarding 1) submission/return of term work and 2) unreturned term work.

Observations

On August 15, 2007, The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Review Committee of the University of Manitoba (or the FIPPA Review Committee) approved the following recommendations regarding unclaimed students’ assignments in response to various departments:

- All students be made aware at the beginning of all courses that unclaimed assignments will become property of the faculty and will be subject to destruction.
- This announcement could be included on the Faculty course template thus disallowing a student’s claim they did not know of potential destruction.
- One place should be designated as storage for unclaimed student assignments, i.e. department office/storage.
- Before destruction it must be confirmed by the faculty member that these unclaimed assignments are exclusive of assignments that may be part of any ongoing process for which the assignment would be required as part of the deliberations and considerations of appeals or disciplinary actions.
- A retention of End of Term + minimum of 4 months: destroy via confidential shredding.

The FIPPA Office had also previously adopted the following general guidelines for the return of student’s course work:

Papers should be returned to students in a manner that prevents other students from having access to personal information. Papers and essays can have grades and comments placed on the inside back cover. Papers can be handed back during class, under supervision. Graded papers should not be left in ‘mail boxes’. These suggestions represent minimum standards; individual faculties may have stricter standards and academic staff should refer to these.
Since the Faculty of Arts did not have a policy regarding these matters, the Dean’s Office recommended that it would be beneficial to establish Faculty policy that could be referred to easily.

Recommendations:

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

The following policy statements regarding 1) submission /return of term work and 2) unreturned term work, be included in the Faculty of Arts Regulations for Academic Evaluation of Undergraduate Student Coursework:

1) Students should not be permitted to submit term work to the instructor (and term work should not be returned to students) by any means which allows unrestricted and unauthorized public access to the term work. For example, term papers, term tests or other written assignments should not be received or returned from a box outside the instructor’s office door, but a student could provide a self-addressed stamped envelope for return of the term work.

2) Unreturned term work must be kept in a secure and confidential department area for a minimum of four (4) months following the end of the course and until destroyed by confidential measures. The final day of the University’s Final Examination period each term is considered as the last day of the term. Instructors shall include on their course outlines a statement to the effect that unreturned term work will become the property of the Faculty of Arts and will be subject to confidential destruction.

3. **Establishing a Faculty policy that course outlines/syllabi include standard information on breaches of academic integrity.**

Observations

The University of Manitoba’s Policy on the Responsibilities of Academic Staff with Regard to Students (ROASS) contains the following statement regarding academic integrity:

4.2 The academic staff member shall provide in writing to every member of the class information regarding academic integrity which shall include: a reference to statements on academic dishonesty including “plagiarism and cheating” and “examination personation” found in the Calendar; and, where appropriate, a reference to specific course requirements for individual work and group work. Students should be made aware that a group project adheres to the principles of academic integrity. Students should also be made aware of any specific instructions concerning study groups and individual assignments. The limits of collaboration on assignments should be defined as explicitly as possible.

Given the above, course instructors are therefore free to provide the information on academic integrity in a manner of their choosing. Many instructors have chosen to include a statement on this matter in their course outline.

Over the years the Dean’s Office has provided to all teaching staff a sample course outline template to be used in the preparation of their course outlines. Although the sample template includes wording on University and Faculty policy defining breaches of academic integrity, etc, not all Arts outlines contain this statement. Some outlines include more information, some contain less or some have nothing on the matter at all.

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Over the past three years, the Faculty has seen an increase in the number of academic dishonesty cases at the various level of hearings particularly at the Arts Local Discipline Committee level.

The Local Discipline Committee is required to hear second-level appeals of decisions/penalties imposed by the Associate Dean (Undergraduate). In considering the various student cases, the Local Discipline Committee found that in many cases, the relevant course outline did not contain sufficient information regarding academic dishonesty including ranges of penalties and resources available to students. Had that information been included on the course outline, the student may have made different choices and avoided disciplinary action.

**Recommendations**

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

All Faculty of Arts course outlines will include a standard sentence approved by the Dean of Arts referring to the Faculty’s website which provides detailed information on the issues and penalties for academic dishonesty.

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I would ask that this report be transmitted to the next meeting of Arts Executive on Tuesday, January 13, 2009. I will be happy to present the report at this meeting upon your invitation.

c Sandi Pereira, Secretary, Arts Executive Committee