

"Ombudsman"

last two weeks of last December. Presumably those were all finals, presumably none of the students involved got a chance to check the accuracy of the scoring. Close to one-third of the students on this campus may have been involved.

My suggestion right now is directed at only a small sample of students. If: a) you took a multiple-choice final exam last December, and b) had no opportunity to check the accuracy of the scoring, and c) got a grade which was no more than two percentage points below the cut-off for the next higher grade, and d) are sufficiently pissed-off by that to want to do something about it — why don't you go see your instructor in that course and ask him to check your return, or let you do it?

Technically, this may fall under the provisions of the re-read clause in the University Calendar, which specifies yesterday as the deadline for re-read requests, and also mentions a \$10 fee. I don't think that clause should apply to this situation very closely, however, since it starts with the words: "Since great care is taken in marking final examination papers..." I don't think anyone can argue that "great care" is taken in this particular approach to grading, unless the instructor can show that he has seen to it that all answer sheets were hand-checked beyond what the Optical Scorer did. I think you have the right to ask for such a check, given the demonstrated inaccuracy of the existing machine-scoring procedures. And I hope someone will raise this issue at GFC or in a similar body, to try to insure that injustices of this nature either have not occurred, or can't in the future.

Meanwhile, if your instructor doesn't want to allow you that "re-read" — talk to his Chairman, his Dean, or me.

Correction: last Thursday I fell into one of my elitist habits, associating the term "Professor" with the title "Doctor." Prof. Davey should not have been identified as Dr. Davey. My apologies for this error of fact.

an excellent job, but that they are performing services well beyond the normal call of duty. For example, they automatically score every exam twice, and retain the program which identifies answer sheets on which too many blanks are recorded, so that they can pull those out and make sure that the machine isn't reading badly; say, because the student used the wrong pencil or missed the spaces. They sit down and hand-correct answer sheets when the students have made obvious mistakes, such as X'ing out, instead of erasing revised answers. All of this is more than you or I have any right to ask for.

Nevertheless, mistakes still occur which do not seem to be traceable either to these common faults, or to any other consistent patterns. The scoring machine is old, and Computing Services has applied for funds for a new one; that may improve things, but doesn't help now.

The problem, at the moment, lies with those instructors and departments that do not allow students to check the accuracy of the scoring on all such exams. While there are often "good" reasons for not doing that: time pressures or having to enter final grades a few days after the final exams; desire to keep exams confidential so that the questions can be re-used, etc. These reasons do not seem to me to outweigh the potential injustice of assigning a student a lower grade than what he has earned solely because the machine has made a mistake.

How often do these mistakes occur? I don't know — nobody does. The one semester in which I've used the Optical Scorer heavily I found such mistakes, on a bad day, on 10 per cent or more of the returns — most of them giving the students a lower grade than what they'd earned, some a higher. And the difference was marked — up to four or five points off out of 20 or 30. In terms of how many students are affected by this, it is hard to get precise numbers; but Computing Services tells me they scored some 5600 answer sheets from 80 courses in the

A student mentioned to me the other day that she had missed getting an 8 in one of her courses by half a percentage point; another told me that he'd missed qualifying for admission to the Med School by .05 GPA points. These are unfortunate episodes; but under ordinary circumstances there is very little you can do about them, except chalk them up to ridiculous bad luck and try to live with them.

In one rather significant respect, however, the circumstances were not "ordinary" — or, if they were in a statistical sense of that word, they shouldn't have been.

The reason for that is that the girl in question had received the score in question in a course in which more than one-third of the final grade depended upon the final exam, and that final exam was both multiple-choice and machine-scored, and, in common with most other courses using machine-scored finals, she was given no feedback on her performance on that exam, other than the numerical score. What's wrong with that? Well, aside from the fact that exams are supposed to have educational value (at least in theory) and they don't if you don't get feedback; the only thing that's wrong is that the Optical Scoring machine that grades the multiple-choice exams is not entirely accurate. It makes mistakes — and there's no way you can find out whether a mistake has been made or not, without checking each paper individually.

Most instructors don't do that, I think. If students are not given back their answer sheets, along with a list of correct answers, they can't check either. Under those circumstances, if a mistake has been made, it will go completely undetected.

The problem here is tricky, and it is easy to get over-exercised about it. Let me try to be very clear about what I am not, and what I am saying.

First of all, I do not want in any way to suggest that people in Computing Sciences who run that machine, in the contrary, my guess is that they're not only doing

GFC exec. defers appeal proposal

by Allen Young

The U of A may see significant changes in grievance and appeal procedures if proposals presented to the executive committee of the General Faculties Council (GFC) are implemented. At an executive meeting Monday, Greg Noval, GFC Arts faculty member, requested the executive recommend that GFC establish a committee, or amend the terms of reference of existing committees, to yield a body which will deal with students' grievances concerning admissions, marking, and teaching practices above and beyond the faculty level.

The executive referred the motion to the newly-created Dean of Students office, with provision for input from the Students' Union and any other interested organizations.

Presently students appeals and grievance procedures, as students first approach their instructor, then the department chairman concerned. The student may then approach the dean or director of their faculty, and finally, take the grievance to the GFC appeals committee.

Problems with this existing structure which necessitate the change, according to Noval, stem from limited authority of the academic appeals committee. First, the committee has no authority to hear an appeal concerning a mark in an individual course. Second, the

Monday, January 31, between 2:00 and 4:00 P.M. in Room 128B, Administration Building.

To assist with arrangements for seating, please telephone 432-5456 before 4:30 P.M. Fri., Jan. 28/77.

Further information may be obtained from: The Students Programme Office Faculty of Environmental Design The University of Calgary Calgary, Alberta Phone 403-284-6601

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