

### Arts & Science tightens up

# Formal grading procedure recommended

by Emmi Duffy

At the March 5 Senate Council meeting, the Faculty of Arts and Science recommended that, as of the 1973 summer session, there be no more courses like History 100 where marks are not based on the professor's evaluation of formal assignments and exams.

The motion was amended to allow one innovative course per department at the elementary level, but the transcript would say that perhaps the mark was based on attendance or self-evaluation.

Moved by Political Science Professor Heard and seconded by Commerce Professor Zinck, the recommendation states: "that the Faculty of Arts and Science reaffirm its position that all grades awarded in the faculty must be based on the instructor's bonafide assessment of the level of his students' performance in formal class assignments and/or examinations; it consequently cannot accept the validity of grades awarded on any other basis, in particular grades which are awarded on the sole basis of attendance or grades which students individually assign themselves without further check; it therefore directs that in future (i.e. with effect from the summer of 1973) transcripts of students in classes in which the proposed grading system contravenes this faculty rule should record no more than that the students have audited such classes."

Philosophy Professor Braybrooke's amendment to the motion adds "except that each department may designate one elementary class in which, for purposes of innovation in content and method, the grading need not conform to the sense of this resolution — the transcripts of students taking such designated classes to indicate that such classes may have been graded on the basis of attendance alone or in some other non standard way."

Heard, in an interview with the GAZETTE, stated, "there were two principle reasons for introducing the motion. First in the Arts and Science Faculty regulation that the grade be based on the professor's evaluation of the students' performance. Therefore to award a grade in line with some other basis is to contravene the regulation. If you have rules, you must act in accordance with the rules until the rules are changed."

"Secondly, outside bodies whether they be our own Law School or Med School, other universities or employers, assume grades to be based on professors' evaluations. If the mark is based on the fact that the

student attended the classes or what the student thinks of his own performance or ability, then our transcript may not be recognized. This devaluation of Dalhousie would affect all Dal students whether a part of the class or not."

Heard said he wished to make it clear it was not an attempt to stop such classes as History 100.

"All that I'm concerned about is what the grade represents."

Professor Zinck, seconder of the motion, explained that he was "somewhat disturbed at the basic concept of a mark where very little attention is paid to the academic part. It may not even be based on attendance since one student told me his girlfriend passes his cards in. This could lead the university to be regarded as a laughing-stock."

Zinck was also worried about the "fairness to outsiders," feeling "these marks are misleading, although it doesn't mean anything is wrong with the class itself."

Braybrooke expressed the same sentiments. "There is an understanding on the part of the public and this includes other universities, employers like school boards, corporations, federal services that by and large, grades do represent the mark the student has earned for better or for worse."

He explained he made the statement because he realized that, although he wished to support Heard's motion, "it would limit the genuine efforts of people experimenting with different approaches."

History Department Chairman P. Burroughs commented "while I wouldn't be prepared to do this with my own classes, since I teach in a traditional manner and also don't have any first year courses, I am

in favour of the individual instructor coming to his own decision in regards to course content, method of instruction and assessment."

Professor David Crook who teaches History 100 with Professor J. F. Godfrey attributed the action to a drop in the enrolment figures for Political Science 100, Economics 100 and a substantial increase in the enrolment figure for History 100 from 250 last year to 650 this year.

While there is some prestige attached to a heavy enrolment, there is also what Crook terms "bargaining clout". He does not believe, however, that there is any financial advantage in the form of budget allocation.

According to Crook, the action came as something of a surprise since "as far as I know, the study methods committee and practically no faculty members outside the history department have ever enquired as to what we're doing. I'm also perplexed because the motion says faculty reaffirms its position and refers to faculty regulation 2.5, 1963-69 catalogue."

Crook contends that faculty never affirmed its position in the first place. The regulation is not an explicit statement and furthermore has never been publicized.

"If it is valid for this year, then it should be in this year's calendar."

Much of the criticism and consequent concern is that such courses tend to lessen the department's credibility; that is, the department's courses become known as "bird courses, easy credits, mickey mouse." Crook believes that History 100, "in dispensing with the prestige of being academic, caused students to be less turned off."

"The big problem with the History department is to



Crook and Godfrey, History 100 profs.

(peter clarke/dal photo)

create interest and involvement in a subject that is traditionally thought of as being dry."

One History 100 student said, "In the beginning, I thought it would be an easy credit but now I'm glad I took it. In the past the onus has been on the student to learn and not enough emphasis has been on the teacher to teach. In History 100 this has been balanced; the teacher must make the lecture interesting."

It has been charged that experimental courses are supposed to be checked out and History 100 was offered for scrutiny. Consequently it did not get faculty approval. Crook argues that History 100 is not an experimental course.

"It is not a one-shot affair; it is merely a revision of an already existing course. Therefore, faculty approval is not required."

In regards to the amendment calling for transcript

notations, Crook believes "there is nothing which you could put on a transcript to make it look silly or frivolous. University transcripts, taken en masse, are unreadable. Recommendations are far more important."

He also thinks the problem lies with people, mainly cynical upperclassmen who attach no value to what they are doing. One student thought it was a good idea to qualify the mark because "it's only fair because otherwise only 'freebees' would take it."

As it stands now, the recommendation has been sent back to the Faculty of Arts and Science for "better documentation and concise recommendations."

Crook concluded, "The real test will be next September on registration day. Students vote with their feet. If only three students register, I'm willing to pack it in."

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