

QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Minutes for the meeting held on Wednesday, November 22nd, 2017

The Registrar, Ms. Pat Canale convened the meeting with the following members concerning Medical appeals/Mental Health appeals.

Those in attendance were as follows:

Registrar Ms. Pat Canale, Dr. George Fragopoulos, Chair -English Department, Dr. Wilma Anthony, Director Counseling Office, Ms. Isabel Hocevar Director Health Services and Ms. Christine Machado Health Services.

Administration Representatives:

*Associate Registrar Ms. Florence Farrat
Meera Chowdhry, Committee Secretary.*

Discussion:

Ms. Canale had concerns about FERPA violations while our handling the students' appeals. Students submit supporting documents which could be their medical documents. Ms. Canale's concern is that any health related documents of the students and/or family members should never go beyond the people who are responsible for making a decision.

At present times, the appeals that are being reviewed by the Counseling Office are mainly for mental health issues. The Counseling Office has set down guidelines for the students for providing the documents, (copy attached). Once the appeal has been made a decision upon, the documents are then downloaded into a secure database. Counseling Office is ascertaining the privacy and confidentiality of the documents.

Likewise, Health Services has a guideline (copy attached) for the students' documents. They should be able to provide documents covering the semester/the dates of their being incapacitated. The basis of appeals approved by the Health Services does have some exceptions to the rules for example a student may be visiting a physical therapist during the morning hours. As long as they are able to provide official documents, students are granted withdrawals for courses selectively. However, the Health Services' basis of the approval is either all or none of the courses. It is assumed that if a student is incapacitated, it is so from all of the courses. After the decision, the Registrar's Office is informed in order for them to change the grades. All supporting medical documents are retained with the Health Services and are secured.

Ms. Hocevar had a concern about other departments asking students for their medical documents. The Registrar, Ms. Canale would take up the issue with the Admissions Office to sort the matter. Also, the students should not submit any kind of medical documents other than to the Health Services or Counseling Office. It was stated by both Dr. Anthony and Ms. Hocevar that their Departments are adhering to sending letters to the professors about students' withdrawals as against their looking at medical support documents.

It was stated that sometimes students include confidential information on the appeal, we have therefore, made certain changes to the Appeal Form where they are made aware of the possibility that the documents are being looked at by all necessary parties including, but not limited to the Committee on Course & Standing. However, Ms. Canale feels this does not in any way completely relieve us of our responsibility to keep students confidentiality.

The members discussed different measure to be taken in complying with the confidentiality of student health related documents. It was suggested if we could have a sub-committee to the Committee on Course & Standing the members of the sub-committee could vet the documents before releasing. The appeals are time sensitive and holding them could cause students to miss the deadlines for readmission/Financial Aid appeals.

The most viable solution, that was reached upon by all attending members was using a secured drop box at the Registrar's Office. When the students submit their appeals at the front office, they would be provided with an envelope where they would be able to select if the appeal is regular/health/mental health. The envelope could then be hand-delivered to the department concerned. This would safe-guard students' confidentiality to a great extent.

The other changes that have been made to the Appeal Form are; removal of options – mail-in and fax. The appeals could only be either hand-delivered to the Registrar's Office in a sealed envelope or scanned and e-mailed to a secured e-mail I.D.