

# Accounting Office Changes Rules on Bookstore Charges

By Steve Brun

Before the start of UPEI's 2003 fall semester, the campus bookstore was informed by the accounting office that they would not be permitted to charge items to their individual student accounts after September 30th. While this may seem trivial to some, there are students who would prefer that the system remained the same as it was in previous years, where students were permitted to charge bookstore items to their accounts during the entire semester.

"The original policy was based on the premise that students in general should have obtained their textbooks within the first 4 weeks of the semester," says Belinda Rogers, Manager of the Accounting Office at UPEI; she adds that the original policy came into effect to aid students who were awaiting student loans and did not yet have the means to pay for any course materials. "Operationally, over the years, the timelines have expanded," Ms. Rogers explains.

Although the majority of students do not usually require course materials after the first month of the semester, there are still some issues that may warrant this extension of the timelines over the years. Many Arts students, for example, may have English courses that require several texts to be read on a book-by-book basis according to their syllabus. The extended policy would have a greater advantage to these students, as they do not necessarily need all of these books at the beginning of the semester. Some of the books may also become unnecessary as an absence of a professor due to illness, winter storm cancellations, and miss scheduling could affect the course schedule and lead to a book being dropped

from the syllabus.

The accounting office is quick to point out, however, that they are more than willing to work with students who express concern with the change in policy, and it is sensitive to the various needs of students.

This policy will also be in effect for the 2004 winter semester, and additional notifications throughout the campus, not solely within the bookstore, will be provided. "As it is believed that all students should have their books by the 4th week of classes, more publicity did not seem warranted (for this semester)," Ms. Rogers says.

While the accounting office is understandably clearing up a system that may have stretched out of hand, there are legitimate arguments for allowing the all-semester charge system to remain in place. Students are given the duration of the semester to pay off their accounts, and it is true that most students do have all their course material by the first few weeks of the semester. This does not extend, however, to supplies and clothing articles which students may wish to purchase for Christmas gifts, or for other occasions and may not have the available funds to pay for the items on the spot.

Discussion about this idea would be helpful, and – who knows? – It could become a platform issue for next year's student council elections if the rule doesn't change before that. The costs of education are arguably unreasonable for students today, so might not the administration be able to help us out with this small aspect of campus life? I think so. For any students who have an issue they would like to raise with the change in bookstore policy, the accounting office urges anyone to drop by and they will attempt to help to the best of their abilities.

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