

## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

### Appeal of an Academic Course Grade

This section describes the process for an academic grade appeal for undergraduate students. The relevant policy for grade appeal by graduate students can be found in the Graduate Catalog.

The assessment of the quality of a student's academic performance is solely and properly one of the major responsibilities of university faculty members. A grade appeal is not appropriate when a student simply disagrees with the faculty member's judgment about the quality of the student's work. Grade appeals should be based on problems of process and not on differences in opinion concerning academic performance. A student who is uncertain about whether or not a grade should be appealed or who needs additional information about the grade appeal process can contact the department head's office (or dean's office should the instructor be the department head). This policy is implemented within the college that administratively houses the department through which the course was offered, irrespective of a student's major or class standing.

The grade appeal process is designed to give the student an opportunity to correct an injustice. Disagreement or dissatisfaction with a faculty member's professional evaluation of coursework is not the basis for a grade appeal. It should only be utilized when the student contends that the final grade assigned for the course by the instructor is a result of procedural/calculation error, a result of prejudice, or is arbitrary and/or capricious. Arbitrary and/or capricious here implies that,

- 1) The student has been assigned a grade on the basis of something other than their performance in the course; or
- 2) Standards utilized in determining final course grade were not evenly applied to all students in the course; or
- 3) The grade is based on standards that are unannounced or are substantially different and unreasonable departures from those articulated in the course syllabus at the beginning of the course.

The burden of proof is always on the student appellant to prove that a change of grade is an appropriate action in their case.

### Informal

In all cases, the student must begin a grade appeal process informally with the instructor involved to attempt to resolve the disagreement in a cooperative atmosphere. The student must explain their position to the instructor and attempt to understand the justification for the grade assigned by the instructor. The purpose of the meeting is to reach a mutual understanding of the student's situation and the instructor's actions and to resolve differences in an informal and cooperative manner. If the student and instructor cannot, after consultation, reach a satisfactory resolution, the student may begin a formal grade appeal process based on procedural/calculation error, prejudice, or an arbitrary and/or capricious assertion.

## Formal

The following apply to the formal appeal process for an academic final course grade assigned by an instructor and challenged by a student that has failed to reach a resolution during the informal process.

1. Appeal of a final course grade must be made by the student directly affected and must be made immediately following the conclusion of the course. Immediately, here, means before the beginning of another semester or summer term.
2. All appeals of a grade must begin with the student making a written appeal to the instructor involved and explaining the nature of the problem and the student's desired resolution. In the case of an instructor who has terminated his/her association with the University, the appeal would begin with the department head or to the dean of the college if the department head should be the instructor involved. Appeals must be presented in writing and contain the following information:
  - (a) A listing of the student name, course prefix, number, section, semester term/year and instructor of course;
  - (b) A clear concise statement describing the specific supporting evidence of arbitrary and/or capricious grading as defined above must be provided. It is very important that the basis of the appeal is clearly understood.;
  - (c) A brief summary of the prior informal attempts to resolve the matter and the results of those previous discussions; and
  - (d) A specific statement of the action or resolution sought.

The instructor (or department head/dean) will have 10 business days to provide a written response to the student appellant. If the instructor is a department head who has left the University and the dean determines no grade change is warranted, the appeals process is completed.

3. If the appeal is not resolved in the previous step, within 5 business days of the date of the written response from the instructor, the student wishing further consideration would take the issue and documents to the head of the department in which the course is taught, or to the dean of the college if the department head should be the instructor involved. The department head (or dean) will review the case and make a judgment on the appeal to determine if a change of grade is warranted. The department head (or dean) will provide a written notice to the instructor and student appellant of their decision within 10 business days of receiving the documents from the student appellant. If the instructor is a department head and the dean determines no grade change is warranted, the appeals process is completed.
4. If the student wishes further consideration after the previous step, within 5 business days of the date of the written response from the department head, the student may appeal to the dean of the college offering the course only if the student has new evidence pertaining directly to their case that was not reasonably available at the time of the initial appeal or contends that the procedures outlined here were not followed. The student would submit a written formal presentation of the case, with all related supporting documents, to the dean. Should the dean determine that there is no new relevant evidence or that procedures were properly followed, the appeals process is completed and the student appellant will be notified in writing within 5 business days. If the dean agrees that there is new relevant evidence or that procedures were not followed, an ad hoc hearing committee will be appointed. The committee will be composed of three faculty members from the college in which the course is offered, or two from the college and one from the student's major department, if that department is not in the same college as that in which the course is offered. The committee members will be appointed by the dean(s) of the college(s) involved. The committee will review the documents and can then either reject the appeal on the basis of its content or proceed to investigate further. The committee will have full cooperation of all parties in gathering information and conducting interviews for the hearing. Once an issue is before the committee, the committee shall have the authority to recommend a lower grade, recommend a higher grade, or recommend no change of a grade. Review by the committee should be completed within 15 business days of

the submission of the written presentation of the case to the dean by the student appellant. The committee recommendation will be conveyed to the dean of the college in which the course is offered. The dean would inform the student appellant, instructor, department head, and registrar of any grade change for the course if applicable. The dean's determination is final.

### **Appeal of an Academic Undergraduate Program Dismissal**

The following apply for an undergraduate student appeal of program dismissal having been made by an academic department. The procedure for a graduate student appeal of program dismissal is outlined in the Graduate Catalog.

1. Appeal of a program dismissal must be made by the student directly affected and must be made immediately following the departmental decision to the department head. Immediately, here, means within 10 business day of the date of the dismissal notification.
2. It is very important that the basis of the appeal is clearly understood. Appeals must be presented in writing and contain the following information:
  - (a) A clear concise statement about the student's desire and motivation for reinstatement must be provided;
  - (b) A brief summary of any prior informal attempts to resolve the matter and the results of those previous discussions; and
  - (c) A specific statement of the action or resolution sought.
3. If the student wishes further consideration after the previous step, within 5 business days of the date of the written response from the department head, the student may appeal to the dean of the college in which the academic program department is housed only if the student has new evidence pertaining directly to their case that was not reasonably available at the time of the initial appeal or contends that the procedures outlined here were not followed. The student would submit a written formal presentation of the case, with all related supporting documents, to the dean. Should the dean determine that there is no new relevant evidence or that procedures were properly followed, the appeals process is completed and the student appellant will be notified in writing within 5 business days. If the dean agrees that there is new relevant evidence or that procedures were not followed, an ad hoc hearing committee will be appointed. The committee will be composed of three faculty members from the college in which the academic program is administered. The committee will select its own chairperson. The committee will review the documents and can then either reject the appeal on the basis of its content or proceed to investigate further. The committee will have full cooperation of all parties in gathering information and conducting interviews for the hearing. The committee shall have the authority to recommend that the student be retained in the program or confirm the original dismissal decision of the department. Review by the committee should be completed within 15 business days of the submission of the written presentation of the case to the dean by the student appellant. The committee recommendation will be conveyed to the dean of the college who will notify the department head and student appellant in writing of the committee's decision.

### **Other Academic Grievances**

Other grievances relating to an instructor will proceed through an appeal to the department head, dean of the college, and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Vice President for Academic Affairs will evaluate the grievance to determine if the charge and evidence warrants initiating proceedings against the instructor under the appropriate provisions in the "Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure" approved by the Board of Trustees.