

# ACADEMIC GRIEVANCES

## Purpose

The following procedures are designed to provide a means for graduate students to petition for review of final course grades alleged to be incorrect. Before filing a formal appeal, students are urged to resolve grievances informally with the instructor of the course. Students filing a written appeal shall be expected to abide by the final decision of the committee to which it is submitted, as provided for in these procedures. This decision precludes any further review under any other procedure within the University.

## Conditions

A student may seek a review of a final grade if he or she feels that one of the following conditions applies: A grade was assigned on some basis other than performance in the course, or the standards applied to a grade were not the same as those applied to the standards of other students in the course, or the assigned grade represents a substantial and unannounced departure from the instructor's previously stated standards.

## Procedures

A student who feels that his or her grade is incorrect should follow one or all of the following:

Confer promptly with the instructor of the course.

If the instructor is unavailable and cannot be reached by the student after a reasonable effort, then the student shall consult with the chair of the department offering the course.

If the student and instructor or department chair are unable to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution, the student may file an appeal within twenty (20) days after the first day of class of the next semester (not including summers) with a standing committee of three (3) tenured faculty members of the department offering the course.

If the instructor of the course is a member of the committee, he or she shall be replaced by a tenured faculty member selected by the chair of the department.

File an appeal by submitting to the departmental committee a detailed statement regarding the alleged improper grade as well as any relevant evidence. The appeal shall be dismissed if the student has submitted the same or substantially the same complaint to any other grade review procedure, the appeal is not timely, or the student has not conferred with the instructor or department chair before filing the appeal.

Allow the departmental committee to take action. If the appeal is not dismissed, the committee shall submit a copy of the student's written appeal to the instructor with a request for a prompt written reply.

Work toward a mutually agreeable solution in concert with the committee and the instructor. If a mutually agreeable solution is not achieved, the committee shall advise both the student and the instructor that the matter has been sent to the Dean of the academic unit offering the course. The Dean of the academic unit shall convene a committee of three (3) tenured faculty members from departments outside of the department offering the course. This committee shall hold an informal, non-adversarial fact-finding meeting concerning the dispute. Both the student and the instructor shall be entitled to be present throughout

this meeting and to present any evidence deemed relevant, except the student shall not be present during the discussion of any other student. Neither the student nor the instructor shall be accompanied by counsel, an advocate, or a representative. The meeting shall be closed to the public. After the fact-finding meeting, if the majority of the committee finds that the evidence supports the student's complaint, the committee shall take any action thought to rectify the situation, including, but not limited to:

- directing the instructor to re-grade the student's work,
- directing the instructor to administer a new final examination or paper in the course,
- directing the cancellation of the student's registration in the course, or
- if no reasonable alternative is available, directing the instructor to award a grade of "pass" in the course.

The committee is not authorized to award a letter grade, or to reprimand, or otherwise take disciplinary action against the instructor. The decision of the committee is final and shall be promptly reported in writing to the parties involved. The Dean of the academic unit has the responsibility for implementing the decision of the committee.

In the event that the Department does not and/or is not able to convene a committee to review the grade appeal the student may appeal directly to the Dean of the Graduate School. If necessary, the Dean of the Graduate School will appoint a committee of three graduate faculty members to review the grade appeal. Once appointed the committee will review the grade appeal as outlined above and the decision of the committee is final and shall be promptly reported in writing to the parties involved. The Dean of the academic unit has the responsibility for implementing the decision of the committee.

For other grievances concerning procedures and processes directly concerning graduate students, the procedure is the same with the exception that if the departmental committee fails to achieve a mutually satisfactory solution, the committee or the student may appeal directly to the Dean of the Graduate School. The Dean of the Graduate School will attempt to resolve the issue through consultation. If the consultation fails to produce a mutually satisfactory outcome, the Dean will appoint a committee made up of regular graduate faculty from outside the department in question to conduct an inquiry. The committee will hear from all parties concerned. Its decision will be final.