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## **GRADE APPEAL PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Abstract**

*This update provides an alternative way to appoint a student representative.*

**Key Words:** *grading, appeals, timeline*

**Author/Source:** *APC, SAC*

### **Responsible Unit(s)**

*VP of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, Provost and VP Academic Affairs, AVP Enrollment Management*

### **History**

Version	Approved	Revisions(s)
3	04/23/2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Provide for alternative route to appoint student representative</i></li></ul>
2	04/17/2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Timeline clarification</i></li><li>• <i>Adds non-voting student member</i></li><li>• <i>Clarifies information flow and availability</i></li><li>• <i>Acknowledges role of associate deans and other members of deans' offices in the appeals process.</i></li><li>• <i>Uses more consistent terminology</i></li></ul>
1	05/11/2004	Original

# Preface

The AAUP Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure establishes the following principles in assigning grades: (1) the faculty has the responsibility for the assignment of grades; (2) students should be free from prejudicial or capricious grading; and (3) no grade may be assigned or changed without faculty authorization. The review of a student complaint over a grade should be by faculty, under procedures adopted by faculty, and any resulting change in grade should be by faculty authorization.”

This revised policy on grade appeals practices and procedures supersedes AS Policy #1G (November 8, 1981) and S04-230 and conforms to Chancellors Office Executive Order No. 1037 Grading Symbols, Minimum Standards Governing the Assignment of Grades, Policies on the Repetition of Course, Policies on Academic Renewal, and Grade Appeals August 1, 2009).

## Definition of Terms

1. **Appealable Grade:** A grade is appealable when the grade assigned as a final course grade does not reflect what the student has earned according to the criteria for grading as outlined by the instructor of the course in the syllabus and other course materials.
2. **Instructor:** The instructor of record of the course, thesis, or project who is responsible for evaluation and determination of the final grade.
3. **Chair:** The chair is the chair of the academic department or designee.
4. **Dean:** The dean is the dean of the college or designee.

## Introduction

The following recommendations are set forth in an attempt to offset the need to initiate formal grade appeal procedures.

1. The formal grade appeal process is a serious procedure which should only be initiated when the grade assigned does not reflect the criteria for grading as outlined by the instructor. It is the responsibility of the instructor to define the grading policy as early in the semester and as explicitly as possible while conforming to accepted university practices. If there is any deviation from this original statement of policy, all affected students should be informed in writing.
2. It shall be assumed that the grade assigned is correct and that the student appealing the grade must justify the need for a change of the grade assigned. The student must submit a written justification for a grade change that addresses why the grade should be changed comparing the student's performance relative to the course grading criteria. This document should be submitted to the instructor prior to any meeting between the instructor and the student appealing their grade.
3. Procedural questions (e.g., allegations of improper grade appeal procedure) shall be referred to the University Counsel or designee, but the evaluation of the extent to which the instructors grading criteria were or were not followed will not be conducted beyond the college level.
4. Normally, grade appeals should be resolved informally between the student and faculty involved. A student who believes he/she has been assigned an appealable grade, as defined in definition of terms, should meet with the instructor of and together review the grading procedures used to determine the grade assigned on the student's transcript. If the student and instructor are unable to resolve their differences, the department chair will attempt to serve as mediator working with the individuals to resolve the dispute.
5. If the instructor refuses to take part in the informal process described in the paragraph above, or if following this process, the student is still dissatisfied, the student may initiate the formal grade appeal procedure.

## Formal Grade Appeal Procedure

The following steps define the progress of the formal grade appeal procedures.

1. Formal grade appeals must be initiated by the student submitting a written justification to the instructor by the end of the fourth week of the semester following the award of the grade (Appendix B. Petition for Grade Appeal). The instructor may change a grade if it is found that there was an error, work was overlooked, etc. Except for changes made by the instructor, grades shall not be changed except through the appeal process.
2. Normally, any differences of opinion between an instructor and student concerning a grade herein relevant should be resolved between the individuals involved. If the instructor will not be available within one semester, the appeal may be postponed with the written agreement of the student until the instructor returns to campus. Alternatively, the instructor may agree to engage in a grade appeal by distance communication (e.g., email or telephone). The department chair may choose to act in lieu of the instructor for the purpose of grade appeals only if the instructor will not be available to participate by the end of the eighth week of the semester that the appeal was submitted. If

neither the instructor nor the chair will fulfill the instructor role, then a college Grade Appeals Committee (GAC) shall be formed by the college dean for review of the appeal (see section 4).

3. If the instructor and student cannot resolve their differences of opinion, the student must present a written brief outlining the problem and the area of disagreement to the department chair that includes the original justification sent to the instructor (Appendix B. Petition for Grade Appeal). The Petition for Grade Appeal must be submitted to the chair by the end of the eighth week of the semester following the award of the grade. The department chair will inform the instructor a grade appeal brief has been filed, the instructor will be given the student brief to review, and the instructor will be required to provide a written response to the department chair within ten working days. The department chair will then decide if a meeting should be held. The meeting will include the student, instructor, and department chair. The department chair will attempt to serve as mediator working with the individuals to resolve the dispute. If this mediation proves unsuccessful within fifteen working days of the instructor response, the department chair shall forward the Petition for Grade Appeal, instructor response, and department chair comments to the college dean.
4. The college dean will review the findings to date and will attempt to act as a mediator in resolving the dispute. If mediation at the college level does not lead to resolution within fifteen working days from the notification by the department chair, then a college Grade Appeal Committee (GAC) shall be formed by the college dean. This committee shall include the following persons:

□ Three qualified<sup>1</sup> faculty members from the university: one selected by the instructor of record, one by the student appealing the grade<sup>2</sup>, and one by the college dean.

- In accordance with Executive Order 1037, in addition to the three faculty, a student shall be appointed to the GAC. The student's role in the committee is limited to discussing whether in fact the evidence presented establishes that the grade assigned was erroneous, capricious, or prejudicial or involved the inconsistent or inequitable application of standards for evaluation; and if the evidence does establish that one of these conditions was operative. The student shall not participate in the assignment of grades. This student will be appointed by Associated Students.
- It is possible for the instructor or student to challenge the composition of the committee. Such a challenge will be resolved by college dean's office; however, it can be requested to be elevated to the Dean of Faculty Affairs by the instructor or Dean of Students by the student.
- If a GAC representative (faculty or student) is not appointed according to the timeline (appendix A), a representative will be appointed by the Student Affairs Committee in consultation with the college dean's office.

The GAC shall elect its own chair. A simple majority shall prevail in the GAC.

1. The Petition for Grade Appeal, all pertinent data, papers, records, etc., together with written briefs, will be submitted to the GAC for study by the dean. Both the student and instructor will be given all materials used by the GAC at least ten working days before an initial GAC meeting. The initial GAC meeting will occur within twenty working days of the GAC formation. The GAC may meet individually or collectively with those involved in its quest for determination, and the GAC may choose to continue mediation efforts. Each party may bring an additional person not on the GAC with them as support or spokesperson at any stage in the process; however, the instructor is limited to bringing a current university employee. The student or instructor has the option of meeting with the GAC without the other party present.
2. The function of the GAC shall be to evaluate the grading procedures as well as to, if necessary, re-evaluate the student's assignments for the course in terms of criteria established by the instructor of the course. The GAC may decide to keep the assigned grade, or to raise the assigned grade.
3. The GAC shall provide a written justification to the college dean for its decision, including minority opinions when they exist, within ten working days of the original GAC meeting. The college dean shall inform the student and the instructor of the GAC's ruling and provide both parties with copies of the committee report.
4. In the case of a change of grade, if the instructor does not implement the change of grade decided upon by the committee within ten working days, the dean shall implement the change of grade on the student's official transcript through the ordinary change of grade procedure. This shall be the last step in the deliberation of the formal grade appeal.
5. The college dean shall provide a written record of the results of all grade appeals to the VPAA/Provost. College deans shall also provide an annual summary to the Academic Senate of the number of cases heard and the result of each case.

1. A "Qualified faculty" means one or more persons with academic training comparable to the instructor of record who are present on the faculty at the campus (Executive Order No. 792).
2. If the student appealing the grade cannot find a qualified college faculty person to serve, the college dean shall appoint the third faculty person.

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Action</b>
End of fourth week of the semester following the award of the grade.	Formal grade appeals must be initiated by the student submitting a Petition for Grade Appeal to the instructor.
End of the eighth week of the semester that the appeal was submitted	Deadline for the student promoting the Petition for Grade Appeal to the chair.
End of the eighth week of the semester that the appeal was submitted	The department chair may choose to act in lieu of the instructor for the purpose of grade appeals, only if the instructor will not be available to participate by the end of the eighth week of the semester that the appeal was submitted.
Within ten working days of being informed by the department chair that the Petition for Grade Appeal has been submitted and shared	Instructor must provide a written response to chair regarding the student's grade appeal brief.
Within fifteen working days of the instructor response	The department chair shall forward the student's brief, instructor response, and department chair comments to the college dean.
Within fifteen working days after the notification by the department chair	A college Grade Appeal Committee (GAC) shall be formed by the college dean.
At least ten working days before an initial GAC meeting	Both the student and instructor will be given all materials used by the GAC.
Within twenty working days of GAC formation	The initial GAC meeting will occur.
Within ten working days after the original GAC meeting	The GAC shall provide a written justification to the college dean for its decision including minority opinions when they exist.
Within ten working days after the GAC decision	The dean shall implement the change of grade if the instructor has not done so.

Appendix B. Petition for Grade Appeal



Last Name Number	First Name	Middle Initial	Student ID
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## PETITION FOR GRADE APPEAL

**Normally, the student and instructor meet to review the grading procedures used to determine the grade assigned before any formal grade appeal process is initiated.** This form must be completed in full and submitted to the instructor by the end of the fourth week of the semester following the award of the grade. Please refer to the Academic Senate policy on Grade Appeal Practices and Procedures: <https://senate.sfsu.edu/policy/grade-appeal-practices-procedures>.

**This *Petition for Grade Appeal* submission must include the following:**

- The syllabus for the course
- A written justification for a grade appeal that addresses how the grade should be changed based on the student's performance relative to the course grading criteria. Supporting documentation should be included, if possible, to support the justification. Examples of supporting documentation are:
  - Any record of relevant communications with the professor (e.g. copies of emails, etc.)
  - Copies of course assignments, papers, exams, etc. that are relevant to the appeal

Dept. & Course #: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Term/Year course taken: \_\_\_\_\_

Units: \_\_\_\_\_ Course Title:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Instructor:  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Student's justification for requesting a grade appeal** (please attach justification, maximum of 250 words):

I understand that any documentation provided will be shared with those who are charged with reviewing this petition. I have completed the informal process of requesting a grade change without satisfactory resolution.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Department Chair Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date:  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_