

**Reference Number:** S04-230

**Senate Approval Date:** Tuesday, May 11, 2004

## **Grade Appeal Practices and Procedures**

### **S04-230**

*(formerly Academic Senate Policy 1G)*

\*NB: page 2 paragraphs 4-6 have been rewritten for increased clarity, and a mid-semester deadline for grade appeals has been added to a paragraph numbered 1. A phrase was removed from the very last paragraph on page 4 so now all grade appeals are reported to the AAVP.

### **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. It provides, in relevant part, that administrators should not "substitute their judgment for that of the faculty concerning the assignment of a grade. 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 conforms to Chancellor's Office Executive Order No. 792 "Grading Symbols, Assignment of Grades, and Grade Appeals (November 12, 2001).

### **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.
2. **Instructor of Record:** The instructor of the course, thesis, project who is responsible for evaluation and determination of the final grade.

### **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 his/her 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.
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.
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 instructor's 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 improper grade, as defined in definition of terms, should meet with the instructor of record 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 or designee will attempt to serve as mediator working with the individuals to resolve the dispute.

5. If the instructor of record 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 by the end of the eighth week of the semester following the award of the grade. 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 of record will not be available within one semester, the department chair or designee may act in lieu of the instructor of record for the purpose of grade appeals. 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. After notification by the department chair that a grade appeal brief has been filed, the instructor must respond to the department chair in writing within **ten working days**. The department chair or designee will attempt to serve as mediator working with the individuals to resolve the dispute. If this mediation proves unsuccessful, the department chair shall forward the student's brief to the college dean.

3. The college dean or designee 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, then a college Grade Appeal Committee shall be formed by the college dean within ten working days. This committee shall include the following persons:

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

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

4. All pertinent data, papers, records, etc., together with written briefs, will be submitted to this committee for study. Both student and instructor will have permission to view, but not copy, all materials used by the committee. The committee may meet individually or collectively with those involved in its quest for determination, and the Committee may choose to continue mediation efforts. Each party may bring another person with them as support or spokesperson at any stage in the process. The student or instructor has the option of meeting with the Committee without the other party present.

5. The function of the Grade Appeal Committee 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 committee's decision may be to keep the assigned grade, or to raise the assigned grade.

6. The Committee shall provide a written justification to the college dean for its decision including minority opinions when they exist. The college dean shall inform the student and the instructor of the committee's ruling and provide both parties with copies of the committee report.

7. In the case of a change of grade, if the instructor of record does not implement the change of grade decided upon by the committee, 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.

8. 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.

**\*\*\* Approved by the Academic Senate on May 11, 2004 \*\*\***

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[1] <sup>1</sup>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] <sup>2</sup> If the student appealing the grade cannot find a qualified college faculty person to serve, the college dean shall appoint the third faculty person.

