

## **GRADE APPEAL PROCEDURE**

(This Policy Statement supersedes Policy Statement 79-17, 86-05, and 86-05 Amended).

### **GRADE APPEAL GENERAL INFORMATION**

**1.000.** The primary authority of the instructor in the assignment of grades must be respected. Provided it is formed in accordance with the generally accepted canons of the relevant discipline and of the academic institution, an instructor's evaluation of a student's work and performance in that instructor's course must not be over-ridden merely because of difference of opinion or evaluative judgment. It is presumed that every instructor wants and tries to be fair and objective in assignment of grades. This presumption, however, may be over-ridden by weight of evidence to the contrary.

**1.100.** Although the University presumes that grades assigned are correct, the University has established this grade appeal procedure to protect all parties against academic and administrative evaluations and decisions that are prejudicial, capricious, or arbitrary. This procedure is available equally to undergraduate and graduate students and instructors, and constitutes the only grade appeal procedure at California State University, Long Beach.

**1.200.** The burden of proof rests upon the student submitting the appeal. It is therefore important that the appellant prepare a file which includes: (1) a written statement clearly presenting the basis for the grade appeal; (2) a completed Grade Appeal form obtained from the College in which the course was offered; (3) and any supporting documentation such as the class syllabus, exams, papers, assignments or other corroborating documents.

**1.300.** Only final grades may be appealed. Students who believe that individual exams and/or assignments were graded unfairly and that those grades had a direct bearing on the final grade should include them in the grade appeal file as supporting documentation.

**1.400.** Timelines for filing an appeal and subsequent decisions specified in this Policy Statement refer to instructional days during the regular Fall and Spring semesters.

**1.500.** All grade appeal information, whether written or oral, is confidential.

**1.600.** The appellant may seek the assistance of an advisor in the preparation of the appeal file. If Department and/or College Committee procedures permit oral arguments, the advisor may accompany the appellant to the Departmental and/or College hearing and be privy to all confidential information relevant to the case.

**1.700.** The original appeal file, with all documentation, recommendations, final decisions, etc., (including a copy of the grade change, if relevant) shall be kept by the Dean of the College involved. One complete duplicate set of all documentation is to be kept in the Office of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, for a period of not less than five years. All other duplicate materials shall be destroyed within thirty instructional days of the final decision.

1.800. Each College Dean and the Chair of the University Grade Appeals Review Committee will provide a written report at the end of each academic year to the President and the Academic Senate on the number of cases heard and the disposition of each case.

1.900. If the student's complaint is confounded by an allegation of unlawful discrimination as defined by Federal and State law, the student has the right to access the university's internal Unlawful Discrimination process and the processes available through the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights and the State of California Fair Employment and Housing Commission. However, grades may be changed only through the grade appeal process.

## **GRADE APPEALS COMMITTEES**

2.000. Departments/Programs may choose whether to have a Department Grade Appeals Committee. If there is a Department Grade Appeals Committee, it shall have provision to include at least one student member.

2.100. Each College shall have a standing Grade Appeals Committee which shall have provision to include at least one student member.

2.200. Committee members, at any level, shall not participate in any way in an appeal of a grade decision in which they have been involved personally. Such participation includes assignment of the grade in question, and involvement in the work of, or grading in, the class in which the grade in question was assigned.

2.210. The appellant, and the instructor involved in any particular appeal, shall each have one peremptory challenge to remove a committee member from service for that particular appeal. Department and College grade appeal procedures shall provide for replacement of such challenged members.

2.300. A Grade Appeals Committee deliberating an appeal--at any stage in the process-- shall consider all information submitted and may, if necessary, obtain clarification in writing from the student, the instructor, and/or committees at other levels in the process. This may include a request for information that will help the Committee understand the basis for assignment of the grade.

2.400. Committees shall consider only information available to all parties. All parties to an appeal shall be notified in writing of all responses at all points of the appeal process and shall have full opportunity to comment in writing.

2.500.

Distribution of materials submitted in an appeal shall allow reasonable time for response by the involved parties before committees render their decision. "Reasonable time" for rebuttals and rejoinders shall generally be understood to be ten instructional days from receipt of a response.

2.600. After making its determination, the Committee hearing the appeal shall prepare a written statement of its decision, including an explanation of its reasoning and a response to the specific issues upon which the appeal is based. A copy of this statement shall be sent to all parties involved.

2.700. Should the Committee recommend a change of grade and the instructor choose to appeal that decision, the change shall not be initiated until after the appeal process has been concluded.

2.800. Committee Chairs shall provide a written report to their Dean at the end of each semester detailing the number and disposition of cases heard.

## **THE GRADE APPEAL PROCESS**

### **Initiation of Grade Appeals**

3.000. Students who believe they have received a final grade in a class that does not fairly reflect their work must make this known to the instructor, either orally or in writing, before they begin the formal appeal process. If they are not able to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of both parties, the formal process may then be initiated. In the event an instructor is not available to participate, the Department Chair in the discipline may appoint another instructor whose area of expertise most closely approximates that of the instructor of record to represent the interests of the latter.

3.100. The formal process begins with the preparation of a grade appeal file (see paragraph 1.200 above). The file must include: (1) a written statement describing the reasons for the appeal and the recommendation for a new grade; (2) a Grade Appeal Form obtained from the appropriate College office and fully completed; and (3) supporting documents (see paragraph 1.200 above) that show evidence of the alleged improper grading.

3.110. The written statement describing the reasons for the appeal should be addressed to the Department Chair (or Program Coordinator if there is no department involved) of the discipline in which the course resides.

3.120. An appeal must be initiated within the regular semester immediately following the semester or special session in which the course was completed. As long as a student has filed a written notification of the appeal with the appropriate Department Chair within the required semester, action on the appeal may continue during subsequent semesters.

3.200. The Department Chair shall present the grade appeal file to the instructor of the course and shall encourage that person to, again, attempt a resolution with the student. The Chair shall mediate if so requested.

3.210. If the instructor of record refuses to participate, the Department Chair shall insert a written statement to that effect in the appeal file.

3.220. If a student is appealing a grade assigned by the Department Chair, the College Dean or designee shall perform all functions of the Chair in the appeals process.

### **Appeals in Departments that Have Grade Appeals Committees**

3.300. Should consultation fail to resolve the appeal and the student choose to continue the process, he or she must request that the Chair forward the appeal to the Department Grade Appeals Committee.

3.310. The Department Chair shall forward the appeal to the Department Grade Appeals Committee, and may include a written recommendation based upon the first, consultative, step in the process. The instructor must also be informed that the formal process has been initiated, and shall be given copies of all materials forwarded to the Grade Appeals Committee.

3.320. The instructor may write a response to the student's appeal and a rationale to be considered by the Grade Appeals Committee. A copy of such a response must also be provided to the student.

3.330. An appeal may be terminated at any point by a letter from the appellant withdrawing the appeal.

3.400. The Department Grade Appeals Committee shall consider the appeal, adhering to the principles and guidelines of paragraphs 1.000-1.600, 2.300, 2.400, and 2.500 above. In all but extraordinary circumstances, a Department Grade Appeals Committee shall reach its decision within the semester in which it receives the appeal.

3.500. If the appeal is supported by the Committee, the Committee will then determine a grade for the student based upon the evidence included in the appeal file (exams, papers, assignments, etc.). The Committee need not grant the student's suggested grade but should assign a grade that is appropriate to the work submitted. The Committee's decision of a grade may not be appealed further by the student.

3.510. The Committee shall communicate its decision and rationale as specified in paragraph 2.600 above, and shall also provide a copy to the Department Chair. If, within ten instructional days of the receipt of the Committee's decision, either the instructor does not file a grade change or file an appeal of the Committee's finding, the Department Chair shall authorize the grade change by filing the appropriate grade-change forms.

3.520. If, within ten instructional days, the instructor files in writing an appeal of the Department Committee's finding, the Committee Chair shall, forward the file (including the Committee's decision and rationale) to the College Grade Appeals Committee.

3.600. If the Department Grade Appeals Committee rejects the appeal, it shall communicate its decision and its rationale as provided in paragraph 2.600 above, providing a copy also to the Department Chair. If, within ten instructional days, the student does not request further review of the appeal, the grade appeal process is terminated.

3.610. If, within ten instructional days, the student communicates in writing her/his wish to continue the appeal process, the Committee Chair shall, within ten instructional days, forward the file (including the Committee's decision and rationale) to the College Grade Appeals Committee.

### **Appeals in Departments that lack Grade Appeals Committees**

3.700. Appeals filed in Departments that lack Grade Appeals Committees are to be considered by the standing Grade Appeals Committee at the College level. The provisions of paragraph 3.300 through 3.610 above apply, with the College Committee substituting for the Department Committee, except that appeals of Committee decisions are directed to the University Grade Appeals Committee.

### **Appeals of Committee Decisions**

4.000. If a first-level Grade Appeals Committee (a Department Committee or the College Committee acting in lieu of a Department Committee) recommends a change of grade, the instructor may appeal that decision. In that event, the grade will not be changed until the appeal has been completed.

4.100 An appeal of a Department Grade Appeals Committee decision, by either the instructor or the student, begins with a written request to have that decision reviewed. The Chair of the Department Grade Appeals Committee forwards the appeal file, including the Committee's decision and rationale, to the College Grade Appeals Committee.

4.200. The College Grade Appeals Committee, when acting as a second-level Appeals Committee, shall review the grade appeals file, the Committee's decision and rationale, and any rebuttal to that decision and rationale provided by the appellant, in the light of paragraphs 1.000 through 3.700 above. It may consider both matters of procedure and substance.

4.300. The College Grade Appeals Committee may confirm the decision of the Department Committee, or it may recommend re-consideration.

4.310. If the College Grade Appeals Committee confirms the decision of the Department Committee, and if the appellant does not request further review, the grade appeal process is concluded. All parties, including the Department Chair and the Department Grade Appeals Committee, must be informed of the decision in writing. If a grade change has been recommended by the Department Committee but held in abeyance pending the appeal, the Department Chair shall, within ten instructional days, authorize the grade change by filing the appropriate form.

4.315 If an appellant communicates in writing her/his wish to continue the appeal process, the Committee Chair shall, within ten instructional days, forward the file (including the Committee's decision and rationale) to the University Grade Appeals Committee.

4.320. If the College Grade Appeals Committee recommends re-consideration, it shall put in writing its rationale (which may involve matters of procedure or substance), and any recommendations it may have (which may include recommendations of substance, or of procedure, or also of a re-constituted Department Committee, or may include other recommendations toward realizing a fair evaluation of the matters at issue). The grade appeal file, including the rationale and recommendations of the College Committee, is returned to the Department Grade Appeals Committee for re-consideration. Copies of its recommendations are to be supplied to all parties, including the Department Chair.

4.400. When a grade appeal decision has been returned for re-consideration, the Department Grade Appeals Committee shall review the rationale and recommendations of the College Grade Appeals Committee. It shall undertake to remedy procedural faults identified by the College Committee. It shall consider anew the substance of the grade appeal, with due attention to whatever recommendations have been advanced by the College Committee. The Department Grade Appeals Committee shall render a new decision on the appeal, which may be a re-iteration of its original decision or may be a different decision (which may, but need not be, in agreement with the College Committee's recommendations).

4.410. The Department Grade Appeals Committee shall, in any but extraordinary circumstances, render its re-considered decision within 20 instructional days of receipt.

4.420. Upon reaching its decision, the Department Grade Appeals Committee shall report in writing its response to all procedural faults identified by the College Committee, and shall again put in writing its rationale for its decision on the substance of the grade appeal. These reports shall be forwarded with the grade appeals file to the College Grade Appeals Committee; and copies shall be supplied to all parties, including the Department Chair.

4.500. The College Grade Appeals Committee shall review the re-considered decision of the Department Committee. It may seek clarification from the Department Committee (see paragraph 2.500 above). It shall either confirm the decision of the Department Committee or declare the appeal to be at impasse.

4.510. If the College Grade Appeals Committee confirms the decision of the Department Committee, the appeals process is completed. All parties must be informed of this final disposition. If a grade change is called for, the Department Chair shall, within ten instructional days of the College Committee's action, authorize that grade change by filing appropriate grade-change forms.

4.520. If the College Grade Appeals Committee declares the appeal to be at impasse, it shall so inform all parties, including the Department Chair, and shall forward the file to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

4.600. The Vice-President for Academic Affairs, upon review of the grade appeal file, including the recommendations and rationale of the Grade Appeals Committees, shall authorize the recording in the student's records of either a "W" or a grade of "CR." This completes the appeals. All parties must be informed of this final disposition.

### **Role of the University Grade Appeals Review Committee**

**5.000.** The University Grade Appeals Review Committee shall function as the second-level Grade Appeals Committee in grade appeals from Departments which lack departmental Grade Appeals Committees. In such cases, the College Grade Appeals Committee functions in lieu of the Department Grade Appeals Committee and the University Grade Appeals Review Committee shall function in lieu of the College Grade Appeals Committee. All provisions of paragraphs 4.000 through 4.600 above apply.

**5.100.**

The University Grade Appeals Review Committee shall function as the final level Grade Appeals Committee in cases where a complainant appeals the decision of a College Grade Appeals Committee after that Committee reviews the decision of a Department Grade Appeals Committee. In such cases the University Grade Appeals Committee functions in lieu of the College Grade Appeals Committee, and communicates directly with the Department Grade Appeals Committee. All provisions of the entirety of paragraphs 4.000 through 4.600 above apply.

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EFFECTIVE: Immediately