

Grade Appeal Procedure

(This policy statement supersedes 79-17, 86-05, 86-05 Amended, 94-07, and 99-16.)

This revised policy was recommended by the Academic Senate on March 11, 2010 and approved by the president on June 2, 2010.

1. Grade Appeal General Information

- 1.1. The primary authority of the instructor in the assignment of grades must be respected. An instructor's evaluation of a student's work and performance in that instructor's course must not be over-ridden merely because of a difference of opinion or evaluative judgment, provided it is formed in accordance with the generally accepted canons of the relevant discipline and of the academic institution where said course is offered. The university presumes that every instructor wants and tries to be non-prejudicial, objective, and consistent in the assignment of grades. This presumption, however, may be over-ridden by weight of evidence to the contrary.
- 1.2. Although the university presumes that grades assigned are correct, the university has established this grade appeal procedure both to protect students against academic and administrative evaluations and decisions that are prejudicial, capricious, or arbitrary, and to preserve the authority of instructors to evaluate student work in a non-prejudicial, objective, and consistent way. This procedure, available equally to undergraduate and graduate students, also preserves the rights of instructors to appeal grade appeals committee findings as outlined below. The policy in its entirety constitutes the only grade appeal procedure at California State University, Long Beach.
- 1.3. The burden of proof rests upon the student submitting the appeal.
- 1.4. Students may appeal only final grades. Students who believe that individual exams and/or assignments demonstrate evidence of prejudicial, capricious, or arbitrary grading and that those grades had direct bearing on the final grade should include them in the grade appeal file as supporting documentation.
- 1.5. If a grade appeals committee decides to change a grade, the committee need not grant the student's suggested grade but should assign a grade that is appropriate to the work submitted. The new grade shall not be lower than the original grade.
- 1.6. Once a student has filed a formal grade appeal, nobody may change a grade until neither the student nor the instructor continues the process or the third and final level has been concluded.

Timelines for filing an appeal and subsequent decisions specified in this policy statement refer to instructional days during the regular fall and spring semesters. In the case of courses that do not follow the traditional semester pattern (such as short-term courses given during a regular semester or programs that require year-round enrollment), students must initiate an appeal within 40 regular semester instructional days of the termination of the course.

- 1.7. All grade appeal information, whether written or oral, is confidential.
- 1.8. The student may seek the assistance of an advisor in the preparation of the appeal file. If department and/or college committees permit oral arguments, the advisor may accompany the student to the departmental and/or college hearing and be privy to all confidential information relevant to the case.
- 1.9. The original file, with all documentation, recommendations, final decisions, and all other materials (including a copy of the grade change, if relevant) shall be kept by the college involved for five years. One complete duplicate set of all documentation shall be kept in the office of the Academic Senate for five years. All other parties must destroy all duplicate materials within thirty instructional days of the final decision.
- 1.10. Each college dean and the chair of the University Grade Appeals Committee shall 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. College deans also shall forward their reports to the chair of the University Grade Appeals Committee.
- 1.11. If the student's appeal is compounded (or accompanied) by an allegation of unlawful discrimination as defined by federal and state laws, 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.

2. Grade Appeals Committees

- 2.1. Each department and extra-departmental program (hereafter referred to as program) shall form a department/program grade appeals committee. If department/program faculty members are unable to serve in sufficient number to form a grade appeals committee, the chair of the council of the relevant college shall appoint the required number of grade appeals committee members from the ranks of college faculty. A department/program grade appeals committee shall include at least one student member appointed by the Associated Students, Incorporated.
- 2.2. Each college and the university shall have a standing grade appeals committee, each of which shall include at least one student member appointed by the Associated Students, Incorporated.
- 2.3. For courses located in a college but not in a department (college-based courses), a first-level grade appeals committee must be formed. The council of the relevant college shall appoint the first-level grade appeals committee from among the faculty members of that college. If review beyond the first-level grade appeals committee is necessary, the appeal next shall go to the regular college-level grade appeals committee.
- 2.4. For courses not located in a college or department/program (university-based courses), the Curriculum and Educational Policies Council must create a first- and second-level grade appeals committee by appointing each committee from among its members.
- 2.5. For courses cross-listed between or among different units, the unit with the prefix under which the student took the course shall handle the grade appeal.
- 2.6. 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, but is not limited to, assignment of the grade in question, involvement in the class in question, or grading any student work for the class in question.
- 2.7. No committee member may serve on a committee at more than one level of a single appeal.
- 2.8. The committee chair at the department/program level and at the college level shall inform all parties of the composition of the grade appeals committee and of the right to peremptory challenge. The student and the instructor involved in any given appeal shall each have one (1) peremptory challenge to remove one (1) committee member from service for that particular appeal. Departments/programs and colleges must replace any removed members within a timely fashion. If peremptory strikes of members are exercised by either party, the committee shall have an additional ten (10) instructional days to review the file and render its decision.
- 2.9. A grade appeals committee deliberating an appeal during any level of 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 of the process. The committee may request information to help it understand the basis for assignment of the grade. If either party does not supply appropriate grade appeal information within a reasonable time (see 2.11.) when requested by a committee, then that committee may base its decision on the corresponding information supplied by the other party.
- 2.10. Committees shall consider only information available to all parties. All parties to an appeal shall be notified by the committee chair in writing of all responses and deadlines at all points of the appeal process and shall have full opportunity to comment in writing.
- 2.11. 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 responses shall generally be understood to be ten (10) instructional days from receipt of a response.
- 2.12. 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. The chair of the committee shall place a copy of the decision statement in the appeal file and shall send copies of the statement to all parties involved.
- 2.13. Chairs of department/program and college grade appeal committees shall provide a written report to their dean at the end of each semester detailing the number and disposition of cases heard.

3. Preliminary Informal Phase of the Grade Appeals Process: Initiation of Grade Appeals

- 3.1. Students who believe they have received a final course grade that reflects prejudicial, capricious, or arbitrary grading of their academic performance must make this belief known to the instructor(s), either orally or in writing, before they begin the formal appeal process. In accordance with the Policy on Final Course Grades, Grading Procedures, and Final Assessments, students have a right to be informed of their scores and to review each of their demonstrations of competence with their instructors. If materials submitted for a demonstration of competence are not returned to the student, such materials will be retained for at least two (2) subsequent semesters by the instructor. The materials shall be accessible to the department office. In the absence of the original instructor, an

instructor with appropriate qualifications may be appointed by the Chair to review the demonstration of competence with the student.

- 3.2. In the event an instructor is not available to participate, the department/program chair in the discipline/program may appoint another instructor whose areas of expertise most closely approximates that of the instructor of record to represent the interests of the latter.
- 3.3. If the student cannot resolve the problem after informal consultation with the instructor and intends to continue the process, the next step is for the student to prepare a grade appeal file.
 - 3.3.1. 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, such as the class syllabus, exams, papers, assignments or other corroborating documents, that show evidence of the alleged improper grading.
 - 3.3.2. The written statement describing the reasons for the appeal shall be addressed to the department/program chair of the discipline in which the course resides. For the purposes of this policy, a program director or coordinator is considered a program chair.
 - 3.3.3. The grade appeal file must be delivered to the department/program chair within the first 40 instructional days of the regular semester immediately following the semester or special session in which the course was completed.
- 3.4. After receiving the student's grade appeal file (see 3.3.1., above), the department/program chair will consult with both the student and the instructor(s) involved to attempt a resolution to the grade appeal.
 - 3.4.1. If the instructor of record refuses to participate, the department chair shall insert a written statement to that effect in the appeal file.
 - 3.4.2. 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.
 - 3.4.3. In the case of courses that do not follow the traditional semester pattern (such as short-term courses given during a regular semester or programs that require year-round enrollment), students must initiate an appeal within 40 regular semester instructional days of the termination of the course.

4. First Level of the Formal Appeals Process: Appeal to department/program grade appeals committee

- 4.1. Should consultation fail to resolve the appeal and should the student choose to continue the process, the student must ask the chair to forward the appeal to the department/program grade appeals committee. The student must make this request in writing by the last day of instruction of the regular semester immediately following the semester or special session in which the course was completed.
 - 4.1.1. The department/program chair shall forward the appeal to the department/program grade appeals committee within ten (10) instructional days and may include a written recommendation based upon the first, consultative step in the process (outlined in 3.4., above). The chair must also inform the instructor immediately that the formal grade appeals process has been initiated and must give copies of all materials forwarded to the grade appeals committee to the instructor and to the student.
 - 4.1.2. The instructor may submit a written response to the student's appeal and a rationale to be considered by the grade appeals committee. The department/program chair must also provide a copy of the response and rationale to the student.
 - 4.1.3. The student may terminate the appeal at any point by submitting a written request to withdraw the appeal.
- 4.2. The department/program grade appeals committee shall consider the appeal, adhering to the principles and guidelines of paragraphs 1.1., 1.10., 2.9., 2.10., and 2.11., above. A department/program grade appeals committee shall reach its decision within 40 instructional days after it receives the appeal.
- 4.3. If the appeal is granted by the committee, the committee will then determine a grade for the student based upon the evidence included in the appeal file (e.g., exams, papers, and assignments). The committee shall communicate its decision and rationale as specified in paragraph 2.12., above and shall also provide a copy to the department/program chair.

- 4.3.1. If both the student and instructor accept the committee's decision, the instructor will then have ten (10) instructional days to initiate the grade change by signing the grade change form and forwarding it to the department/program chair, at which point the grade appeal process is over.
- 4.3.2. If the student accepts the decision of the committee but, within ten (10) instructional days of the receipt of the committee's decision, the instructor does not either file a grade change or file an appeal of the committee's finding, the grade appeal committee chair shall sign the grade change form in the place of the instructor and forward it to the department/program chair. If the department/program chair does not sign the form within ten (10) instructional days of notification, the chair of the department/program grade appeal committee will sign in lieu of the department/program chair and then the college dean will authorize the grade change.
- 4.3.3. If, within ten (10) instructional days, either the instructor or the student files in writing an appeal of the department/program committee's finding, the committee chair shall, within ten (10) instructional days, forward the file (including the committee's decision and rationale) to the college grade appeals committee.
- 4.4. If the department/program grade appeals committee rejects the appeal, it shall communicate its decision and its rationale as provided in paragraph 2.12., above, and provide a copy also to the department/program chair.
 - 4.4.1. If, within ten (10) instructional days, the student does not request further review of the appeal, the grade appeal process is terminated.
 - 4.4.2. If, within ten (10) instructional days, the student communicates in writing her/his wish to continue the appeal process, the committee chair shall, within ten (10) instructional days, forward the file (including the committee's decision and rationale) to the college grade appeals committee.

5. Second Level of the Formal Appeals Process: Appeal to the College Grade Appeals Committee

- 5.1. An appeal of a department/program grade appeals committee decision, by either the instructor or the student, begins with a written letter of appeal to have that decision reviewed. This letter of appeal should be directed to the appropriate college grade appeal committee (also called college committee in this document) by way of the department/program chair. The department/program chair must then inform within five (5) instructional days the instructor, student, and college dean in writing that an appeal has been filed and the dean must inform within five (5) instructional days the appropriate college grade appeals committee in writing that an appeal has been lodged. The chair of the department/program grade appeals committee must forward within five (5) instructional days the appeal file, including the committee's decision and rationale, to the college dean who must immediately inform the college grade appeals committee that the grade appeal file has been received and is ready for review.
- 5.2. The committee chair at the college level shall inform all parties of the composition of the grade appeals committee and of the right to peremptory challenge. The college grade appeals committee shall normally render its review decision within twenty (20) instructional days of receipt of the grade appeal file. However, if peremptory strikes of members are exercised by either party, the committee shall have an additional ten (10) instructional days to review the file and render its decision.
- 5.3. The college grade appeals committee shall review the grade appeal file, the department/program grade appeals committee's decision and rationale, and any rebuttal to that decision and rationale provided by the student or instructor in the light of paragraphs 1.1. through 4.4., above. During its review it may consider and act upon matters of both procedure and substance.
- 5.4. As a result of its review, the college grade appeals committee may confirm the decision of the department committee or it may recommend re-consideration.
 - 5.4.1. If the college grade appeals committee confirms the decision of the department/program grade appeals committee, and if neither the instructor nor the student requests further review, then the grade appeal process ends. The chair of the college committee must inform in writing all parties, including the department/program chair and the department/program grade appeals committee. If a grade change has been recommended by the department/program committee but held in abeyance pending the appeal, the department/program chair shall, within ten (10) instructional days, authorize the grade change by filing the appropriate form. In the event that the department/program chair does not effect the change within ten (10) instructional days of notification, the chair of the college grade appeal committee will sign in lieu of the instructor or the department/program chair. The college dean will then authorize the grade change.
 - 5.4.2. If either the student or the instructor communicates in writing her/his intention to continue the appeal process, the college committee chair shall, within ten (10) instructional days, forward the file (including the college committee's decision and rationale) to the University Grade Appeals Committee.
 - 5.4.3. 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 procedure, new constitution of the department/program committee, or other recommendations toward realizing a fair evaluation of the matters at issue). The chair of the college grade appeal committee shall return the grade appeal file, including the rationale and recommendations of the college committee, to the department/program grade appeals committee for re-consideration and supply copies of the recommendations to all other parties, including the department/program chair.

4

PS 10-05

5.5. When a grade appeal decision has been returned for re-consideration, the department/program 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/program grade appeals committee shall render a new decision on the appeal, which may be a reiteration of its original decision or may be a different decision (which may, but need not be, in agreement with the college committee's recommendations).

5.5.1. The department/program grade appeals committee shall render its reconsideration within twenty (20) instructional days of receipt of the grade appeal file. If peremptory strikes of members are exercised by either party, the committee shall have an additional ten (10) instructional days to review the file and render its decision.

5.5.2. Upon reaching its decision, the department/program 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. The chair of the department/program grade appeals committee shall forward these reports with the grade appeals file to the college grade appeals committee and supply copies to all other parties, including the department/program chair.

5.6. The college grade appeals committee shall review the re-considered decision of the department/program committee. It may seek clarification from the department/program committee. It shall either confirm or disagree with the decision of the department/program committee. The chair of the college grade appeals committee must inform all parties in writing of its decision.

5.6.1. If within ten (10) instructional days following notification of the college committee's decision, the student or instructor communicates in writing her/his wish to continue the appeal process, the committee chair shall forward the file (including the committee's decision and rationale) to the University Grade Appeals Committee.

5.6.2. If a grade change is recommended by the committee and the change is not appealed by either the instructor or the student (in compliance with 4.5.1., above), the college grade appeals committee chair shall, within ten (10) instructional days of the college committee's action, inform the college dean, in writing, of its decision and the college dean will authorize the grade change as determined by the committee.

6. Third Level of the Appeals Process: Appeal to the University Grade Appeals Committee

6.1. The University Grade Appeals Committee shall function as the third and final level of the grade appeals process. The University Grade Appeals Committee may communicate with the student, the instructor, and the department/program and college grade appeals committees as needed.

6.2. The University Grade Appeals Committee shall normally render its decision within twenty (20) instructional days of receipt of the grade appeal file.

6.3. The University Grade Appeals Committee shall review the grade appeals file, the lower level committees' decisions and rationales, and any rebuttals to those decisions and rationales provided by the student or instructor. It may consider both matters of procedure and substance. The committee may seek further clarification from either lower level committee or the student or instructor as needed. The University Grade Appeals Committee shall either confirm or disagree with the decision of the college grade appeals committee.

6.3.1. If the University Grade Appeals Committee determines that the grade appeal guidelines have not been followed, it may send the appeal back to the department/program or college grade appeals committee for reconsideration.

6.3.2. In the event that a grade change is authorized by the University Grade Appeals Committee, the chair of the University Grade Appeals Committee shall ensure that the appropriate change-of-grade form is properly signed by the provost and filed with Enrollment Services.

6.3.3. The chair of the University Grade Appeals Committee shall inform all parties to the grade appeal, in writing, of the committee's decision.

6.3.4. The rendering of the University Grade Appeals Committee's decision, notification of all parties of the decision, and effecting of a grade change where authorized by the committee, completes the appeal process.

EFFECTIVE: Fall 2010

Obsolete