

Grade Appeal Procedure

I. Purpose

- A. The purpose of the course final- grade appeal procedure is to provide the student with a safeguard against receiving an unfair final grade in a course, while at the same time respecting the academic freedom of the instructor which is vital to the integrity of the teaching process at the University of New Orleans.
- B. The course final grade appeal process strives to resolve the dispute between student and instructor in the assignment of a course final grade at the collegial level. The intent is never to embarrass or disgrace students or instructors, nor to assess penalty or retribution on any party when mistakes are discovered, but instead to provide a neutral forum for the discussion of differences of opinion.
- C. Every student has the right to have a request for consideration of his or her final grade reviewed by the chair of the department and the departmental grade appeal committee.
- D. The course final grade appeal shall be confined to charges of unfair action against an individual student and may not involve a challenge of an instructor's class grading standard. It is incumbent on the student to substantiate the claim that his/her final grade in the course represents unfair treatment, compared to the standard applied to the remainder of the class. Only the final grade in a course may be appealed.
- E. The following grade appeal procedure affords informal and formal mechanisms for arbitration of a grade disagreement between student and instructor.

II. Administrative Guidelines

- A. A standing Grade Appeal Committee (hereafter designated as the Committee), one for undergraduate appeals and (where applicable) one for graduate appeals, shall exist within all departments.
- B. The Committee shall consist of Five (5) full-time faculty members (one of whom is designated as "alternate") and three (3) students (one of whom is designated as "alternate"). Students must be registered for at least six (6) credit hours during the academic year and three (3) credit hours during the summer term.
- C. The four regular Committee faculty members and the "alternate" (who shall serve in the event a charge is brought against a regular Committee faculty member or in the event a regular faculty committee member cannot participate) shall be elected on an annual basis, prior to the second week of classes in the Fall semester, by the faculty of the department. (For the graduate grade appeal Committee, the faculty members must be Full or Associate Members of the graduate faculty.) Faculty members must serve if elected.

- D. The two regular student members and the "alternate" (who shall serve in the event a regular Committee student member is issuing the grade appeal or in the event a regular student member cannot participate) shall be appointed, on an annual basis, by the Department Chair. Only undergraduate students can serve on an undergraduate appeal, and only graduate students can serve on a graduate appeal.
- E. In departments with fewer than five faculty members, each eligible member will serve on the Committee. The Dean of the College shall appoint eligible faculty or student members from a related department to fill the remaining vacancies. (The Dean of the Graduate School shall serve this function for the graduate level Committee.)
- F. In the event of faculty or student vacancies on the Committee due to death, approved leave, normal absence during the summer, or ineligibility to serve, the Department Chair shall appoint a temporary replacement.
- G. The Committee shall meet and elect, prior to the third week of classes in the Fall semester, a Chair and a Vice Chair, who will preside in the absence of the Chair. At this meeting, the Department Chair shall verify that Committee members are familiar with the grade appeal procedure.
- H. All members of the Committee are voting members except the Chair, who shall vote only in the case of a tie vote.
- I. Three faculty members plus one student member shall constitute a quorum for the Committee.
- J. Throughout this document, "weeks"/"days" refer to time periods that classes are in session (excluding Saturday).
- K. Since these are academic proceedings, attorneys or advisors are not allowed to be present during any of the proceedings.

III. Informal Mediation

- A. If a student believes that the final grade in a course is unfair, the following informal mediation procedure represents the first course of action.
- B. Within ten (10) class days following the issuance of final grades, the student shall meet with the instructor to seek an explanation of his/her grade in the course.
- C. If the dispute remains unresolved after meeting with the instructor, the student shall submit to the Department Chair a formal written statement representing his/her viewpoint. The student must present the written charge and supporting materials no later than the end of the fourth week of the following semester (whether or not the student is actually enrolled at the University). The statement must include the student's request that the grade be changed from _____ to _____ and the specific reason (or reasons) that the student believes justifies the change of grade.
- D. The Department Chair shall serve as a mediator, attempting to resolve the conflict between the student and the instructor. (In the event that the Department Chair is the instructor subject to the charge, the Committee shall serve as the arbiter.) The mediator shall act to accomplish the following:

1. Meet with the student within five (5) class days, upon receipt of the written complaint, to ascertain that he/she has a copy of the University's Course Final-Grade Appeal Procedure and that he/she understands the nature of the appeal process;
2. Forward a copy of the student's written complaint to the instructor;
3. If appropriate, request a written statement from the instructor responding to the allegations presented in the student's written complaint and forward a copy to the student; and
4. confer with both parties, either separately or jointly, within ten (10) class days of receiving the student's written complaint to attempt a resolution of the dispute.

IV. The Formal Appeal

- A. If the dispute over the course grade cannot be resolved through informal mediation, the student may request in writing that the Department Chair initiate a formal appeal procedure involving the presentation of the case to the departmental Grade Appeal Committee.
- B. If a formal grade appeal is requested, the Committee shall commence deliberations within ten (10) class days after submission of this request. In initiating the formal appeal procedure, the Department Chair shall take the following actions:
 1. Solicit formal written statements (which may be revisions of the original complaint submitted for informal mediation) from the student and from the instructor, specifying details of their respective viewpoints, along with any pertinent supporting documents from the two parties;
 2. If necessary, clarify procedures for either or both parties in the preparation of the formal written statements to be presented to the Committee; and
 3. Distribute the written presentations from both parties to the Committee (as well as to the opposing parties) at least one week prior to the first Committee meeting.
- C. The Committee shall conduct one or more meetings, at which time the Committee shall take one of the following actions:
 1. May request that one or both parties write a more definitive statement when the language in the original statement is vague and/or ambiguous and the Committee cannot make a determination concerning the allegation of unfair treatment compared to the standard applied to the remainder of the class;
 2. May decline to hold a hearing because the information presented in the student's statements fails to meet the criteria specified in Section "Purpose", "D."; or
 3. May conduct a hearing with both the student and the instructor present (unless the Committee goes into executive session to discuss procedural issues), whereby, both parties will be allowed to call witnesses as approved by the Committee Chair, and the Committee members may ask questions of any individuals involved.

D. At the conclusion of the formal review, the Committee shall meet in executive session to deliberate, under the following conditions:

1. The Committee shall limit its concern to the specific issues of unfairness specified in the complaint as detailed in the student's written statement; and
2. The Committee shall reach a final decision (by majority vote of those present) that will either support the original course grade or designate an alternative grade.

Within five (5) class days of the Committee's decision, the Committee Chair shall forward the Committee's decision (and written justification) to the student and instructor concerned, the Department Chair, and the Dean of the College (or, for graduate appeals, to the Dean of the Graduate School). If the Committee recommends a change of grade, the Department Chair shall submit a Request for Change of Grade to the Dean of the College (or to the Dean of the Graduate School). After expiration of the time period for an appeal of the Committee's recommendation, the Dean shall forward the Request form to the Office of the Registrar.

V. Appeal of the Decision

If either the instructor or the student wishes to challenge the procedural process as defined in this document, he/she may appeal to the Dean of the College (or, for graduate appeals, to the Dean of the Graduate School) for a review thereof. A written statement, describing the procedural objections, must be submitted to the Dean within five (5) class days of receipt of the Committee's written recommendation. It shall not be within the purview of the Dean to enter into judgment of the case, but only to examine the procedure employed by the department. The Dean shall respond within ten days to all involved parties. If the Dean determines that the procedures involved were not properly followed, and the procedural violations could have been material to the outcome of the hearing, the Dean will direct that the process be resumed at an appropriate point.

(Adopted by the University Senate on 12 March 1996.)

(Reaffirmed by the University Senate on 20 March 2020.)