

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR REVIEWING AND APPEALING AN ASSIGNED GRADE ³

Policy - Students are responsible for maintaining standards of academic performance established by their professors and for conducting themselves in the classroom in accordance with established procedures and generally accepted standards of social behavior. Students, on the other hand, have the right to an orderly review and if necessary appeal of an evaluation that allegedly is:

- (a) not "made fairly and equitably without prejudice⁴ or capriciousness," or
- (b) an inconsistent application of syllabus statements on course requirements and/or grading system, or
- (c) out of compliance with the University's official grading policy, or
- (d) otherwise erroneous

[See University Academic Policy Manual, page 241 on "Policy on Course Syllabi and Grading", also covering course syllabus and record keeping requirements.]

Three basic principles govern that assertion:

1. The right of the instructor to make a final judgment relative to a student's academic evaluation. It is presumed that the instructor's assigned grade is correct; therefore, the burden of proof rests upon the student to show cause.⁵
2. The right of the student to have a review of the specific course evaluation by the instructor and/or appropriate University official(s).
3. Redress shall be limited to the removal of the harmful effects of the academic evaluation in question.

³ An Advisor in the Office of Advising Services will be available upon request to provide assistance to a student seeking review or appealing an assigned grade, including explaining the process and preparing a written statement. A student should not contact the Student Academic Petitions Committee, SAPC Chair or members prior to submitting the written statement of appeal.

⁴ Prejudice includes use of age, disability, ethnicity, nationality, political preference, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation in assigning a grade.

⁵ If the student alleges an instructor falsely accused him/her of cheating or plagiarism, the burden of proof rests upon the instructor and resolution of this matter shall occur pursuant to the University's "Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism". (See Academic Policy Manual, page 235.)

Procedure - A student must adhere to the following procedure if he/she believes an evaluation by a faculty member was not in a manner consistent with the above policy.⁶

1. Within 15 working days⁷ after the next semester's classes begin, the student must consult with the instructor concerned and make every effort to resolve the issue. The instructor must give the student an answer explaining how the grade was earned within 5 working days of the student's inquiry.⁸ If consultation with the faculty member does not occur within 15 days after the beginning of the next semester's classes, the student may request the SAPC for an extension upon a sufficient show of cause. Except for cause, the extension must be requested within the first five weeks of class.
2. If the issue is not resolved through consultation with the instructor, the student must immediately consult with the chair of the appropriate academic department in accordance with that department's established procedures. The department chair shall discuss the student's allegation(s) with the instructor and possibly the school dean, as appropriate, and give the student an answer within 10 working days.⁹ If the instructor also is the department chair, then the student should directly contact the school dean directly who shall consult with the department chair about the allegation.
3. If the student still believes that his/her request for review has not been satisfactorily handled, he/she may pursue the appeal by requesting the SAPC¹⁰ to review the issue. To make such an appeal the student must submit a written statement setting forth all pertinent facts relating to the issue within 5 working days after receiving the department chair's response (i.e., no later than 35 working days - approximately seven weeks after the beginning of classes). If the student appeals to the SAPC, it is understood that the burden of proof rests with the student and that a copy of the written statement of protest will be sent to the faculty member concerned.

⁶ If the student or instructor alleges these procedures have not been followed correctly, he/she should appeal to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs immediately. The faculty member should appeal via the school dean and the student via the Office of Advising Services.

⁷ For all deadlines stated in this policy, exceptions may be made by the SAPC for extenuating circumstances.

⁸ This section is written on the assumption that the instructor, when originally contacted, maintains the grade was not assigned erroneously.

⁹ The period from the time the student seeks review by the instructor until the department chair announces his/her decision should be no longer than 15 working days. If it appears to the student that this deadline will not be met, he/she should immediately contact the Office of Advising Services which will notify the SAPC Chair in order to assure a timely procedure.

¹⁰ The Student Academic Petitions Committee is composed of ten members: three members of the teaching faculty appointed by the University President upon recommendation of the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate; a representative of the Office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs; a representative of the Dean of the Division of Graduate Studies; a representative from the Office of Admissions, Records and Evaluations; two students appointed by the Associated Students President; and two representatives appointed by the Dean of Student Affairs, one of whom serves as Committee Chair.

4. When a formal appeal has been filed with the SAPC, the following action will be taken:
 - a) A memorandum will be sent to the instructor concerned, including a copy of the student's statement, requesting the instructor to reply in writing to the specific charge(s) of the student and to include the instructor's rationale for the evaluation of the student presenting the complaint. A copy of this correspondence is sent to the department chair and school dean for their information and/or commentary.
 - b) The instructor concerned is responsible for complying with the above request by the SAPC within 5 working days after receiving the request.
 - c) At its next meeting, the SAPC will review the student's statement, the instructor's response, and other evidence, as appropriate, and determine either that there is sufficient evidence to render a decision without a hearing or that the nature of the complaint and relevant factors warrant a formal hearing. The SAPC's decision usually will be rendered within 10 working days after receipt of the instructor's response.
5. If the student or instructor is not satisfied with a decision, that was not based on a hearing, he/she may make a written request for a hearing. Justification for the hearing must be included and the request shall be submitted within 5 working days after receiving written notification of the SAPC's decision. The SAPC may deny the request if it believes adequate evidence to warrant a hearing has not been supplied. If a hearing is allowed, either party may be required to submit additional evidence to the SAPC for further consideration.
6. The hearing before the SAPC will be closed. Both the instructor and the student will be notified to appear in person. Attendance at the hearing shall be limited to the members of the SAPC, the student, the instructor, each one's advisor -- either a University student, administrator, or faculty or staff member -- and a witness in the process of testifying. The department chair and/or school dean may be present. There is no provision for legal counsel to represent either party. Normally, the hearing shall be held within 10 working days of the request. New evidence for the hearing must first be submitted to the Chair of the SAPC and may not be submitted at the hearing without his/her prior approval. At least six members of the SAPC must be present for the hearing to proceed, and at least two of those six must be faculty representatives.
7. The University shall provide a secretary to take official notes and minutes of the hearing. The hearing will be tape-recorded; a copy of the tape can be made available to the petitioner (i.e., student or instructor) at the petitioner's own expense. Appropriate measures will be taken to protect the confidentiality of the hearings.

8. After the hearing is concluded, the SAPC will render its judgment and rationale in writing to the student, instructor, department chair, and the school within 10 working days. If the SAPC finds in favor of the student it will recommend ¹¹ to the instructor that the grade be changed.
9. If the instructor of record does not carry out the SAPC's recommendation within 10 working days of written notification, the SAPC shall notify in writing the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs. An instructor's refusal to change the grade will automatically be interpreted to be an appeal of the decision.
10. If the student or instructor disagrees with the SAPC's decision, he/she may appeal directly to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs in writing within 10 working days, stating the rationale for the appeal. The Provost/Vice President will either deny the appeal, or appoint an ad hoc committee of three tenured faculty in the discipline to review the case and render a decision¹² within one calendar month. The decision will be final and cannot be appealed further on campus.
11. If the decision of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs or the ad hoc committee necessitates a change of grade for the course, the Director of Admissions, Records, and Evaluations shall be notified in writing by the Provost/Vice President that the student's academic record/transcript be changed to reflect that decision. The instructor cannot block or appeal such official action on campus.

¹¹In the case of a grade protest the SAPC is a recommending body only, it does not have the authority to change a grade. Similarly, the department chair and school dean do not have such authority.

¹²The ad hoc committee has the authority to raise or lower the assigned grade, or to leave it unchanged.

Approved by the Academic Senate
 Approved by the President
 Revised
 Revised

February 1981
 February 1981
 April 1984
 August 1993