

## Oklahoma State University Policy and Procedures

### APPEAL OF FINAL GRADE NOT INVOLVING ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

2-0821  
ACADEMIC  
AFFAIRS  
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#### POLICY

1.01 It is the responsibility of the faculty members of Oklahoma State University to communicate to students early in the term a clear statement of the grading practices and procedures that will be used to determine the student's final grade. If a student believes those practices and procedures were not consistently and accurately followed when the faculty member determined the student's final grade, the student shall have the right to appeal the case to the Grade Appeals Board if informal discussions fail to resolve the issue. The burden of proof rests with the student. The proof shall be a preponderance of evidence.

1.02 The deadline for filing grade appeals is no later than four months after the date the grades are officially due in the Registrar's office, or six weeks after the student begins a new semester, whichever comes first. Deadlines for filing a grade appeal for short courses or intersession courses will be those deadlines that apply to the semester in which credit is granted. For courses offered during the summer sessions appeals deadlines will be those of the Fall semester unless the appeal impacts the student's graduation. If graduation during the summer is impacted then appeal becomes a "Priority Appeal" and is governed by those procedures (section 3.01).

1.03 The guidelines of the Board specify that the process is not an adversarial process. The Board makes a determined effort to provide a mechanism for exchanging information between student and instructor, and affecting reconciliation without creating an air of judicial inquiry. The intent is not to embarrass students or instructors, nor to assess penalty or retribution when mistakes on either side are discovered, but to provide a forum in which honest differences of opinion are discussed rationally and peacefully. For these reasons, the Board does not have the student and the instructor appear at the same time in the proceedings.

A. The University considers the syllabus a contract between a faculty member and each student within a course. As such, the Grade Appeals Board hears appeals based on concerns related to the course syllabus. Types of issues that might come before the Board related to a syllabus include, but are not limited to:

1. The student was not adequately informed of the details of the requirements of the course, the prerequisites for the course, and/or the grading system.
2. The evaluation system was not consistently and fairly applied to all students.
3. Criteria for determining the final grade were changed during the course of the semester, and the students were not adequately notified of this change. It is important to note that changes in syllabi need not be made in writing as long as students are given adequate notice of the changes.

4. All students did not receive equal notification and consideration of extra credit or other grade adjustment opportunities that were provided during the course of the semester.
  5. Items such as attendance, participation, and/or attitude were criteria for determining the final grade and were not made clear in advance to the student.
  6. The student was not adequately informed in advance of criteria used in making subjective evaluations of academic activities such as essay examinations, papers, projects, speeches, and practice teaching.
  7. The grading system included non-academic criteria.
- B. When evaluating the grading system of an instructor, the Board makes no attempt to establish whether a grading system is academically sound; that is, the Board is not in a position to decide the case on the instructor's choice of one particular grading system over another. Rather, the Board must rule solely upon whether the grade was assigned fairly within the grading system adopted and announced by the faculty member. In all other instances, the case will be referred back to the departmental and college levels for resolution. The following guidelines have been cautiously developed to be used when examining the internal merits of any grading system:
1. Were errors made in calculating the final grade?
  2. Was the student accurately informed, in writing, of the instructor's grading system; that is, was the student clearly and precisely informed of the decision-making process the instructor was using in determining the final grade for the course?
  3. Student absence is not to be considered a valid excuse for being unaware of the details of the grading system.
  4. Subjective criteria are recognized as valid in determining a grade. The grading system can be subjective but not arbitrary, capricious or personally biased.
  5. Did the instructor consistently and fairly apply the grading system to all students?
  6. Did the instructor change the grading system during the course of the semester in such a way that it put the student at a serious disadvantage or without adequately communicating the change to the students in the class?
  7. Were all students given a chance to improve their grades when grade adjustment opportunities were made available during the course of the semester?
  8. Did the instructor single out the student for arbitrary or discriminatory treatment?
- C. It is very important to note that the Board, while considering all the above issues does not engage in the following activities:

1. Grading papers or examinations or challenging the instructor's evaluation of oral participation in class.
2. Hearing cases involving graduate oral or qualifying examinations or theses/dissertations.
3. Making decisions on the basis of the academic soundness of the instructor's teaching methods or grading system.
4. Basing decisions on a general consideration of "good" or "bad" instruction.

D. The Board does not have the academic competency in the various fields that are involved to evaluate field specific instruction; nor can the Board overcome the differences of opinion over soundness of teaching methods. Recourse against generally "bad" instruction must be handled at the department or college level; therefore, these cases will be referred back to the departmental and college levels for resolution.

1.04 The Grade Appeals Board has the authority to instruct the Registrar to change a final course grade to any letter grade including "W," "F" and "P."

1.05 The Grade Appeals Board consists of twenty faculty who are appointed by the President of the University in consultation with the Chair of the Faculty Council, eight undergraduate students who are appointed by the President of the Student Government Association, and four graduate students who are appointed by the President of the Graduate and Professional Student Association. No fewer than two Faculty members on the GAB must be members of the Academic Standards and Policy Committee (ASAPC) of the Faculty Council. Two faculty members serve as co-chairs to divide the Board so that all cases filed within that semester can be handled quickly. When the Board is so divided, each panel shall have the authority of the full Board, providing a section has a quorum present. A quorum for the full Board or a hearing panel shall consist of three voting members, two of whom are faculty, and a chair. In addition, the Board will be assisted by an Executive Assistant and an Assistant who are appointed by the Office of Academic Affairs.

- A. Before any member may serve on an appeal committee he/she must attend an orientation session, conducted by the Chair of the Grade Appeals Board, regarding the regulations for hearing/not hearing an appeal and all processes associated with the appeal.
- B. GAB members shall be appointed for a two-year term and cannot be reappointed for the following term.
- C. The chair and co-chair of the GAB are appointed by the President of OSU after consultation with the Chair of the Faculty Council.

1.06 Aside from the duties described elsewhere, the responsibilities of the Chair are to educate and train members of the GAB and to make an annual report on GAB activities to the ASAPC. When issues of violations of academic integrity, presentation of false information, or graduate thesis/dissertation issues are raised at any point in the process the Chair/co-chair has the responsibility to halt the proceedings and to refer the case to the appropriate body for resolution.

## **PROCEDURE**

2.01 In cases where a student appeals a final course grade and where allegations of violations of academic integrity are not involved, the following procedures shall be used:

- A. Student obtains and completes an appeal form. Appeal forms are available at the Office of Academic Affairs the day after grades are posted and available to students on the Internet. In completing the form, the student must discuss the action with an advisor, the instructor, the instructor's department head, and the instructor's dean and thereby informs each official of the pending action. For the purposes of 2.01a of this document, 'instructor' shall mean 'instructor of record'. This procedure may encourage any dispute to be solved by the instructor, the department head and the instructor's dean before it is heard by the Grade Appeals Board. If during these discussions it becomes clear that a grade change is necessary, the instructor will submit a change of grade form to the registrar. When the instructor is no longer employed by the university, the responsibility falls to the department Head.
- B. Form is submitted to Assistant to the Appeals Board. The Assistant, who can be contacted in the Office of Academic Affairs, accepts the form and notifies all parties concerned when the case is ready for hearing. The Executive Assistant to the Grade Appeals Board meets with both the instructor and student before the hearings are scheduled to obtain information pertaining to the case. Information includes, but is not limited to, the official grade book. Prior to the hearing, the student will receive a copy of the instructor's verification form and the instructor will receive a copy of the student's form and written statement.
- C. Appeals Board schedules hearings for both student and instructor. Appointments for hearings are confirmed by mail. Both hearings are generally held on the same day but never simultaneously so that there will be no confrontation between student and instructor. Both parties have the right to call witnesses to assist in establishing the facts of the case. Each party is permitted to have one silent observer of their choosing present during their part of the hearing and the right to call a short recess and consult with that observer outside the hearing.
- D. Instructor's verification form. The Instructor's verification form needs to be returned five working days after signing the students Form "A." If a student has conferred with the instructor in question and has delivered the appropriate form to the instructor, but the completed instructor's form is not returned in a reasonable amount of time, the Grade Appeals Board may hear the case without the instructor's form. In such a case, the Grade Appeals Board should hear the case without prejudice, and the rights of the instructor to present evidence and testimony before the Board should not be restricted. A statement of this policy and the address to which the forms are to be returned are included on the instructor's grade appeal form.
- E. Appeals Board renders decision. Written notice of the decision is sent within ten working days to the student, the student's advisor, the instructor, and the instructor's department

head and dean. When the Board votes to alter a grade, the decision is sent to the Office of the Registrar and the grade is changed.

2.02 In the event that a grade appeal shall involve any current member of the Board as a party (either student or instructor), an ad hoc board shall be convened to hear the appeal.

- A. The ad hoc board shall be composed of three former chairs or co-chairs of the Grade Appeals Board, a past chair of ASAPC selected by the Office of Academic Affairs, and one student selected by the Office of Academic Affairs on the advice of the President of the Student Government Association (if the appeal involves an undergraduate student) or of the President of the Graduate and Professional Student Association (if the appeal involves a graduate student). One of the faculty members shall be designated as chair of the ad hoc board by the Office of Academic Affairs.
- B. In the event there are not enough former chairs or co-chairs of the Grade Appeals Board or past chairs of the ASAPC to establish a quorum, past members of the Grade Appeals Board may be selected to serve on an ad hoc board. Input from Faculty Council Officers and the ASAPC may be sought for additional ad hoc board members in the event a quorum of the ad hoc board cannot be established with former chairs or co-chairs of the Grade Appeals Board, past chairs of the ASAPC, or past members of the Grade Appeals Board.
- C. The ad hoc board shall hear the appeal as soon as is reasonably possible and shall adhere to all rules, regulations, and procedures applicable to the Grade Appeals Board which shall be in force at the time of the consideration of the appeal.

2.03 The procedures of the Grade Appeals Board assume that faculty will ensure the existence of relevant evidence in the form of major projects and exams. (A major project or exam that is considered worth 10 percent or more of the final grade.) The faculty member is expected to do this by (a) returning the project or exam to the student, or (b) retaining it for a period not less than the time during which an appeal can be made. It is understood that if the faculty returns the work, the student shall be provided a reasonable opportunity to pick it up.

2.04 Both parties have five (5) business days to file a written appeal with the Provost's Office of the GAB decision. The ad hoc panel hearing the appeal will be the three former chairs or co-chairs of the Grade Appeals Board, a past chair of ASAPC selected by the Office of Academic Affairs, and one student from the Grade Appeals Board who did not participate in the original hearing. The ad hoc panel may either uphold the decision of the GAB, nullify the decision, or return the case to the GAB for rehearing. Grounds for appeal will be the failure of the GAB to follow its own policy and procedures or if new information related to the original decision becomes available. To be heard, the appeal must include specific written information stating the grounds of the appeal.

- A. In the event there are not enough former chairs or co-chairs of the Grade Appeals Board or past chairs of the ASAPC to establish a quorum, past members of the Grade Appeals Board may be selected to serve on an ad hoc board. Input from Faculty Council Officers and the ASAPC may be sought for additional ad hoc board members in the event a quorum of the ad hoc board cannot be established with former chairs or co-chairs of the Grade Appeals Board, past chairs of the ASAPC, or past members of the Grade Appeals Board.

## **PRIORITY APPEALS**

3.01 The Priority Grade Appeals Board (PGAB) meets after the end of each semester to expedite time-sensitive grade appeals (note: because of unique exigencies in the academic calendar of the Center for Veterinary Health Sciences, veterinary students should follow the plan outlined in section 4.0 below). To request consideration of an appeal as "Priority" the student must meet one or more of the following criteria, and verification is to be proved with the application as indicated below (in italics).

- A. A student whose degree completion depends on the grade in question. Provide confirmation from the Office of the Director of Student Academic Services within the student's college.
- B. A student whose admission to an academic or professional program, or whose employment status, is contingent on the grade in question may justify the appeal by attaching a copy of the official academic or professional program admission letter or proof of employment such as a copy of a letter of offer.
- C. A student whose immediate advancement to the next phase of a time-locked sequential curriculum is contingent on the grade in question. Attach a statement from the office of the Director of Student Academic Services within the student's college.
- D. A student who faces academic suspension, the loss of scholarship or financial aid, or other severe penalty because of the grade in question. Such cases will be verified by the staff of the Office of Academic Affairs, to whom the appeal request is submitted.

3.02 The PGAB has the authority to instruct the registrar to change a final course grade to any letter including "W," "F" and "P."

3.03 The PGAB consists of at least five members, including at least four faculty members one of whom is currently serving on the ASAPC and one student member, selected by the OSU Grade Appeals Board (GAB) from among its current or previous members. PGAB members must be available for possible appeal hearings on the Friday prior to the first class day of the following semester (if no priority appeals are filed in a given semester, this meeting of the PGAB will be cancelled). The current chair of the GAB will be responsible to see that a PGAB is selected prior to the end of the previous semester. One PGAB member will be elected Chair by the PGAB, and will vote only in a case of a tie. A quorum of three PGAB members (two faculty members plus the chair) is required to hear a case and offer a decision. Members who have conflicts of interest (student's advisor, student's instructor in the course, instructor of record) in an appeal will be excused from hearing the case.

3.04 Procedure. In cases where a student appeals a final grade and where allegations of violations of academic integrity are not involved, the following procedures shall be utilized.

- A. Student completes an appeal form. Appeal forms are available from the Office of Academic Affairs the day after grades are posted and available to students on the internet. The student is directed to discuss the action with the advisor, the instructor of record, the

instructor's department head and the instructor's Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. However, if one or more of these individuals are unavailable, see section 3.04(f). Indicate on the form the request for consideration as Priority Appeal, indicate or attach appropriate verification of priority urgency and submit it to the Office of Academic Affairs. The deadline for filing is Tuesday of the week prior to the first week of classes of the regular academic term immediately following the academic term for which the appeal is being filed.

- B. The Chair of the PGAB will determine whether the student's request meets the requirements for consideration as a Priority Appeal. If the request does not meet these requirements, the application will be moved to the regular grade appeals process.
- C. Involvement of instructor. The instructor of record will receive a copy of the form and the student's written statement, and will return his or her verification form to the Office of Academic Affairs. A copy of the verification will be provided to the student.
- D. The PGAB holds hearings for both student and instructor. The hearings will occur on the Friday prior to the first day of classes. Only persons invited by the Board may be present.
- E. The PGAB renders a decision. By Monday, the first class day, notice of the decision is provided to the student, the student's advisor, the instructor and the instructor's department head and dean. When the PGAB votes to alter a grade, the decision is sent to the Office of the Registrar and the grade is changed.
- F. Unavailability of involved individuals. Because priority appeals are heard outside of the class calendar, it is possible that the instructor of record, the student's advisor, the department head, or the instructor's dean may not be available for an initial discussion with the student, for the completion of the instructor's verification form, and/or to attend the hearing. A reasonable attempt will be made by the student to complete the discussions described in section 3.04(a), and by the Chair of the PGAB to contact the instructor. If the completed instructor's form is not returned within the designated time, the PGAB may hear the case without prejudice, but the rights of the instructor to present evidence and testimony at the hearing should not be restricted. If the instructor is unavailable for a hearing on the Friday before classes begin, the student may enroll and attend classes for that week as though his/her appeal had been approved. In these cases, the hearing will be scheduled during the first week of classes and will be decided no later than Friday of that week.

3.05 Policies 1.01, 1.02, 2.02 and 2.03 of the OSU Policy and Procedures for the normal Appeal of Final Grade Not Involving Allegation of Violations of Academic Integrity will apply also in cases identified as Priority Appeals.

#### EXAMPLE CALENDAR FOR PRIORITY APPEALS (FALL-SPRING)

##### DAY AFTER GRADES DUE ACTION

December

T Grades due to registrar by 5pm

W Grades posted by evening and available to students on the Internet.  
Th Appeal forms available in the Office of Academic Affairs.  
F Suspension notifications mailed.

#### DAY BEFORE 1st CLASS ACTION

January

T Student discusses grade with required parties, completes forms, gets signatures, and delivers the appeal forms to the Office of Academic Affairs.

W-Th Instructor is notified. Instructor verification form is submitted.

F Hearings (one for student, one for instructor). PGAB notifies all interested parties of the decision.

### **PRIORITY APPEAL OF FINAL GRADE NOT INVOLVING ALLEGATION OF VIOLATIONS OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY– STUDENTS IN THE CENTER FOR VETERINARY HEALTH SCIENCES ONLY**

4.01 An Emergency Grade Appeals Board (EGAB) for the Center for Veterinary Health Sciences (CVHS) will act to expedite time sensitive grade appeals for students enrolled in the CVHS curriculum. The EGAB will hear appeals of "D" and "F" grades. All other grade appeals will be referred to the University Grade Appeals Board.

4.02 It is the responsibility of faculty members in the Center for Veterinary Health Sciences to communicate to students a clear statement of the grading practices and procedures that will be used to determine the student's final grade. If a student believes those practices and procedures were not consistently and accurately followed when the instructor determined the student's final grade, the student shall have the right to appeal the case to the EGAB if informal discussions with the instructor of record fail to resolve the issue.

4.03 In hearing a case, the EGAB shall base its decision of changing or not changing the assigned grade solely upon whether the grade was assigned consistently and accurately within the grading system adopted and announced by the faculty member.

4.04 The EGAB has the authority to instruct the Registrar to change a final course grade to any letter grade including "W," "F" and "P."

4.05 The Emergency Grade Appeals Board for the Center for Veterinary Health Sciences consists of at least five tenured faculty members recommended by the Veterinary Medicine Faculty Council and appointed by the dean. Two faculty members from the University Grade Appeals Board will also be appointed. A quorum of two faculty members from CVHS and one from the University Board is required to hear a case and offer a decision. A faculty member elected by the EGAB from the hearing board membership will chair the EGAB. In a case of tie votes, the chair can cast the deciding vote. Members that have conflicts of interest (student's advisor, members of the Professional Standards Committee, student's instructor in the course, instructor of record for course) in an appeal will be excused from hearing the case. The Chair of the Professional Standards Committee will be an ex-officio member of the committee.

4.06 Procedure. In cases where a student appeals a final grade of "D" or "F" and where allegations of violations of academic integrity are not involved, the following procedures shall be utilized:

- A. Student obtains and completes an appeal form. Appeal forms are available in the dean's office. In completing the form, the student must discuss the action with the advisor, the instructor of record, the instructor's department head and the associate dean for academic affairs. For Year I-III students, the deadline for filing an emergency appeal is no later than two days after final grades are due in the Registrar's office. For Year IV students, the deadline for filing an appeal is no later than two days after clinical course grades are made available to students. The associate dean and department head may grant a delay for those students that may be off campus when grades are posted.
- B. Form is submitted to the Chair, Emergency Grade Appeals Board, Center for Veterinary Health Sciences. The Chair will provide the instructor of record a copy of the student's form and written statement and the student will receive a copy of the instructor's verification form.
- C. The Board schedules hearings for both student and instructor. These are usually held on the same day but never simultaneously. Only persons invited by the Board may be present. To expedite cases, hearings are usually scheduled within three working days after receipt of student's written appeal.
- D. Emergency Grade Appeals Board renders decision. Written notice of the decision is sent to the student, student's advisor, instructor of record, instructor's department head, and dean. Decisions will be rendered within 24 hours after date of hearing. When the Board votes to change a grade, the decision is sent to the Office of the Registrar and the grade is changed.
- E. Conflict of interest. In the event that a grade appeal shall involve any current member of the Board as a party (instructor), an alternate member shall be selected by the Chair to hear the case.

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Executive Team, August 14, 2018