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Resolution on Student Grade Appeals

The College at Brockport, College Senate

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Revision of Student Grade Appeals Policy – approved by Academic Council on 9/29/98. Revised after Faculty Senate Policies Committee input 11/6/98. Approved by Academic Council on 11/10/98. Amended and approved by Faculty Senate on 2/15/99. This revised policy would replace the entire text on Student Grade Appeals as published in *Your Right to Know 1998-99*, p. 28 and 29.

Student Grade Appeals

Students should address any question or disagreement about grades as quickly as possible. In any case, a formal grade appeal must be submitted no later than the 30th (calendar) day of the next regular semester (see section C below).

A. Grounds for Consideration of Student Grade Appeals

1. For consideration of a student grade appeal, the student must provide evidence that one of the following has occurred:
 - a. that the course instructor has failed to make the standards and expectations for the grade known to the student in a reasonable manner; or
 - b. that the course instructor has not fairly applied the announced standards and expectations of the course to the student who is appealing.
2. The difficulty of the standards and expectations of the course shall not be an issue in a grade appeal.
3. The burden of proof in all phases of the grade appeal process shall be on the student.

B. An attempt to resolve the issue informally with the instructor is required in all cases.

1. The student shall discuss the matter informally with the instructor who assigned the grade in question. If the instructor is off campus or otherwise not available, the student must confer with the chair of the department, who will attempt to contact the instructor. If the instructor is no longer available, the chair will consider the student's complaint.
2. After carrying out the informal process, the student may wish to initiate a further appeal as described below.

C. The formal departmental appeal

1. This appeal must be filed by a written statement no later than the 30th calendar day of the next regular semester. The written statement shall meet the following criteria:

- a. It sets forth in detail the reasons why the student believes the grade originally assigned should be reconsidered, making reference to the specific grounds for grade appeal (as stated above).
 - b. It indicates the date(s) on which the student conferred with the instructor.
 - c. It includes a list of all relevant supporting materials, documents, and evidence that the student wishes to have considered in the appeal.
2. The student shall make two complete copies of the written statement and all attachments. S/he should submit one copy to the chair of the department that offered the course in question, and the other to the course instructor. In an effort to resolve the matter, the chairperson shall carefully review the student's written statement and may confer with the student and instructor, individually and/or together. The chairperson may also review the student's work in the course in question and employ other means for reviewing and investigating the matter.
3. If the chair of the department is successful at resolving the issue with the grade, s/he will see that any grade change agreed upon is recorded through the usual mechanism for changes of grade.
4. Regardless of the outcome, within two weeks, the chair will -
- a. provide a written response to the student and the instructor with a copy to the appropriate dean. This letter of response will detail the steps taken in the attempt to resolve the complaint and state the outcome of the departmental appeal.
 - b. return all documentation to the student.
 - c. inform the student about the dean's level appeal process.

D. Dean's Level Grade Appeal

1. If the student is not satisfied by the outcome within the department, within two weeks s/he may consult with the dean (or the dean's designee) about a further appeal. The student shall supply the dean with all documentation from the previous departmental process. At this stage, the dean has four options:
- a. The dean may deny the grade appeal if the student has not demonstrated appropriate grounds as specified above. In this case, the dean's decision is final and there is no further appeal.
 - b. The dean may determine that the grade appeal is actually a complaint about the instructor's behavior not related to assigning a grade. These complaints will be treated as separate issues and may be referred to other offices where they can be handled appropriately.
 - c. The dean may attempt to resolve the appeal by consultation with the instructor, the department chair, and the student. Failing such resolution, the dean will proceed to 1.d below.

- d. If options a through c above are not used to resolve the appeal, within two weeks of receiving the student's grade appeal letter, the dean shall convene a panel of faculty to hear the student's appeal.

2. The Grade Appeal Panel

- a. The grade appeal panel will consist of three faculty members (no more than one member from the department in which the grade appeal originated) who are acceptable to the student, the instructor, and the dean.
 - b. The panel shall meet and solicit a response from the instructor to each and every element of the student's appeal of his/her grading decision. All materials provided by the student and the instructor will be available to the student, the instructor, and the grade appeal panel. The panel members will familiarize themselves with the standards and expectations of the course and the evaluative material presented. The student will be invited to appear before the panel.
 - c. The decision on the appeal will be made by a majority of the panel members. If the panel finds no reason to change the grade, the original grade will remain. If, on the other hand, the panel finds that the standards and expectations were not reasonably known to the student or were unfairly applied, they may recommend a different grade and give their reasons for so recommending. The panel shall report their findings in writing to the student, the instructor, and the dean within two weeks of receiving the appeal.
 - d. If the panel recommends a different grade, the instructor shall have ten working days from the receipt of the panel's report to change the grade or to appeal the decision to the vice president for academic affairs. In the absence of a further appeal, the dean will have the responsibility of making certain that the grade change takes place. A change of grade shall not be interpreted as an admission of unfairness in grading on the part of the instructor.
 - e. Either the student or the instructor may appeal to the vice president for academic affairs when:
 - 1) there is substantial new evidence regarding the appeal, in which case the vice president will return the appeal to the departmental chairperson for reconsideration. OR
 - 2) there is clear evidence that College policy has not been followed, in which case the vice president will assign a grade that in his/her discretion is fair to all parties.
- E. In all student grade appeals, the decision of the vice president for academic affairs is final.
- F. Nothing in this policy is intended to limit the exercise of professional judgment on the part of faculty to design courses and establish course requirements.

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 - b. It indicates the date(s) on which the student conferred with the instructor.
 - c. It includes a list of all relevant supporting materials, documents, and evidence that the student wishes to have considered in the appeal.
2. The student shall make two complete copies of the written statement and all attachments. S/he should submit one copy to the chair of the department that offered the course in question, and the other to the course instructor. In an effort to resolve the matter, the chairperson shall carefully review the student's written statement and may confer with the student and instructor, individually and/or together. The chairperson may also review the student's work in the course in question and employ other means for reviewing and investigating the matter.
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 - b. return all documentation to the student.
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