Student Academic Appeals

Students are first encouraged to resolve academic conflicts and complaints informally through their department or through the assistance of the Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Students, which can provide objective and confidential mediation. If an informal resolution cannot be reached there are two kinds of procedures for undergraduate students to pursue with complaints of an academic nature. Refer to the Student Handbook for appeals structures for other grievances.

Grade Appeal Structure for Undergraduate Students

If a student questions the fairness or accuracy of a grade, there is recourse through a student grade appeal structure. Disagreements shall be heard that allege the instructor’s policy was not applied consistently to all students, differed substantially from the announced policy, or that a policy was not announced. All grievances concerning course grades must be filed within one calendar year of the end of the term in which the grade that is being appealed was assigned. The procedures are:

1. The student should first discuss the matter with the instructor involved, doing so as soon as possible after receiving the grade. The instructor should be willing to listen, to provide explanation, and to be receptive to changing the grade if the student provides convincing argument for doing so. The student’s questions may be answered satisfactorily during this discussion.

2. If the student chooses to pursue the grievance, the student shall take the appeal in written form to the appropriate department chairperson. That person, if she or he believes the complaint may have merit, will discuss it with the instructor.

3. If the matter remains unresolved, it will be referred to an ad hoc committee composed of the entire faculty of the instructor’s department. The committee will examine available written information on the dispute, will be available for meetings with the student and with the instructor, and will meet with others as it sees fit.

4. If the faculty committee, through its inquiries and deliberations, determines that the grade should be changed, it will request that the instructor make the change and provide the instructor with a written explanation. Should the instructor decline, he or she must provide an explanation for refusing.

5. If the faculty committee, after considering the instructor’s explanation, concludes it would be unjust to allow the original grade to stand, it may then recommend to the department chairperson that the grade be changed. That individual will provide the instructor with a copy of the recommendation and will ask the instructor to implement it. If the instructor continues to decline, the chairperson is then obligated to change the grade, notifying the instructor and the student of this action. Only the chairperson has the authority to effect a grade change over the objection of the instructor who assigned the original grade, and only after the foregoing procedures have been followed. If the faculty committee determines that the grade should not be changed, it should communicate this conclusion to the student, the faculty member, and the chair.