

POLICY STATEMENT FOR GRADING APPEALS
College of Arts & Sciences
Revised May 2011

I. MANDATE

The Committee on Student Academic Distinction, Awards, and Appeals (hereafter referred to as the Committee or the College Committee) of the College of Arts & Sciences hears grading appeals in accordance with the Bylaws of the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska and draws its mandate from Chapter V, Section 5.3, which reads:

“Each college or school shall provide for a faculty-student appeals committee for students who believe that evaluation of their academic progress has been prejudiced or capricious. Such procedure shall provide for changing of a student's evaluation upon the committee's finding that an academic evaluation by a member of a faculty has been improper.”

II. THE COLLEGE COMMITTEE AND THE DEPARTMENTS

The procedures of each departmental grading appeals committee should ideally reflect those of the college committee. Students should attempt to reconcile the grade with the instructor within two weeks of the regular academic year semester following the semester in which they received the disputed final grade. It is incumbent upon the instructor to render a decision regarding the grade during this two-week period. Students who are dissatisfied with the decision should seek to resolve the matter with the department chair or director within the first four weeks of the semester. Students who are still dissatisfied may appeal the grade to the departmental committee within the first six weeks of the semester. Departments are not obligated to hear appeals during the summer terms, although they may. Each departmental grading appeals committee should hear both the student and the faculty member concerned in a timely manner, and gather documentary evidence that will be of relevance in arriving at a decision. The departmental committee should render its decision to the student and the faculty member in writing no longer than 30 days after the student files an appeal with the departmental committee, provided that the appeal is made during a regular academic semester. The departmental committee should keep a record of its deliberations as well as copies of all documents concerned with the case. The Dean's office should solicit information from departments about pending appeals four weeks after the start of each semester, so that the Dean may be apprised of any appeals that might reach the level of the College Committee.

III. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A. Organization. The Committee consists of eight voting members, five of them representatives of the full-time teaching faculty, one graduate student and two undergraduate students. The members of the Committee shall serve staggered terms as follows:

1. The full-time faculty members shall serve staggered three-year terms.
2. (a) The committee chair is chosen by the committee at the last meeting of the preceding academic year.
(b) The committee chair must be a tenured member of the faculty.
3. The graduate student shall serve a **one**-year term.
4. The undergraduate students shall serve **one**-year terms. Undergraduate students will be appointed by the Dean at the recommendation of the Student Advisory Board. The graduate student will be appointed by the Dean upon the recommendation of the Graduate Student Association or the Dean of Graduate Studies. The Committee will routinely invite a liaison member of the Dean's Office staff to be present during consideration of a case. He or she will not have a vote.

In cases involving a member of one of the departments represented on the Committee, that individual will be recused from the deliberations, although he or she may appear to provide evidence. In the case of the recusing of a faculty member, the Dean of the College may appoint a replacement from another department for the duration of that particular case. In the case of the recusing of a student member, a replacement will be provided the College Student Advisory Board, the Graduate Student Association or the Dean of Graduate Studies,.

B. Scope of inquiry. The Committee attempts to protect students against arbitrary, capricious or prejudiced evaluation by the instructor. It cannot undertake to resolve disputes about a student's knowledge of a particular subject matter, and its responsibility is to ensure due process in grading procedure. In accepting an appeal, *the Committee must be satisfied that there is reason to suspect that the awarding of the grade may have involved a denial of due process, through arbitrary, capricious or prejudiced action on the part of the instructor or elsewhere in the department.*

The Committee will not adjudicate appeals involving violation of law, violation of University rules or regulations, disruptive or insubordinate behavior or cheating on examinations, although students may appeal the grade assigned in such cases. (For further information on student conduct violations, please contact Student Affairs or the Academic Senate Office.)

C. Content of appeal. A student wishing to appeal to the College Committee should present to the Dean a written statement of the grounds of his or her appeal within one week of receiving the decision of the departmental committee. Except under special circumstances, the committee will not hear appeals during the summer. The statement should provide the following information:

1. An account of the facts surrounding the awarding of the grade.
2. Evidence that the student has sought to resolve the case in consultation with the other party.
3. Evidence that the student, failing to resolve the case, has attempted to resolve it by recourse to the department chair or director.

4. Evidence that the student, failing to resolve the case, has attempted to resolve by recourse to the Departmental Grading Appeals Committee.
5. Evidence that the student has carried through the appeal with the greatest expedition possible under the circumstances. The College Committee will normally only accept appeals which have been initiated in the semester following the awarding of the grade.

The appellant should be as specific as possible in the evidence introduced, giving dates, places and times supplying documentary evidence when this is available (e.g., e-mail communications). The statement is intended as a source of information for the Dean, members of the Committee, and the other party concerned, and should not be a vehicle for unsubstantiated charges.

D. Appeal procedures

1. Upon receiving the appellant's application, the Dean or Committee chair will forward it to the Committee members.
2. When an appeal is received, the Committee members will request from the departmental committee all records of its deliberations, including documentary evidence gathered in the case.
3. The instructor or department representative against whom the appeal is being filed will be notified of the appeal, and informed that he or she has a right to examine a copy of the appeal.
4. This notification will inform both parties of their right to speak before the Committee if the appeal is accepted.
5. Upon examination of the case, the Committee may take one of the following courses of action:
 - a. It may reject the case, giving written reasons for its refusal to hear it.
 - b. It may refer the case back to the instructor or department, or to the student, suggesting that a resolution lies within the power of the student and faculty member or the student and the department.
 - c. It may accept the case unconditionally. The Committee will:
 - (i) Solicit additional information from the faculty member, student and/or the departmental committee in written form to address those questions and issues identified by the college committee as in need of further clarification. If clarification of departmental committee material is necessary, the Committee must request it from both the student and the faculty member.
 - (ii) If necessary, supplement this information with interviews with the chair of the departmental committee or all of its members, with the faculty member and the student, and any other parties whose testimony is relevant to the case. Both parties may request a hearing. If one party requests a hearing, the same courtesy will be extended the other party.
 - (iii) Consider the full body of evidence.
 - (iv) If it is decided there is a clear preponderance of evidence in favor of either the student or the faculty member, render its decision accordingly.

E. Decision. The decision of the Committee will be rendered within 45 days. The decision will be communicated in a written letter to the Dean, with copies to the student, the faculty member, and the party whose position was rejected, giving appropriate reasons and justification for the decision. The letter will be sent before the end of the last week of classes of the semester following that in which the disputed grade was received.

F. Right to appeal. The charge of the College Committee is to stand as the final appeals committee (College Bylaws, Appendix: Section 1.f). It recognizes the possibility of a mistaken or misinformed decision, and will advise each student or faculty member ruled against that he or she may petition in a timely manner to re-open the case. The basis for re-opening the case will be the submission of significant new evidence or interpretation of evidence that was not considered in the earlier appeal.

G. Procedure for grade change. Committee decisions which result in a change of grade will be communicated in writing to the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. It will be the responsibility of the Dean to make the change of grade.