

# GRADE APPEAL PROCEDURE

The following grade appeal procedure applies to the College and the Schools, not the School of Law. The obligation of the instructor to evaluate the performance of students on sound academic grounds is basic to the formal education process. A student who believes the grade awarded by an instructor is based upon reasons other than the student's academic performance may appeal the grade received in a course. Students utilize the procedure outlined below to appeal the grade unless a student believes the grade was awarded based on illegal discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, disability, sex, marital or parental status or sexual orientation/gender identity. Appeals based upon complaints of discrimination follow the University's procedure for complaints of discrimination (eodirector@washburn.edu).

## Consultation with the Faculty Member

A student must first attempt to resolve the dispute concerning the final grade received in a course through consultation with the instructor of the class. Such consultation normally shall take place following award of the grade but in no event shall such consultation take place later than the fourth week of the next regular academic semester following the award of the grade. In the event the course instructor is no longer at the University or is on a leave of absence during the semester following the contested grade or the instructor has refused to consult with such student, the student may proceed to the next stage, which is mediation by the Department Chair (where such exists). If no Department Chair exists, the next stage is mediation by the Dean of the College or School in which the course was offered.

## Mediation by the Department Chair

If the student is dissatisfied with the result of the consultation with the instructor or the student has been unable to meet with the instructor because of the instructor's refusal to meet or absence, the student may seek mediation of the matter with the Department Chair in the unit in which the course was offered. The Department Chair must be notified in writing by the student of the intention to continue the appeal process. Such notification must be received within 10 working days of the day on which the student/instructor consultation has been completed. The process shall be terminated if notification is not received within 10 working days. The instructor shall make available to the Department Chair all of the materials and criteria which entered into the determination of the student's final grade in the course. The student shall provide the Department Chair, in writing, the grounds for contesting the grade by the instructor. After receiving and reviewing these materials, the Department Chair shall meet with the student and the instructor, either jointly or separately, to attempt to mediate the dispute about the contested grade.

## Mediation by the Dean of the College or School in Which the Course was Offered

If the student is dissatisfied with the result of the consultation with the instructor and with the Department Chair (where appropriate) or the student has been unable to meet with the instructor because of the instructor's refusal to meet or absence, the student may seek mediation of the matter with the Dean of the College or School in which the course was offered. The Dean must be notified in writing by the student of the intention to continue the appeal process. Such notification must be received within 10 working days of the day on which the student/Department Chair consultation has been completed. The process shall

be terminated if notification is not received within 10 working days. The instructor shall make available to the Dean all of the materials and criteria which entered into the determination of the student's final grade in the course. The student shall provide the Dean, in writing, the grounds for contesting the grade by the instructor. After receiving and reviewing these materials, the Dean shall meet with the student and the instructor, either jointly or separately, to attempt to mediate the dispute about the contested grade.

## Appeal to Grade Appeal Committee

If, after mediation with the Dean as provided above, the student is still dissatisfied with the result, the student may file a notice of appeal with the Dean, which shall specify the grade requested and provide a written summary of the grounds for appeal to the Grade Appeal Committee. Such notification must be received by the Dean within 10 working days of the day on which the student/faculty member consultation was completed. The process shall be terminated if notification is not received within 10 working days.

Upon receipt of the notice of appeal, the Dean shall forward it and all materials submitted by the faculty member and student during the mediation process to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the faculty member, and the student. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, upon receipt of the notice and materials, shall appoint and convene a committee of five persons comprised of three faculty members (at least one and no more than two members from the department/discipline from which the grade appeal originated and a minimum of one from other departments/disciplines) and two students from departments/disciplines outside the originating College/School to serve as the Grade Appeal Committee. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs may request names of potential discipline-based committee members from the appropriate Dean and/or Department Chair. The awarding of grades that are fair and equitable is taken seriously by the University. Therefore, faculty members are urged to view a request to serve on a Grade Appeal Committee as an important obligation and a service to the University which should be refused only under extraordinary circumstances.

At its first meeting, the Grade Appeal Committee shall select its chairperson and set the date, time and place for the appeal to be heard, and review appeal materials from the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The committee shall advise the student and the faculty member of the hearing date. The Grade Appeal Committee may only request clarifying information related to the original documents of the appeal packet. Clarifying information requested from the student/faculty member by the committee should be requested through the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. Any clarifying information gathered by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will also be shared with the student and/or faculty member.

## Hearing

The hearing will take place before the entire Committee. The burden of proof rests with the student who shall, during the course of the hearing on the contested grade, be responsible for presenting evidence to support the claim. The hearing will be informal and the formal rules of evidence shall not be applicable. Oral testimony of witnesses may be presented but is not required. If either the student or the faculty member presents witnesses, he/she must provide a written summary of the testimony expected of the witness(es) to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs not later than five business days prior to the date of the hearing. The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs will

then disseminate such information to the committee and each party within three business days. The student or the faculty member may be accompanied by an advisor whose only role in the course of the hearing will be to render advice to the student/faculty member. The student is required to attend the hearing. It is recommended that the faculty member attend the hearing. Should both the student and faculty member attend, they will meet with the committee jointly. The amount of time allotted to each party will be left to the discretion of the committee. The hearing will not be audio, video, or digitally recorded.

## **Decision**

The student will prevail only if at least four of the five members of the committee agree that the relief (grade) sought should be awarded for the reasons stated in the notice of appeal and the student's grade be changed. The committee shall report its decision in writing to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs who will then disseminate the decision to the student, faculty member, Dean, and Department Chair (if applicable). The decision of the committee shall be final. If it is the judgment of the committee that the grade be changed, the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs shall notify the University Registrar, who will enter the changed grade.