



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

University Policy 3130

Grade Appeal

Effective Date

July 1987

Last Revision Date

May 2011

Responsible Party

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, (208) 426-1202

Scope and Audience

This policy applies to all University students.

1. Policy Purpose

To establish the University's policy outlining procedures, power and authority, limits, and responsibilities for student appeals (graduate and undergraduate) of final grades when a student believes a different grade has been earned.

2. Policy Statement

This policy is established to maintain high academic standards and to protect objectivity and fairness in assigning, administering, and evaluating student performance.

3. Definitions

3.1 Grade Appeal

A complaint regarding a final course grade.

3.2 Academic Grievance

A complaint regarding perceived unfair treatment.

4. Responsibilities and Procedures

4.1 Grade Appeals

Grade appeals will be considered only when it is clearly established by the student, in a concise written manner that one of the following has occurred:

- a. The faculty member violated a specific University rule or policy pertaining to grading.
- b. The faculty member refused to correct a clerical or administrative error made in the process of recording or reporting the grade.
- c. The faculty member refused to report any grade for the individual student.
- d. The grade reflects arbitrary or capricious, threatening, abusive, exploitive or similar personal, improper conduct towards the individual student.

4.2 Parameters for Student Grade Appeal

- a. It is the student's responsibility to demonstrate the final course grade is improper based on one of the criteria listed above under "grade appeal." The authority of all those involved in the appeals process is very specific and limited to the conditions included in the above definition. It is outside the purview of such persons to tell a faculty member he or she has graded an exam or assignment too harshly; or that his or her standards are too high; or that particular assignments are unreasonable. These are issues of professional judgment, and if consistent with University policies, fall within the prerogative of the faculty member.
- b. Furthermore, unless clear and/or repetitive patterns of behavior with respect to grade assignments are displayed, grade appeals will in no way be used as criteria in matters of tenure and promotion. It should be assumed that this is a mechanism to resolve differences between two reasonable, but conflicting, parties.

4.3 Procedure for Grade Appeal

- a. All parties are encouraged to work towards a resolution that ensures high academic standards and performance, fairness and academic freedom. Two phases guide the overall outcome of the process.
- b. The Initial Phase is less formal and involves the initial contact and attempts to resolve the situation at a departmental level. The Second Phase is more formal and begins at the college level.
- c. Timelines for the initial phase are somewhat informal and dependent upon the parties involved; however, if a formal grade appeal is to be filed, it must be filed by the end of the regular semester following the semester in which the aggrieved incident occurred.

4.3.1 Initial Phase-Process and Timeline

- a. A student complaint will first be presented by the student to the faculty member of record. The student should contact the faculty member as soon as possible after receiving a disputed grade and attempt to resolve the issue.
- b. The faculty member will respond to the student as soon as possible. It is important that the student document the date, time and manner of attempt to communicate with the faculty member.
- c. If the student is unable to resolve his/her concern with the faculty member, the student may forward the complaint to the chair of the department in which the course is offered. The chair will review the concern and seek a resolution in a reasonable time. It is important that the student document date, time and manner of attempt to communicate with the chair.
- d. If the student is unable to resolve his/her concern with the chair, the student may forward the complaint to the dean of the college in which the class is taught and/or alleged decision occurred.
- e. The student's complaint to the dean will be in writing and needs to include the following:
 - The grounds on which the original grade is being challenged;

- A description of the remedy sought; and,
 - A description and documentation of the informal efforts taken to date to resolve the matter.
- f. The dean (or designee) will review the concern and seek a resolution that is acceptable in a reasonable time. If the original parties have not had a conversation attempting to find a resolution, the dean will facilitate a discussion seeking an acceptable outcome. This discussion shall occur in person with the student and faculty member unless circumstances prohibit a face-to-face interaction.
- g. Exceptions
- (i.) If the faculty member involved is also serving as chair, after an initial attempt to resolve the concern directly with the faculty member, the student may take their concern directly to the dean.
 - (ii.) If the faculty member involved is also serving as dean, after an initial attempt to resolve the concern directly with the faculty member, the student may take their concern directly to the provost.
 - (iii.) If the faculty member involved is also serving as provost or vice president, after an initial attempt to resolve the concern directly with the faculty member, the student may take their complaint directly to the President.

4.3.2 Second Phase-Process and Timeline

- a. If the problem is not resolved during the initial phase, the student may submit their complaint to the Provost. The student's complaint to the Provost will be in writing and needs to include the same items included in the complaint to the dean. It is also important that the student include all information related to date, time and manner of attempt to communicate with the faculty member, chair and dean. The complaint must be filed with the Provost within 20 business days following the last attempt at resolution through the dean.
- b. Upon receiving notification of a complaint by the student, the Provost (or designee) will request written responses to the complaint from the faculty member, chair and dean.
- c. The Provost (or designee) will convene a Preliminary Panel.

- d. The Provost is responsible to ensure that those designated to serve are not directly involved with the concern nor have any other conflict of interest. The Preliminary Panel shall consist of the following members:
- The Faculty Senate Vice president or his/her faculty appointee (voting),
 - A chair, dean or associate dean, selected by the Provost (or designee), who will serve as chair (voting); and
 - The ASBSU Vice President or their student appointee (voting)
- e. The Preliminary Panel will review all of the written documentation from the student and university personnel and determine if the case has merit based upon the parameters provided herein.
- f. The Preliminary Panel's finding of merit does not constitute a finding of fact or a judgment of the case but is merely a recognition that the complaint falls within the conditions for a grade appeal review.
- g. The Preliminary Panel will submit their findings to the Provost's Office within 15 business days. The Provost will issue a decision upholding or overturning the Preliminary Panel's findings within 5 business days of receiving the documentation.
- h. If the complaint is found to have merit, the Provost (or designee) will convene a Grade Appeals Board as soon as possible.

4.3.3 Grade Appeal Board

The Grade Appeal Board will review the grade appeal to provide recommendations to the Provost regarding whether a grade should be overturned, amended or upheld. The Board will consist of:

- The Preliminary Panel as it was constituted during the second phase (3 members)
- A second chair, dean or associate dean, selected by the Provost (voting)
- Second student, selected by the ASBSU President (voting)
- The Chair of the Faculty Senate Academic Standards Committee or his/her representative for the committee (voting)

- Faculty Ombuds or his/her representative (non-voting)
- The Registrar or his/her representative (non-voting ex officio)

4.3.4 Procedures for the Grade Appeal

- a. If it is shown that a member of the Board is directly involved in the case or has any other conflict of interest, that person will be replaced by the appropriate body.
- b. The Chair of the Preliminary Panel will chair the Grade Appeals Board. The Chair of the Grade Appeals Board does not vote.

4.3.4A Hearing Convened by Grade Appeal Board

- a. The Grade Appeal Board will convene a hearing in which both parties have an opportunity to speak.
- b. A single record, such as a written record or audio recording, of every hearing before a Grade Appeals Board will be maintained by the Office of the Provost.
 - (i.) The record will be the sole property of Boise State University.
 - (ii.) No other audio or visual recordings of hearings will be allowed.
 - (iii.) Deliberations will not be recorded.
 - (iv.) The written decision letters will remain as the official University record and be maintained per the University records policy.
- c. Each party will have an equal amount of time to present their case. The specific amount of time allowed will be at the discretion of the chair.
- d. Board members will be allowed to question either party. The question period will continue until all board members are finished with their questions.
- e. Questions between parties will be directed to the chair, who may choose to disallow questions if he/she feels they are not relevant to the topic.

- f. Both parties will have an opportunity to respond to the evidence and information provided during the hearing.
- g. All parties subject to a grade appeal shall cooperate with the Grade Appeal Board; provide truthful and accurate testimony and information; and conduct themselves respectfully and in accordance with Boise State University's Shared Values, Student Code, and rules and policies applicable to students and employees. Abuses of the processes provided herein may result in immediate dismissal of a grade appeal, and subject the offending party to appropriate disciplinary action.
- h. Parties are expected to appear at hearings personally and to advocate on their own behalf. Parties may have a representative present during a hearing if they so elect, however, representatives may not advocate on their behalf or otherwise participate in the proceedings. Any representative allowed at a hearing must agree to protect the confidentiality of the proceedings.
- i. Once all information has been heard, the Board will then adjourn and deliberate.

4.3.4B Post-Hearing Grade Appeal Board Deliberations and Decisions

- a. All deliberations are made in a closed session.
- b. A decision will be made by a majority vote, based on the information presented to the Board.
- c. The Board will provide its written recommendations and minority opinion to the Provost along with justification.
- d. The Provost may uphold or overturn the recommendation of the Board.
- e. The Provost will inform the parties of the final decision in writing within ten (10) business day of the receipt of the recommendation.

Revision History

July 1995; April 1998; November 2001; April 2010; May 2011