

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
POLICY & PROCEDURES LETTER

**Appeal of Final Grade Not Involving Allegation of
Academic Dishonesty
or Misconduct**

**2-016
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
July 2009**

POLICY

- 1.01 It is the responsibility of the faculty members of Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology to communicate to students early in the term a clear statement of the grading practices and procedures that will be used to determine the student's final grade. If a student believes those practices and procedures were not consistently and accurately followed when the faculty member determined the student's final grade, the student shall have the right to appeal the case to the Academic Appeals Board if informal discussions fail to resolve the issue.
- 1.02 The deadline for filing grade appeals is no later than four months after the date the grades are officially due in the Registrar's office, or six weeks after the student begins a new semester, whichever comes first.
- 1.03 The guidelines of the Board specify that the process is not an adversarial process. The Board makes a determined effort to provide a mechanism for exchanging information between student and instructor, and affecting reconciliation without creating an air of judicial inquiry. The intent is not to embarrass students or instructors, nor to assess penalty or retribution when mistakes on either side are discovered, but to provide a forum in which honest differences of opinion are discussed rationally and peacefully. For these reasons, the Board does not have the student and the instructor appear at the same time during the proceedings.
- A. The University considers the syllabus a contract between a faculty member and each student within a course. As such, the Academic Appeals Board hears appeals based on concerns related to the course syllabus. Types of issues that might come before the Board related to a syllabus include, but are not limited to:
1. The student was not adequately informed of the details of the requirements of the course, the prerequisites for the course, and/or the grading system.
 2. The evaluation system was not consistently and fairly applied to all students.
 3. Criteria for determining the final grade were changed during the course of the semester, and the students were not adequately notified of this change. It is important to note that changes in syllabi need not be made in writing as long as students are given adequate notice of the changes.

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4. All students did not receive equal notification and consideration of extra credit or other grade adjustment opportunities that were provided during the course of the semester.
 5. Items such as attendance, participation, and/or attitude were criteria for determining the final grade and were not made clear in advance to the student.
 6. The student was not adequately informed in advance of criteria used in making subjective evaluations of academic activities such as essay examinations, papers, projects, and speeches.
 7. The grading system included non-academic criteria.
 8. The student did not receive adequate and timely feedback on his/her performance on assignments, exams, reports, and other assignments administered during the course of the semester.
- B. When evaluating the grading system of an instructor, the Board makes no attempt to establish whether a grading system is academically sound; that is, the Board is not in a position to decide the case on the instructor's choice of one particular grading system over another. Rather, the Board must rule solely upon whether the grade was assigned fairly within the grading system adopted and announced by the faculty member. In all other instances, the case will be referred back to the division for resolution. The following guidelines have been cautiously developed to be used when examining the internal merits of any grading system:
1. Were errors made in calculating the final grade?
 2. Was the student accurately informed, in writing, of the instructor's grading system; that is, was the student clearly and precisely informed of the decision-making process the instructor was using in determining the final grade for the course?
 3. Student absence is not to be considered a valid excuse for being unaware of the details of the grading system.
 4. Subjective criteria are recognized as valid in determining a grade. The grading system can be subjective but not arbitrary, capricious or personally biased.
 5. Did the instructor consistently and fairly apply the grading system to all students?

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6. Did the instructor change the grading system during the course of the semester in such a way that it put the student at a serious disadvantage or without adequately communicating the change to the students in the class?
 7. Were all students given a chance to improve their grades when grade adjustment opportunities were made available during the course of the semester?
 8. Did the instructor single out the student for arbitrary or discriminatory treatment?
- C. It is very important to note that the Board, while considering all the above issues does not engage in the following activities:
1. Does not grade papers or examinations or challenge the instructor's evaluation of participation in class.
 2. Decisions are not made on the basis of the academic soundness of the instructor's teaching methods or grading system.
 3. Decisions are not based on a general consideration of "good" or "bad" instruction. Recourse against generally "bad" instruction must be handled at the division level; therefore, these cases will be referred back to the division for resolution.
- 1.04 The Academic Appeals Board has the authority to instruct the Registrar to change a final course grade to any letter grade including "W," "F" and "P."
- 1.05 The Academic Appeals Board consists of seven faculty members who are appointed by the President of the University, and three students who are appointed by the President of the Student Government Association. A quorum for the Board shall consist of three voting members, two of whom are faculty, and a chair.

PROCEDURE

- 2.01 In cases where a student appeals a final course grade and where allegations of academic dishonesty are not involved, the following procedures shall be utilized:
- A. Student obtains and completes an appeal form. Appeal forms are available at the Office of Academic Affairs the day after grades are posted. In completing the form, the student must discuss the action with the instructor and the instructor's division chair and thereby informs each official of the pending action. This procedure may encourage any dispute to be solved by the instructor and the division chair before it is heard by the Academic Appeals Board. If during these discussions it becomes clear that a grade change is necessary, the instructor or the division chair can submit a change of grade form to the registrar.

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- B. Form is submitted to the Office of Academic Affairs. The Administrative Secretary, who can be contacted in the Office of Academic Affairs, accepts the form. The Executive Vice President reviews the information pertaining to the case to determine if a hearing is necessary. Prior to the hearing, the Academic Affairs Office provides the student with a copy of the instructor's verification form and the instructor with a copy of the student's form and written statement.
- C. Appeals Board schedules the hearing. Appointments for the hearing are confirmed in writing. The Board hears both parties separately so that there will be no confrontation between student and instructor. Both parties have the right to call witnesses to assist in establishing the facts of the case. Other individuals may only attend a hearing with the consent of the Board.
- D. Instructor's verification form. The Instructor's verification form needs to be returned five working days after signing the student's Form "A." If a student has conferred with the instructor in question and has delivered the appropriate form to the instructor, but the completed instructor's form is not returned in a reasonable amount of time, the Academic Appeals Board may hear the case without the instructor's form. In such a case, the Academic Appeals Board should hear the case without prejudice, and the rights of the instructor to present evidence and testimony before the Board should not be restricted.
- E. Appeals Board renders decision. When a decision is reached, the Chair of the Academic Appeals Board will send a memo to the Office of Academic Affairs with the results, who then will send written notification to the student, the instructor, and the instructor's division chair, with the Board's decision within ten working days. When the Board votes to alter a grade, the decision is also sent to the Office of the Registrar and the grade is changed.
- 2.02 In the event that a grade appeal shall involve any current member of the Board as a party (either student or instructor), that individual must excuse himself/herself and not be one of the three voting members.
- 2.03 The procedures of the Academic Appeals Board assume that faculty will ensure the existence of relevant evidence in the form of major projects and exams. (A major project or exam is one that is considered worth 10 percent or more of the final grade.) The faculty member is expected to do this by (a) returning the project or exam to the student, or (b) retaining it for a period not less than the time during which an appeal can be made. It is understood that if the faculty returns the work, the student shall be provided a reasonable opportunity to pick it up.

Approved: September 2005
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