

Shippensburg University Graduate Grade Appeals Procedure

I. **Introduction** – A graduate student contemplating filing a grade appeal understands that consistent with the practice of academic freedom faculty bear responsibility for assigning course grades in accordance with professionally acceptable standards which have previously been communicated to students verbally or in writing. At the same time, students have the right to ensure that grades are calculated accurately and consistently, fairly and equitably, and without discrimination.

Note: Any grade appeals or grade change requests initiated on the basis of alleged academic dishonesty shall be handled under the procedures set forth for academic dishonesty discussed later in this chapter.

II. **Basis for Appealing a Final Course Grade** – Graduate students may appeal a final course grade assigned to them by an instructor based on one of four conditions:

- A. The course instructor miscalculated the final course grade.
- B. The course instructor committed an oversight in calculating the final course grade.
- C. The course instructor acted in an arbitrary and/or capricious manner in assigning grades to the student, including the final course grade to the student.

For an instructor to act in an arbitrary and/or capricious manner in assigning grades is defined as follows:

- 1. The instructor assigned a course grade to a student on some basis other than performance in the course;
 - 2. The instructor assigned a course grade to a student by resorting to unreasonable standards different from those which were applied to other students in that course; or
 - 3. The instructor assigned a course grade to a student in a manner that represented a substantial, unreasonable and unannounced departure from the instructor's previously articulated standards.
- D. In assigning grades in the course to the student, the course instructor engaged in discrimination based on factors that include but are not limited to: race, color, religion, creed, lifestyle, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, age, union membership, gender, disability or political affiliation. This policy extends to all military veterans as well.

III. **Selection and Composition of the Academic Appeals Committee**

- 1. **Composition of the Academic Appeals Committee** – The Academic Appeals Committee of the department or program shall consist of a minimum of three regular tenure track faculty members in the department or program (excluding the Department Chairperson or Program Director) and an equal number of students who are majors in the program, with a faculty member and student serving as co-chairs. In the event that a faculty or student member of the Academic Appeals Committee is a party in a grade appeal an alternate previously selected shall serve in his or her place.
- 2. **Selection of Academic Appeals Committee Members** -- Within the first week of the Fall semester, each academic department or program shall elect at least three faculty members and one faculty member alternate to serve on the Academic Appeals Committee for the academic year and designate three graduate students and one graduate alternate enrolled in the academic program to serve on the Academic Appeals Committee. Each academic department or program shall develop a standard process for selecting student members for the Academic Appeals Committee. By the end of the first full week of the Fall semester, the names of the faculty and student members of the Academic Appeals Committee and alternates selected for each academic year shall then be forwarded to the graduate dean's office by the end of the first full week of the Fall semester. In the event that a program lacks

sufficient faculty to staff the Academic Appeals Committee and provide a faculty alternate member it shall notify the Dean of the College in which the Program is located. The Dean's office shall provide assistance in identifying a suitable pool of faculty from the College to staff the Academic Appeals Committee and provide an alternate member for the Committee if the need should arise.

IV. **Timetable and Procedures for the Grade Appeal Process** – Compliance with all timelines set forth in this policy is required.

A student may initiate a grade appeal any time after receiving a final grade in a course. Grade appeals however cannot be initiated after thirty (30) calendar days following the onset of the next regular (fall or spring) academic semester. Should the deadline for completing a step in the grade appeal process set forth below fall on a day that the University is not open for business that deadline shall be moved to the next date the University is open for business.

In the event that a faculty member, Department Chairperson or Program Director (or Chair of the Department's Professional Affairs Committee if necessary) fails to comply with the timelines or procedures set forth in this policy the student shall have the right to appeal to the Dean of the College in which the appeal has arisen. If the Dean shall determine that the student's rights under this policy have been violated he or she shall direct the Department to schedule the Formal Grade Appeal Hearing in a timely fashion consistent with the intent of the policy.

A. **Meeting with the Faculty Member Assigning the Final Course Grade** – Following notification of a final grade assigned in a course a student disagreeing with a final course grade shall meet informally with the course instructor in an effort to resolve the matter prior to resorting to the formal appeal process *. This informal meeting between the student and the faculty member assigning the disputed grade shall occur no later than thirty (30) calendar days following the beginning of the next regular (fall or spring) academic semester **. If the faculty member finds in the student's favor, a grade change will be sent to the Registrar's Office after the program chair has signed the grade change form. A copy will be sent to the student. However, if the faculty member decides the grade as given was correct, the student will be notified in writing within seven (7) calendar days. Students who are not satisfied with the results may initiate a formal appeal of the final grade assigned in the course, as outlined below.

***In the event that the faculty member assigning the final grade in the course is no longer an employee of Shippensburg University the student desiring to appeal a course grade shall meet with the Department Chairperson or Program Director to establish procedures consistent with this policy and past practice for entertaining the desired grade appeal.**

** Note: Shippensburg University Policy permits faculty members to change grades if there has been a miscalculation or oversight in grading, but not on the basis of additional student work or revision of previously accepted work.

B. **Initiating a Formal Grade Appeal** – Students wishing to formally appeal a final course grade based on the factors listed in **Section II. Basis for Appealing a Final Course Grade**, must file a written appeal with the Department Chairperson or Program Director of the academic program home to the course whose grade they are seeking to appeal no later than thirty (30) calendar days from the first full day that classes meet of the semester following the semester in which the final course grade was assigned. Appeals may not be filed electronically. Failure to meet the deadline for formally filing a grade appeal shall result in the forfeiture of a student's appeal rights ***. A student wishing to pursue a grade appeal shall by this date submit to the Department Chairperson or Program Director (or Chair of the Department's Professional Affairs Committee in the event that the student is appealing a grade assigned by the Department Chairperson or Program Director) the completed grade appeal form, signed and dated and supporting documentation which shall set forth the basis for the appeal and the desired

resolution. Appeals from the Spring semester and Summer terms shall be filed no later than thirty (30) calendar days from the first day of the Fall semester. An undergraduate grade appeal form may be obtained in the Department office of the major/program where the appeal is filed or from the graduate dean's office. Formal Grade Appeals may not be filed electronically.

*****Note: Both the informal attempt at resolving the disputed grade with the faculty member assigning such grade and the formal initiation of a formal grade appeal must be completed no later than thirty (30) calendar days from the first full day that classes meet of the semester following the semester in which the final course grade was assigned.**

- C. **Meeting with Department Chairperson or Program Director** – Within ten (10) calendar days of receiving a completed grade appeal form, the Program Chairperson shall meet individually and/or jointly, if useful, with the student and the faculty member to discuss the disputed grade in an effort to mediate an amicable resolution to disagreement over the final grade assigned. Such meeting(s) may occur in person or via conference call if necessary. The mediated result must be given in writing to both the student and faculty member. The Department Chairperson or Program Director will notify the faculty member that a formal appeal has been filed.
- D. **Formal Program Grade Appeal Hearing** – If the student finds that the mediated effort fails to address his or her concerns or achieve the desired results, he or she must notify the Department Chairperson or Program Director in writing within fourteen (14) calendar days of the meeting with the Program Chairperson (or designee) of his or her desire to continue on to the formal grade appeal hearing before the Academic Appeals Committee of the program. Failure to meet this fourteen (14) day deadline for proceeding with the formal grade appeal shall result in the forfeiture of a student's appeal rights, except as noted in Paragraph IV.
1. **Scheduling of the Academic Appeals Hearing** -- Upon notification by the student of his or her desire to continue with the appeal, the Academic Appeals Committee shall have **ten (10)** calendar days to conduct a hearing on the matter and to issue its findings and recommendations.
 2. An equal number of students and faculty, but in no case fewer than four members, shall be present at an Appeals Hearing.
 3. **Conduct of the Academic Appeals Hearing** -- The Chairpersons of the Academic Appeals Committee shall have sole responsibility for the conduct of the hearing. Prior to the hearing the student shall submit to the committee a written statement setting forth the issue(s) in the dispute and the desired resolution. Only the student and the faculty member in the dispute have the right to attend the hearing. Both the student and faculty member involved in the grade appeal shall have the right to be present during the grade appeal hearing itself. Both the student and the faculty member have the right to introduce materials into the hearing that are directly relevant to the assignment of the final grade in the course, including such items as:
 - Course Syllabi as given to the student
 - Graded assignments such as, but not limited, to journals, research papers, group projects, examinations
 - Other material relevant to the determination of the student's final course grade
- E. **Decision of the Academic Appeals Committee** -- Only the actual members of the graduate Academic Appeals Committee shall be present during the discussion and deliberations on the outcome of the student's grade appeal. The Academic Appeals Committee's deliberations shall be viewed as confidential and no transcripts, notes or records shall be made regarding their discussion other than a record of their

final decision. The committee has the power to decide the outcome of the final grade dispute by simple majority vote taken by secret ballot. A tie vote upholds the faculty member's decision in the case. If the committee sustains the appeal (i.e., rules in favor of the student) a grade change form will be sent to the Registrar's Office after being signed by the program chair. With the exception of the grade, no part of these proceedings will become part of the student's official academic record. In addition, no part of these proceedings will become part of the faculty member's record or file. The evidence, proceedings, and the final decision of the Academic Appeals Committee shall remain confidential.

V. **Request for Reconsideration** -- A student whose grade appeal has been denied may file a written request for reconsideration within **seven (7)** calendar days with the appropriate academic dean of the college in which the academic program is housed upon the following grounds:

- A. A demonstration of substantial procedural irregularities or inequities in the conduct of the hearing.
- B. The student provides substantial new evidence that was not available at the time of the hearing that would have had a bearing on the outcome of the appeal.
- C. The student is able to demonstrate that the Academic Appeals Committee's decision was erroneous or unfair.

In the absence of a written request for reconsideration of the Committee's decision filed with the appropriate academic Dean in the college wherein the appeal arose within the specified **seven (7)** day period, the committee's initial findings and action on the Appeal filed shall be final.

VI. **Reconsideration of the Academic Appeals Committee Determination** -- Within seven (7) calendar days of the **request for reconsideration**, the dean shall determine whether a compelling reason has been presented for setting aside the initial decision of the Academic Appeals Committee. If the dean finds that a compelling reason exists to take such action he or she may direct the Committee to reconsider their findings and determination or take other appropriate action consistent with the guidelines.

Upon direction from the Academic Dean of the College in which the grade appeal arose, the Academic Appeals committee shall have ten (10) calendar days to reconvene and reconsider their initial decision on the grade appeal. The Committee in undertaking such review and reconsideration shall examine and take into account the concerns raised by the Dean.

Following review and reconsideration by the grade appeals committee, the decision of the grade appeals committee shall be final.

Approved by University Forum 11-16-2004
Approved by President's Cabinet 3-14-2005

Shippensburg University

Graduate Grade Appeal Form

Grade Appeal form is not Valid Unless Completed in Full and Filed in a Timely Fashion

I. Student Information:

Student Name: _____ Student ID No.: _____

Student's Home College: _____ Major: _____

Last Day to File a Grade Appeal: _____ Today's Date: _____

Postal Address(es) to which all university communication concerning this appeal will be directed:

E-mail Address(es): _____

Phone #(s): _____

II. Course for Which Appeal in Being Filed:

I Hereby Register a Formal Grade Appeal Against: _____ (name of the instructor)

in Course Name: _____, Course Number _____, Section: _____, taken
during the Spring ___ Fall ___ Summer Term ___ 20__.

III. Basis for the Appeal (Check Appropriate Line(s)):

___ The Course Instructor Miscalculated the Final Course Grade.

___ The Course Instructor Committed an Oversight in Calculating the Final Course Grade.

___ The Course Instructor acted in an "Arbitrary and/or Capricious" Manner in Assigning Grades, including the Final Course grade to the Student.

___ The Course Instructor in Assigning grades discriminated against the student on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, lifestyle, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, age, union membership, sex, disability or Veteran's status.

IV. Desired Resolution

Grade Given by the Instructor _____ Grade Expected by Student _____

Student Signature: _____

Attach to this form a written statement detailing the basis for your grade appeal and the justification for the grade change desired.

Received By _____ Name of Department or Program _____
(Departmental or Program Representative)

Date _____ Time _____

Cc: Dean's Office

Shippensburg University

Disposition of Graduate Grade Appeal

I. Student Information:

Student Name: _____ Student ID No.: _____

Student's Home College: _____ Major: _____

Postal Address(es) to which all university communication concerning this appeal will be directed:

E-mail Address(es): _____

Phone #(s): _____

II. Course for Which Appeal Was Filed:

Course Name: _____, Course Number _____, Section: _____, taken during Spring ___ Fall ___ Summer Term ___ 20___. Course Instructor _____.

III. Basis for the Appeal (Check Appropriate Line(s)):

- The Course Instructor Miscalculated the Final Course Grade.
- The Course Instructor Committed an Oversight in Calculating the Final Course Grade.
- The Course Instructor acted in an "Arbitrary and/or Capricious" Manner in Assigning Grades, including the Final Course grade to the Student.
- The Course Instructor in Assigning grades discriminated against the student on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, lifestyle, sexual orientation, ancestry, national origin, age, union membership, sex, disability or Veteran's status.

IV. Resolution of Appeal

Grade Given by the Instructor _____ Grade Desired by Student _____

Appeal Granted _____ Appeal Denied _____

Academic Appeals Committee Faculty Co-Chairperson

Date

Academic Appeals Committee Student Co-Chairperson

Date