

# Grade Appeals Policy

The following is a complete copy of the Grade Appeals Policy as passed by UAF Faculty Senate at its meeting #56 (March 20, 1995) and amended at meeting #61 (February 5, 1996), meeting #80 (May 4, 1998), meeting #89 (September 27, 1999), meeting #109 (May 6, 2002), meeting #157 (March 2, 2009), meeting #183 (May 7 2012), meeting #189 (March 4, 2013), meeting #215 (May 2, 2016), and meeting #230 (March 5, 2018).

- Alignment with BOR Policy and UA Regulations, Chapter 09.03 - Student Dispute Resolution (meeting #215, May 2, 2016).
- Clarification made to the time period within which grade appeals will be reviewed (Meeting #189, March 4, 2013).
- Policy at Section III, Procedures, subsection B, Item 4, was revised (Meeting #183, May 7, 2012).
- Deadlines were revised (Meeting #157, March 2, 2009)

## I. Introduction

The University of Alaska is committed to the ideal of academic freedom and so recognizes that the assignment of grades is a faculty responsibility. Therefore, the University administration shall not influence or affect an assigned grade or the review of an assigned grade.

The following procedures are designed to provide a means for students to seek review of final course grades alleged to be arbitrary and capricious. Before taking formal action, a student must attempt to resolve the issue informally with the instructor of the course. A student who files a written request for review under the following procedures shall be expected to abide by the final disposition of the review, as provided below.

## II. Definitions

- A. A "grade" refers to final letter grades A, B, C, D, F, and Pass or Fail. The I (incomplete) and DF (deferred) designate a temporary grade, not a final grade, so these are not subject to appeal until they become final.
- B. There may be extenuating circumstances when the deadlines cannot be met due to illness or other situations over which the parties or the university may have no control. In such case, upon request from either party or the university, the deadlines may be extended. Every effort should be made to complete the appeal process within the current semester.
- C. In accordance with Board of Regents (BoR) policy and University of Alaska regulation, "arbitrary and capricious" grading means:
  1. the assignment of a course grade to a student on some basis other than performance in the course, or
  2. the assignment of a course grade to a student by resorting to standards different from those which were applied to other students in that course, or

3. the assignment of a course grade by a substantial, unreasonable and unannounced departure from the instructor's previously articulated standards.
- D. "A Grading error" is a mathematical miscalculation of a final grade or an inaccurate recording of the final grade, not an error in judgment.
  - E. A class day is any day of scheduled instruction, excluding Saturday and Sunday, included on the academic calendar in effect at the time of a review, as defined in university regulations (R09.03.024). Final examination periods are counted as class days.
  - F. "Department chair" for the purposes of this policy denotes the faculty member responsible for the academic unit offering the course.
  - G. The "dean/director" is the administrative head of the college or school offering the course or program from which the academic decision or action arises. For students at extended campuses the director of the campus may substitute for the dean/director of the unit offering the course or program.
  - H. The "final grade" is the grade assigned for a course upon its completion.
  - I. The next regular semester is the fall or spring semester following that in which the disputed academic decision was made. For example, it would be the fall semester for a final grade issued for a course completed during the previous spring semester or summer session. The spring semester is the next regular semester for an academic decision made during the previous fall semester.

### III. Procedures

#### A. Informal Procedures

Errors by an instructor in determining and recording a grade or by the university staff in transcribing the grade are sources of error that can be readily corrected through the student's prompt attention following the normal change of grade procedure.

1. Review the UAF Appeal of Grade form. [The form is available online at <https://www.uaf.edu/uafgov/faculty-senate/policies-procedures/grade-appeals/>] {Policy revision committee suggests the development of a new template to simplify and clarify the process for students. New template to include information about the grade appeal advisers in the Academic Advising Center}
2. To begin the informal process, the student shall notify the instructor in writing with an explanation of the perceived grading error within 15 class days of the next regular semester (i.e., fall semester for grade issued at the end of the previous spring semester or summer session; spring semester for grade issued at the end of the previous fall semester).

3. The instructor is responsible for notifying the student in writing of the instructor's final judgement concerning the grade in question within 5 class days of receipt of the request, and for promptly submitting the appropriate change of grade form to the Registrar's Office if an error occurred. If the decision was not to change the grade, the instructor shall notify the student, in writing by completing the informal portion on the Appeal of Grade form.
4. If the student does not receive a response from the instructor by the required deadline, the student shall seek the assistance of the chair of the department which the course was offered.
5. If the instructor is no longer an employee of the university or is otherwise unavailable, the student shall seek the assistance of the unit department chair who will make every effort to contact the instructor by the 15th class day of the next regular semester.
  - a. If the instructor cannot be contacted but course records are available, the department chair shall effect resolution within 5 class days of notification by the student. The department chair may correct a grading error through the regular change of grade process on behalf of the instructor.
  - b. If the instructor cannot be contacted and course records are either unavailable or indecisive, the student may request a formal review as described in section B. below.

## B. Formal Procedures

If not resolved in the informal process, the remaining option is by review for alleged arbitrary and capricious grading, or for instances where the course instructor is unavailable and resolution is not forthcoming from the appropriate department chair.

1. This review is initiated by the student through a signed, written request to the department chair with a copy to the dean of the college or school in which the course was offered.
  - a. The student's request for review shall be submitted using university forms specifically designed for this purpose and available online at [http://www.uaf.edu/files/provost/new\\_grade\\_appeal-form.pdf](http://www.uaf.edu/files/provost/new_grade_appeal-form.pdf)
  - b. The student completes the grade appeal checklist and submits the Grade Appeal form, acknowledging the completion of the informal process.
  - c. The request for a review must be received by the dean/director of the college or school in which the course was offered within 5 class days of completion of informal grade appeal process.
  - d. The request must detail the basis for the allegation that a grade was the result of arbitrary and capricious grading and must present the relevant evidence. {the policy revision subcommittee suggests a new template to make it easier for the student to understand what arbitrary and capricious grading is, and the types of evidence that would assist in making their case}

2. Within five days of receipt of the written request for review, the dean notifies in writing the instructor who issued the grade and the department chair of the unit that a formal grade appeal has been filed, and supplies a copy of the student's request for a formal grade appeal to the instructor.
3. The instructor shall be invited to respond in writing to the student's allegations; the instructor's response shall be directed to the grade appeals committee.
4. If the instructor of the course is also the Dean of the College, the Provost will designate another Dean within the University to act as the college's monitor of all proceedings.
5. A review committee will be appointed as follows:
  - a. Three faculty members holding academic rank, who are represented through the current applicable collective bargaining agreements, from the Faculty Senate ad hoc Student Appeals Committee (SAC) shall be appointed by the SAC chair. One voting member shall serve as chair of the student appeal committee.
  - b. The Associated Students of the University of Alaska Fairbanks shall appoint a non-voting member to each grade appeal committee. If practicable, an undergraduate student will be appointed when the petitioner is an undergraduate, and a graduate student shall be appointed when the petitioner is a graduate student. This member shall not be excluded from any of the proceedings.
  - c. A facilitator appointed by the administration shall serve as a non-voting member for formal grade appeals hearings. This individual shall serve in an advisory role to help preserve consistent hearing protocol and records.
6. The committee shall schedule, within 10 class days from receipt of the student's request, the initial review meeting. Only members of the committee shall attend the initial review meeting.
  - a. Throughout the grade appeals process, all parties involved shall protect the confidentiality of the matter according to the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and any other applicable federal, state or university policies.
  - b. At the initial review meeting, the committee shall first examine the student's request and the instructor's written response, if any, and shall rule whether to proceed with a formal hearing, to request additional information, or to dismiss the student's request. Grounds for dismissal of the request for review are:
    - 1) A properly prepared formal appeal of the particular grade has already been denied.

- 2) The alleged actions of the instructor do not constitute arbitrary and capricious grading, as defined herein.
  - 3) The request was not made within the policy deadlines and no extenuating circumstances exist that would allow for the deadlines to be extended.
  - 4) The student has not completed the informal procedures to resolve the grade conflict with the instructor.
  - 5) In the event that the committee votes to dismiss the request, a written notice of dismissal shall be forwarded to the student, instructor, department chair, and dean within five class days of the decision, and will state clearly the reasoning for the dismissal of the request.
7. Acceptance for consideration of the student's request shall result in a review hearing scheduled to meet within 10 class days of the decision to review the request.

(the section a-g formerly were numbered 1-6)

- a. Both the student and the instructor will be invited to attend the review hearing. In accordance with BoR policy and UA regulation, neither party may be excluded from the review hearing.
- b. At the committee's discretion, witnesses for either party may be invited to testify at the review hearing.
- c. Student dispute resolution proceedings will normally be closed. Requests for an open proceeding must be made by a party prior to the start of the proceeding. Such requests shall be granted to the extent allowed by law unless the committee's chair determines that all or part of a proceeding should be closed based upon considerations of fairness, justice, and other relevant factors.
- d. Both the student and the instructor may be accompanied by a supporter. Supporters for the student or instructor may speak only at the discretion of the committee. Supporters shall not act as representatives.
- e. Other matters of format will be announced in advance.
- f. The proceedings will be recorded and the recordings will be stored with the campus conduct office.
- g. The hearing must be fact-finding, where both the student and instructor may provide additional relevant and useful information and can provide clarification of facts for materials previously submitted.

8. The committee will make its final decision in private by a majority vote.
  - a. The academic decision review committee proceedings will result in the preparation of written findings and conclusions. Conclusions will result in one of the following:
    - 1) the request for a grade change is denied.
    - 2) the request for a grade change is upheld; the review committee requests the course instructor to change the grade; and the course instructor changes the grade in accordance with the University of Alaska Fairbanks rules and procedures
    - 3) the request for a grade change is upheld; the course instructor is either unavailable to change the grade or refuses to, and the review committee directs the dean/director to initiate the process specified by the University of Alaska Fairbanks rules and procedures to change the grade to that specified by the review committee.
  - b. A formal, written report of the decision shall be forwarded to the student instructor, department chair, dean, and registrar within five class days of the meeting.
  - c. The decision of the committee is final.