

# HAUB SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENT & NATURAL RESOURCES

## GRADE APPEALS GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

**Reference:** Student Code of Conduct: UW Regulation 11-1 (1/23/2020)  
Change of Grades: UW Regulation 2-121 (6/10/2020)

### I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this grade appeal policy is to establish a clear, fair process by which students can contest a course grade. Grades involve an unusually sensitive and complex area for students and faculty. Whereas the student has a right to expect thoughtful, non-capricious grading, instructors may apply a variety of standards and individual approaches to grading validly exist in a university environment.

Borderline grades can be especially difficult for clear-cut judgment by the instructor and acceptance by the student. The Haub School supports resolution of academic concerns at the level closest to the issue through thoughtful consultations among the parties involved. This document sets forth procedures for those instances when a student wishes to appeal a grade.

For an appeal to be successful, capricious evaluation or capricious treatment must be demonstrable to reasonable committee members who are not in the field of study of the class. The burden of proof is on the student.

Grade appeals are serious, and appellants should consider their ability to document capricious evaluation or capricious treatment before proceeding. Frivolous appeals are strongly discouraged, as they are time consuming for all parties involved.

### II. DEFINITIONS

**Appellant:** The student or group of students who are appealing their grade in a course taught by the Appellee. If the Appellant is a group of students appealing an assigned group project grade, the group's appeal shall be handled as one.

**Appellee:** The instructor of record of the course whose grade is being appealed by the Appellant.

**Capricious Evaluation:** Applying different standards of evaluation to members of the same course without legitimate reason; or grading assignments or assigning course grades in a manner inconsistent with the articulated standards of evaluation for the assignment or the course.

**Calendar Days:** Most timelines within this policy are written in calendar days. Any deadline that falls on a calendar day during a weekend, holiday, winter closure, inclement weather, or other instance in which the University is officially closed shall be extended to the next calendar day that the University is officially open.

**Grounds for Appeal:** One of two conditions on which the Appellant bases their appeal: (a) Capricious Evaluation, and/or (b) Capricious Treatment.

**Capricious Treatment:** Unpredictable or inconsistent actions that affect the student in an

adverse way.

**Appeals Coordinator:** A Haub School faculty member, appointed by the Associate Dean for Academic Programs, who will facilitate hearings in cases of grade appeals.

**Hearing Officer:** An impartial hearing officer is selected by the Appeals Coordinator. The Hearing Officer shall not be an instructor of a course in which the Appellee is currently enrolled.

**Hearing Panel:** A group of at least three members that includes: the Hearing Officer, at least one additional Haub School faculty member, and at least one student, whose major is within the school, to be selected by the Appeals Coordinator. If the appellant is a graduate student, a graduate student will serve on the hearing panel. If the appellant is an undergraduate student, an undergraduate student will serve on the hearing panel. The Appeals Coordinator serves as an ex-officio member of the hearing panel to facilitate the process.

**Jurisdiction:** These guidelines apply to both undergraduate and graduate students in the Haub School of Environment and Natural Resources, including concurrent degree students

**Working Days:** Business days excluding any days the University is officially closed.

### **III. PROCEDURES TO APPEAL GRADES**

This policy and the procedures set forth below apply solely to student appeals of a course grade within the Haub School. Instructors who have determined they made an error in a student's grade may change grades pursuant to the processes set forth in UW Regulation 2-121. Separate policies and procedures for charges involving student academic dishonesty allegations are governed by UW Regulation 2-114. Grade disputes based, in whole or in part, on claims of discrimination as set forth in UW Regulations 4-2 and 4-3 should be referred to the University's Equal Opportunity Report and Response Unit and will be governed by those policies and procedures.

#### **A. Informal Consultative Process**

1. All grade dispute resolutions shall begin with consultation between the student or group of students and the instructor. The student or group shall request, in writing, that the instructor reconsider the disputed grade. In this request, the student or group shall specifically identify their reasons supporting the request for reconsideration by the instructor. The student or group may also request to meet with the instructor to further discuss the student's request.
2. The instructor shall reply in writing to the student's or group's written request for reconsideration. The instructor is encouraged, but not required, to honor a student's or group's request to additionally meet to discuss the issue regarding the grade.
  - (a) If during this initial review, the instructor determines that they made an error when determining the grade(s), the instructor shall follow UW regulation 2-121
  - (b) and complete the University Registrar's procedures for correcting that error. This process requires that the instructor inform the student or group that an error was made and that the instructor is pursuing correction and that the error correction has received approval by the Associate Dean and Dean (or designee).

- (c) If the instructor determines that there is no basis for reconsideration of the grade(s) and there was no error when determining the grade(s), the instructor shall inform the student or group in writing that their request for consideration of the grade has been denied and may, at their discretion, include a brief summary of how the grade(s) was determined in accordance with the course syllabus.
- 3. If the student or group does not resolve their issues regarding their grade(s) with the instructor, the student or group shall then request, in writing, a meeting with the Haub School Associate Dean for Academic Programs. In this request, the student or group shall include a brief summary of their interactions with the instructor. If the Associate Dean is the instructor whose grade is being challenged, the request for a meeting shall be to the Dean of the Haub School (or designee), who shall then conduct the steps in Sections III (A) steps 4-6 in lieu of the Associate Dean.
- 4. The Associate Dean shall schedule and conduct separate meetings with the student or group and the instructor to provide both the student or group of students and the instructor an opportunity to present any relevant information pertaining to the grade(s) in the course and the reasons the student or group has requested reconsideration of their grade(s).
- 5. The Associate Dean shall then work with the instructor to resolve the grade dispute.
- 6. If the Associate Dean (or Dean/designee if participating) and the instructor agree on a response to the grade dispute, the Associate Dean shall communicate that response to the student or student group and the informal consultative process is complete. If the student or student group does not agree with the response, the informal consultative process has not achieved resolution and the student or group may initiate a formal appeal.
- 7. If the Associate Dean, instructor, and Dean/designee cannot agree on a response to the grade dispute, the Associate Dean shall notify the student or student group that the informal consultative process is complete but has not achieved resolution and therefore the student or group may initiate a formal appeal.

## **B. Formal Appeal Initiation**

- 1. Once the student or student group has completed the Informal Consultative Process, or if the Associate Dean/Instructor have not met the time deadlines within this policy to respond to the student or student group through no fault of the student, then the student or group may move forward to initiate a formal written appeal with the School. If the Appellant is a group of students, only one formal appeal shall be filed on behalf of the group.
- 2. The formal appeal by the Appellant shall:
  - (a) Be written and signed by the Appellant.
  - (b) Clearly state the specific bases of the appeal.
  - (c) Provide a step-by-step description of the factual matters of the case.
  - (d) Include documentation of the Informal Consultative Process steps and results.
  - (e) Include a complete copy of the course syllabus with any amendments.
  - (f) Include copies of all relevant grading rubrics (if any).
  - (g) Include the specific remedy requested.

3. The formal appeal shall be submitted to the Appeals Coordinator who will review the appeal for completeness and take one of the following steps:
  - (a) Return the appeal to the Appellant for further revision if the appeal is incomplete, (i.e., does not include all the content mandated in Section (III)(B)). The Appellant may then be permitted to resubmit a revised appeal within a reasonable period of time set by the Appeals Coordinator.
  - (b) Determine the formal appeal submitted by the Appellant contains the required information in Section III (B) and initiate the Appeals Hearing Procedures in Section IV.

#### **IV. APPEALS HEARING PROCEDURES**

##### **A. Prehearing Procedures**

The Wyoming Rules of Administrative Procedure shall not apply to Grade Appeal hearings.

1. The Appeals Coordinator shall transmit a copy of the formal appeal to the Appellee. The Appellee shall provide a written response after receiving the appeal.
2. The Appeals Coordinator shall select a Hearing Panel and inform the Appellant and the Appellee.
3. The Appellant and the Appellee may object to any member of the Panel. Such objections shall be in writing. The Appeals Coordinator shall evaluate the objections and may in their sole discretion, replace a member of the Panel. The written objections shall remain with the record of the Appeal.
4. The Appeals Coordinator shall schedule the hearing and inform all parties and the Hearing Panel of the date, time, and location. The hearing shall be held in-person but may be held electronically if an in-person hearing is not feasible at the determination of the Appeals Coordinator.
5. Prior to the hearing, the parties shall provide to the Appeals Coordinator a list of witnesses (if any), all supporting evidence and written responses related to the appeal. The Appeals Coordinator shall ensure that all materials are transmitted to both parties and the Hearing Panel.
6. If the Appellant wishes to be accompanied at the hearing by an advisor of their choice, the Appellant must notify the Appeals Coordinator at least five (5) working days prior to the hearing who their advisor will be and whether the advisor is an attorney. The role of advisor shall only be to consult with the Appellant, not to represent the Appellant. The advisor shall not have a speaking role during the hearing.
7. If the Appellee wishes to be accompanied at the hearing by an advisor of their choice, the Appellee must notify the Appeals Coordinator at least five (5) working days prior to the hearing. The role of advisor shall only be to consult with the Appellee, not to represent the Appellee. If the Appellant has chosen an advisor who is an attorney, the Appellee may be accompanied by an advisor who is a University attorney. The advisor shall not

have a speaking role during the hearing.

8. The Hearing Officer may have an advisor or an attorney at all hearings, regardless of whether the Appellant or Appellee request an advisor.
9. If either party fails to appear at the hearing, the hearing shall still proceed and the party in attendance shall present his or her case to the hearing committee.

## **B. Hearing Procedures**

1. The Hearing Officer shall preside over the hearing and have authority over all procedural matters during the hearing. The Appeals Coordinator will set initial time limits for each portion of the hearing to ensure that all parties have reasonable time to make their statements but may adjust these to ensure individuals with disabilities receive any reasonable accommodations needed pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Hearing Officer also has the discretion to extend time limits as necessary to gather needed information.
2. The hearing shall include the Hearing Panel, the Appellant, the Appellant's advisor (if applicable), the Appellee, the Appellee's advisor (if applicable), and the Appeals Coordinator. If witnesses are called, they will be present only for their testimony and answering questions which will occur during the Appellant and Appellee's opening statements respectively.
3. Additional members may be included and/or witnesses permitted to stay throughout the proceedings at the discretion of the Appeals Coordinator in consultation with the Hearing Officer. A recording of the hearing shall be maintained by the School and shall be the official record of the hearing.
4. The order of the proceedings shall be:
  - (a) The Appellant presents their case justifying the appeal. Appellant may present witness testimony, if applicable. The burden of proof during the hearing is on the Appellant.
  - (b) The Appellee presents their response to the appeal. Appellee may present witness testimony, if applicable.
  - (c) Hearing Panel can ask questions of both parties.
  - (d) The Appellant presents their rebuttal.
  - (e) The Appellee presents their rebuttal.
  - (f) Additional questions from the Hearing Panel.
5. Any additional or new evidence not submitted in advance of the hearing pursuant to this policy and brought to the hearing is subject to acceptance or rejection by the Hearing Panel without the presence of the parties. If the evidence is accepted, copies of additional evidence shall be provided to all parties and adequate time provided for review of all materials prior to the beginning of the hearing or an extension of the hearing may be granted by the Hearing Panel.

6. Hearings shall not be adversarial in tone or fact. Rather, hearings shall be conducted in such a manner that the Hearing Panel and the parties have an opportunity to hear and present all pertinent information. The Hearing Officer or Appeals Coordinator may take appropriate action if necessary to maintain a professional atmosphere during the hearing.
7. After the Appellant's final summary, the Hearing Officer shall declare the hearing closed. The parties shall leave the hearing. No further evidence may be presented after the hearing is closed.
8. Immediately after the hearing is closed, the Hearing Panel shall deliberate and, by majority vote, render a decision. The Hearing Panel may:
  - (a) Decide the Appellant met their burden of proof, find for the Appellant and recommend granting the requested grade change,
  - (b) Decide the Appellant failed to meet their burden of proof, find for the Appellee and recommend that the grade remain unchanged, or
  - (c) Identify another solution and recommend that this solution be implemented.
9. The Hearing Officer shall prepare a report to be sent to the Associate Dean, the Dean, and the Appeals Coordinator. The report shall include:
  - (a) The names of the Appellant and Appellee,
  - (b) The course and semester the course was offered,
  - (c) A summary of the evidence presented,
  - (d) The Hearing Panel's findings, and
  - (e) The decision of the Hearing Panel.

## **V. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

1. The Associate Dean will review the report and may approve or deny the decision of the Hearing Panel or has the discretion to remand the case back to the Hearing Panel for further evaluation prior to the Associate Dean arriving at a final decision.
2. The Associate Dean shall inform the parties in writing of the Hearing Panel's decision as well as the Associate Dean's approval or denial of the decision. The Associate Dean shall also indicate the remedies to be implemented, if any, and inform the Appellant that if they desire to appeal the School's decision, they may file a written appeal with Haub School Dean and the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies or the Vice Provost for Graduate Studies in Office of Academic Affairs (as appropriate) or their respective designees within 30 calendar days
3. If an appeal is made to the Office of Academic Affairs, all relevant materials from the hearing shall be forwarded to Academic Affairs by the Appeals Coordinator within 14 calendar days after the Office of Academic Affairs receives the appeal from the Appellant.
4. The file of the case, containing the record of the hearing, all pleadings and evidence presented in the appeal, the written decision of the Hearing Panel, and the written decision of the Dean shall be maintained by the Appeals Coordinator for a minimum of two years.

## **VI. TIME LIMITATIONS IN THE APPEALS PROCESS**

1. Every effort will be made to complete these processes described in this policy through Section (V)(2) prior to the end of the spring semester for grades received in the fall semester and prior to the end of the fall semester for grades received in the spring and summer semester (any sessions). Intermediate deadlines described in subsequent sections govern specific processes.
2. A student or group of students must initiate the Informal Consultative Process within 21 calendar days into the semester immediately following the term in which the grade was assigned.
3. The Informal Consultative Process shall be concluded within 21 calendar days after the student or group of students initiates the process by requesting that the instructor reconsider the grade.
4. The Appellant must initiate a Formal Appeal within 14 calendar days of the conclusion of the Informal Consultative Process.
5. All efforts will be made to complete the hearing of the Formal Appeal with 30 calendar days, but no longer than 42 calendar days, of the Appeals Coordinator receiving the Formal Appeal.

6. The Hearing Officer's report to the Dean shall be submitted within 7 calendar days of the conclusion of the hearing of the Formal Appeal.
7. The Dean shall communicate per Section V2 within 14 calendar days of receiving the report from the Hearing Panel.
8. The Dean at their sole discretion may extend these time limitations in the event of extraordinary conditions. In that case, the Dean shall describe their reasons for modification, to be included with the file of the case.

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