

## POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON ASSIGNMENT OF GRADES

Faculty members' rights and responsibility to evaluate their students' academic performance are some of the most strongly held values in the University. Faculty are accorded much latitude and freedom in setting standards, establishing expectations, evaluating performance, and assigning grades.

### 1. Reporting Course Grades

#### A. Reporting under Normal Circumstances

**Policy** – Course grades are to be assigned by the instructor of record.<sup>1</sup>

**Procedure** – The instructor will complete the final grade rosters in the manner prescribed by the established deadlines.<sup>2</sup>

#### B. Reporting under Extraordinary Circumstances

**Policy** – The department chair will assign grades in consultation with his/her school/college dean and Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs only if:

- 1) The instructor is unable to assign a grade due to the following:
  - a) death
  - b) incapacitating illness
  - c) refusal
  - d) some other extraordinarily unusual circumstance
- 2) The instructor assigned an unwarranted grade while in an impaired physical and/or emotional state.

**Procedure** – The department chair will instruct the Director of Admissions, Records and Evaluations to record the grade(s) accordingly after having consulted with at least two tenured faculty members in the discipline, the school/college dean, and the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs.

### 2. Correcting Course Grades

**Policy** – Grade corrections require the instructor to certify that an error was made in computing or recording the grade. In the event an instructor is not available to correct a grade, the department chair is authorized to take appropriate action. In doing so, the chair must stipulate that there is sufficient evidence in the instructor's grade book to indicate the grade was incorrectly assigned or that the instructor has

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<sup>1</sup> If a department chair, by following University policy and procedure, determines that a student cheated or plagiarized in a class, he/she may request the Student Records Office, using the "Grade Correction Request Form," to change the assigned grade to an "F" or authorize the Instructor to assign an "F" grade if one had not yet been assigned (See "Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism," APM 235).

<sup>2</sup> Exception: to submit a final letter grade for Thesis 299 and Project 298, or to report the completion of the Comprehensive Examination for the master's degree, complete a "Clearance for the Master's Degree" form and return it to the Division of Graduate Studies. The Graduate Office will notify the Office of Admissions, Records and Evaluations of the grade reported.

authorized the correction by telephone, letter, etc. No grade correction can be made if more than three (3) years have passed since the initial grade was awarded.

Procedure – The instructor or department chair concerned submits a “Grade Correction Request Form” to the registrar with copies sent to the student and department chair. As appropriate, copies also are sent to the Office of Graduate Studies.

### **FAIRNESS IN GRADING/EQUITY**

Once the semester (or course) has concluded, students shall NOT be assigned additional work or be allowed to revise previous assignments in order to improve a final grade.

### **RECORD KEEPING**

- 1) Faculty members shall maintain a complete record (i.e., a grade book or equivalent) of the various scores and marks used to determine student grades. This record shall be retained for at least five (5) years and must be given to the department chairman if the faculty member will be away from the University for the purposes such as sabbatical leave or retirement. All materials are not returned to students shall be retained by faculty members for one (1) semester. Course grades are reported according to the Policy and Procedure on Assignment of Grades.

### **GRADING DATA**

Each semester, the University shall provide the department chairpersons with data on grading for the University, the colleges/schools, the departments, and their respective faculty. In turn, department chairpersons shall provide their faculty with grade distributions (within categories of courses) for their own departments.

### **GRADING PRACTICES**

All department chairpersons shall review, on an annual basis, grading practices of individual faculty members. Grading practices that appear inappropriate shall be discussed by chairpersons with the faculty members concerned.

### **APPEAL RIGHTS**

Students who believe they have been evaluated incorrectly and/or unfairly should first request a review by the instructor and the department chair before appealing to the Student Academic Petitions Committee according to procedures established in the Policy and Procedures for Reviewing and Appealing an Assigned Grade.

## POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR REVIEWING AND APPEALING AN ASSIGNED GRADE<sup>3</sup>

**Policy** – Students are responsible for maintaining standards of academic performance established by their professors and for conducting themselves in the classroom in accordance with established procedures and generally accepted standards of social behavior. Students, on the other hand, have the right to an orderly review and if necessary appeal of an evaluation that allegedly is:

- (a) not “made fairly and equitably without prejudice<sup>4</sup> or capriciousness,” or
- (b) an inconsistent application of syllabus statements on course requirements and/or grading system, or
- (c) out of compliance with the University’s official grading policy, or
- (d) otherwise erroneous

(See *University Academic Policy Manual 241* on “Policy on Course Syllabi”)

### Three basic principles govern that assertion:

1. The right of the instructor to make a final judgment relative to a student’s academic evaluation. It is presumed that the instructor’s assigned grade is correct; therefore, the burden of proof rests upon the student to show cause.<sup>5</sup>
2. The right of the student to have a review of the specific course evaluation by the instructor and/or appropriate University official(s).
3. Redress shall be limited to the removal of the harmful effects of the academic evaluation in question.

**Procedure** – A student must adhere to the following procedure if he/she believes an evaluation by a faculty member was not made in a manner consistent with the above policy.<sup>6</sup>

1. Within 15 working days<sup>7</sup> after the next semester’s classes begin, the student must consult with the instructor concerned and make every effort to resolve the issue. The instructor must give the student an answer in writing explaining how the grade was earned within five (5) working days of the student’s inquiry.<sup>8</sup> If consultation with the faculty member does not occur within 15 days after the beginning of the next semester’s classes, the student may request the Student Academic Petitions Committee (SAPC) for an extension upon a sufficient show of cause. Except for cause, the extension must be requested within the first five (5) weeks of class.

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<sup>3</sup> An Advisor in the Office of Advising Services will be available upon request to provide assistance to a student seeking review or appealing an assigned grade, including explaining the process and preparing a written statement. A student should not contact the Student Academic Petitions Committee, SAPC Chair or members prior to submitting the written statement of appeal.

<sup>4</sup> Prejudice includes use of age, disability, ethnicity, nationality, political preference, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation in assigning a grade.

<sup>5</sup> If the student alleges an instructor falsely accused him/her of cheating or plagiarism, the burden of proof rests upon the instructor, and resolution of this matter shall occur pursuant to the University’s “Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism.” (See *Academic Policy Manual 235*.)

<sup>6</sup> If the student or instructor alleges these procedures have not been followed correctly, he/she should appeal to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs immediately. The faculty member should appeal via the school/college dean, and the student via the Office of Advising Services.

<sup>7</sup> For all deadlines stated in this policy exceptions may be made by the SAPC for extenuating circumstances.

<sup>8</sup> This section is written on the assumption that the instructor, when originally contacted, maintains the grade was not assigned erroneously.

2. If the issue is not resolved through consultation with the instructor, the student must immediately consult with the chair of the appropriate academic department in accordance with that department's established procedures. The department chair shall discuss the student's allegation(s) with the instructor and possibly the school/college dean, as appropriate, and give the student an answer in writing within 10 working days.<sup>9</sup> If the instructor also is the department chair, then the student should contact the school/college dean directly who shall consult with the department chair about the allegation.
3. If the student still believes that his/her request for review has not been satisfactorily handled, he/she may pursue the appeal by requesting the SAPC<sup>10</sup> to review the issue. To make such an appeal, the student must submit a written statement setting forth all pertinent facts relating to the issue within five (5) working days after receiving the department chair's response (i.e., no later than 35 working days – approximately seven (7) weeks after the beginning of classes). If the student appeals to the SAPC, it is understood that the burden of proof rests with the student and that a copy of the written statement of protest will be sent to the faculty member concerned.
4. When a formal appeal has been filed with the SAPC, the following action will be taken:
  - a. A memorandum will be sent to the instructor concerned, including a copy of the student's statement, requesting the instructor to reply in writing to the specific charge(s) of the student and to include the instructor's rationale for the evaluation of the student presenting the complaint. A copy of this correspondence is sent to the department chair and school/college dean for their information and/or commentary.
  - b. The instructor concerned is responsible for complying with the above request by SAPC within 15 working days after receiving the request.
  - c. At its next meeting, the SAPC will review the student's statement, the instructor's response, and other evidence, as appropriate, and render a decision. The SAPC's decision usually will be rendered within 10 working days after receipt of the instructor's response.
5. Once the SAPC completes deliberation and reaches a decision, the SAPC will render its judgment and rationale in writing to the student, instructor, department chair, and the school/college dean within 10 working days. If the SAPC finds in favor of the student, it will recommend <sup>11</sup> to the instructor that the grade be changed.

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<sup>9</sup> The period from the time the student seeks review by the instructor until the department chair announces his/her decision should be no longer than 15 working days. If it appears to the student that this deadline will not be met, he/she should immediately contact the Office of Advising Services which will notify the SAPC Chair in order to assure a timely procedure.

<sup>10</sup> See APM 243 Policies and Procedures for Student Academic Petitions Committee.

<sup>11</sup> In the case of a grade protest the SAPC is a recommending body only; it does not have the authority to change a grade. Similarly, the department chair and school/college dean do not have such authority.

6. If the instructor of record does not carry out the SAPC's recommendation within 10 working days of written notification, the SAPC shall notify in writing the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs. An instructor's refusal to change the grade will automatically be interpreted to be an appeal of the decision.
7. If the student or instructor disagrees with the SAPC's decision, he/she may appeal directly to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs in writing within 10 working days, stating the rationale for the appeal. The Provost/Vice President will either deny the appeal, or appoint an objective ad hoc committee of three (3) tenured faculty in the discipline to review the case and render a decision<sup>12</sup> within one (1) calendar month. The decision will be final and cannot be appealed further on campus.
8. If the decision of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs or the ad hoc committee necessitates a change of grade for the course, the Director of Admissions, Records and Evaluations shall be notified in writing by the Provost/Vice President that the student's academic record/transcript be changed to reflect that decision. The instructor cannot block or appeal such official action on campus.

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<sup>12</sup> The ad hoc committee has the authority to raise or lower the assigned grade or to leave it unchanged.