

TO: Fort Wayne Senate
FROM: Educational Policy Committee
Linda Hite, Chair
SUBJECT: Guidelines for Grade Appeals
DATE: May 6, 2003
DISPOSITION: To the Senate for Information

On May 6, 2003, the Educational Policy Committee approved the guidelines regarding grade appeals prepared by the Grade Appeals Committee. These materials were designed to clarify the grade appeals process for students and for faculty.

Approving

Disapproving

Absent

B. Abbott

P. McLaughlin

H. Broberg

J. Purse-Wiedenhoeft

S. Hannah

G. Schmelzle

L. Hite

D. Oberstar

STUDENT INFORMATION SHEET FOR GRADE APPEALS

The University regulations regarding grade appeals state:

The grade appeals policy applies to all students enrolled at IPFW. It can be used by any student who has evidence or believes that evidence exists to show that a course grade was assigned or a similar evaluation was made as a result of prejudice, caprice, or other improper condition such as mechanical error.

I. Do you really have grounds for a grade appeal?

Note that you may appeal a grade only if you have evidence that prejudice, caprice, or other improper conditions have occurred. You may not appeal simply because you believe you should have had a higher grade, or that the instructor was unreasonable or too difficult, or any other such reason, as long as the same standards were applied to everyone in the class.

Remember, also, that **the burden of proof in a grade appeal is on you** (except for cases of alleged academic dishonesty, where the burden of proof is on the instructor.) This means you must be able to document your case. Your opinion or feeling that you were treated unfairly is not sufficient.

II. Have you followed all of the required steps in the appeals procedure before appealing to the Grade Appeals Subcommittee?

Before appealing to the Grade Appeals Subcommittee, you must take each of the following steps:

- a. Meet with the faculty member/ instructor

- b. Meet with the department chair or program director
- c. Meet with the department or school grade appeals committee

These required steps are explained in the IPFW student handbook on pages 52-54, and in Senate Document 82-2 (the IPFW Grade Appeals Policy). These documents also specify the grounds under which an appeal may be made. Make sure you are aware of the time limits for appeals at each step of the process.

If you have followed all of the above steps without resolving your appeal, and if you still believe you have grounds for further appeal, you should contact the Dean of Students for guidance in preparing an appeal to the Grade Appeals Subcommittee. Again, remember that **the burden of proof in an appeal is on you.**

III. How do you appeal to the Grade Appeals Subcommittee?

You should not appeal to the Grade Appeals Subcommittee just because you don't like the outcome of a previous hearing. Before taking this step, ask yourself honestly if you have received a fair hearing at the department or school level.

- a. In appealing to the Grade Appeals Subcommittee, you must specify in writing the nature of the appeal and the basis for it. These bases include: (1) improper procedures at a lower level; (2) new evidence; or (3) the instructor has declined to accept the department/ school recommendations. Your written document must clearly identify the grounds on which you are appealing.
- b. You must present factual evidence to support your appeal. Stick to the facts, not just your opinion. Include any physical evidence you may have (exams, papers, etc.)

- c. You must submit the attached form (obtained from the Dean of Students) with the appropriate signatures, showing that you have exhausted all lower levels of appeal.

You may obtain assistance from the Dean of Students in preparing your appeal. He/she will then direct you to the Chair of the Grade Appeals Subcommittee, to whom the appeal should be submitted.

IV. What happens when the Subcommittee receives your grade appeal?

Your request for an appeal hearing is not automatically granted. You must support your contention with factual evidence, in writing, that grounds for an appeal exist. Therefore, you should not request a Grade Appeals Subcommittee hearing merely because you do not like the decision of the department or school committee. The decision to grant a hearing will be made on the basis of your written statement and evidence, and the records of the department or school hearing. You do not appear before the Subcommittee unless a decision to hear your appeal has been made.

If the Grade Appeals Subcommittee rules that you do not have grounds for an appeal, this ends the appeal process, and your grade will stand. This decision cannot be appealed further.

V. What happens if you are granted a hearing by the Subcommittee?

If you are granted a hearing, come prepared to argue your case. You may bring an advisor with you, but that person cannot speak for you. You may also call witnesses to support your case. The Grade Appeals Subcommittee will not seek out witnesses for you or for the instructor.

In the hearing, both sides (student and instructor) will be heard by a panel of five persons selected from the members of the Grade Appeals Subcommittee. You and your instructor will appear before the panel separately unless both of you request otherwise.

If you are successful in your appeal, the Grade Appeals Subcommittee will direct the Registrar's Office to change your grade. If you are not successful, your grade will stand. Either way, the decision of the Grade Appeals Subcommittee is final, and may not be appealed to any higher authority.

GRADE APPEALS PROCEDURE CHECKLIST

I. Meeting with course instructor.

Date of meeting _____

This certifies that step one of the grade appeals procedure has been carried out.

Student: _____

Instructor: _____

II. Meeting with department chair or program director.

Date of meeting _____

This certifies that step two of the grade appeals procedure has been carried out.

Student: _____

Chair/ director: _____

III. Hearing with departmental or school committee.

Date of meeting _____

This certifies that step three of the grade appeals procedure has been carried out.

Student: _____

Chair of committee: _____

FACULTY INFORMATION SHEET FOR GRADE APPEALS

The University regulations regarding grade appeals state:

The grade appeals policy applies to all students enrolled at IPFW. It can be used by any student who has evidence or believes that evidence exists to show that a course grade was assigned or a similar evaluation was made as a result of prejudice, caprice, or other improper condition such as mechanical error.

I. What happens if a student appeals a grade in your class?

The IPFW grade appeals procedure requires that a student first try to resolve a grade dispute by talking with you. It is important that you take the time to clearly explain to the student the basis for the grade you assigned. In most cases, an appeal can be resolved at this level if both student and instructor are willing to reasonably discuss the student's grade. If you avoid the student or refuse to discuss the grade with him/her, this will simply give the student grounds for an appeal at a higher level.

If the appeal is based on unclear or inconsistent grading practices, or grading guidelines that have not been made clear in your syllabus, it is up to you to decide whether or not this is enough of a problem to change a student's grade. The Grade Appeals Subcommittee is certainly not suggesting that instructors simply give in to student demands. However, you may want to make some revisions to your syllabus in order to avoid similar appeals in the future.

If you and the student are unable to resolve the grade appeal, the student may then appeal to the department chair or program director, who may make an attempt to informally resolve the issue. This affords another opportunity for resolving the conflict. If, at either of these steps, you can convince the student that the grade is fair (or the student can convince you that it is not) without a formal hearing, both you and the student may avoid wasted time and ill feelings.

II. What happens if the appeal cannot be resolved informally?

If the conflict cannot be resolved between you and the student, even with the assistance of the department chair or program director, the student has the option to appeal to the department or school grade appeals committee. Only one committee shall hear the appeal at this level. The specific procedures at this level may vary somewhat, however usually a formal hearing is held in which both you and the student may present your case. The chair of the department or school grade appeal committee will notify you of the hearing, and may guide you in preparing for it.

It should be noted that the burden of proof in a grade appeal is on the student, except for cases of academic dishonesty, where the burden of proof is on you.

If the department or school committee finds in favor of the student, you may wish to reconsider the student's grade. However, if you are convinced that the student's grade should not be changed, you may let the grade stand. The decision of the department or school committee is not binding on you. However, the student then has grounds for an appeal to the Grade Appeals Subcommittee.

If the department or school committee does not find in favor of the student, he/she may, within limitations, appeal the grade to the Grade Appeals Subcommittee. The grounds for such an appeal include improper procedures at a lower appeal level, and new information that was not available at a lower appeal level.

III. What happens if the student appeals to the Grade Appeals Subcommittee?

You will be notified in writing if a student appeals to the Grade Appeals Subcommittee. Appeals to this subcommittee are not automatically granted a hearing. The decision to hear an appeal depends on the student's ability to demonstrate that sufficient grounds exist to hear the appeal. The decision is made on the basis of the student's written statement and evidence presented, and the records of the department or school hearing.

If the Grade Appeals Subcommittee rules that there are no grounds for an appeal, this ends the appeal process, and the grade will stand. This decision may not be appealed further. You will be notified in writing of the Subcommittee's decision on whether or not there will be a hearing.

IV. What happens if the student is granted a hearing?

If a hearing is granted, both you and the student will appear before a panel of five persons selected from the members of the Grade Appeals Subcommittee. You and the student will be seen separately unless both request otherwise.

The student is required to present evidence, including papers, exams, etc., that his/her grade should be changed. The student may have an advisor present, but the advisor may not speak for the student. The student may also call witnesses to support his/her case.

You may present a written statement if you wish, but it is not required. Since this committee must base its judgment on the existence of prejudice, caprice, or other improper condition, you should present your syllabus and any other written statements outlining your grading policies, as well as your grade book and any other student records showing how you graded your class. In addition, you should bring any exams, papers, etc. for the student that he/she would not have in their possession. The chair of the Grade Appeals Subcommittee can guide you in determining what materials will be necessary.

If the grade appeal is based on an accusation of academic dishonesty, you must present evidence supporting this claim.

If the panel finds in favor of the student, the chair of the Grade Appeals Subcommittee will direct the Registrar's Office to change the grade. If the panel does not find in favor of the student, the grade will stand. In either case, the decision of the hearing panel is final, and may not be appealed to any higher authority.