



University Policy Statement

UPS 300.030

ACADEMIC GRADE APPEALS

A. ACADEMIC GRADE APPEALS

Consistent with Executive Order 1037 California State University, Fullerton has adopted policies that provide for the redress of student concerns about the final grade received in a course. The policy is established under authority assigned to the Academic Appeals Board (the Board) administered by the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and Strategic Enrollment Management. These procedures are limited to disputes that meet the definition of a “grade appeal” as defined below. Students may elect to file an appeal only if the basis for the appeal meets one or more of these conditions.

Definitions

A "grade appeal" is a claim that a final course grade differed from what the student expected to receive in the course and that this difference, according to the student, resulted from one or more of the conditions listed below, the existence of which the student is required to prove by a preponderance (more likely than not) of evidence.

1. The instructor violated a specific University rule, policy, or terms set by the instructor's course syllabus (see UPS 300.004).
2. The instructor refused to correct an error made while calculating, entering, or submitting a grade to the Office of the Registrar.
3. The instructor refused to report a final grade once the university deadline had passed.
4. The grade is based on an allegation of cheating or other academic dishonesty, and the instructor has not reported the allegation to the Office of Student Conduct.
5. The grade is based on an allegation of academic dishonesty, and the student disciplinary process established that there was not a preponderance of evidence to prove that the student violated the student code of conduct.
6. The grade reflects treatment of the student that does not meet professional standards, and that treatment falls outside the purview of the Office for Civil Rights and Equity.

Presumed Correctness of Final Grades and the Student's Obligations

All complaints concerning grades considered by the Board involve appeals of a final grade. It is important for students to know that, in accordance with the policies of the California State University, the Board presumes that the final grade is correct. Therefore, it is the student's responsibility to prove that the final course grade is improperly assigned based on one of the criteria listed above under the definition of "grade appeal." The Board's authority in grade appeals is limited to the conditions included in the above definition. Reasons that are unrelated to one of the six conditions above are

normally not appropriate for appeal. Examples of complaints that are outside the board's purview include, but are not limited to:

- the instructor graded assignments too harshly
- the instructor's standards are too high
- particular assignments are unreasonable
- course expectations differ between sections

Such course standards and expectations are all matters of professional judgment, which, if consistent with applicable campus policies, are entirely within the prerogative of the instructor. Concerns about such matters should be discussed with the instructor and, if necessary, the appropriate department chair or college associate dean.

Academic Grade Appeal Procedures

A student who elects to appeal a final grade shall follow the steps set forth below. It should be noted that the use of devices for the purpose of recording meetings that occur as a part of the appeal process is prohibited. Requests for accommodation should be handled through the appropriate campus offices and processes.

1. Informal Resolution

The University supports and encourages responsive and respectful dialogue between faculty and students when there is a disagreement about a final course grade. Students should document their informal resolution efforts so they are prepared in the event that they elect to file a formal grade appeal.

1. Whatever the presumed basis for the grade appeal, the student must make an effort to discuss the matter with the faculty member, including but not limited to a scheduled meeting, phone conversation, or in writing. The faculty member is expected to discuss the matter with the student in a timely manner, provide a clarifying response to the student's inquiry, and, if appropriate, adjust the disputed grade. During periods of regular instruction, faculty should attempt to acknowledge or fully respond to a student's inquiry within ten (10) calendar days after the faculty member receives it. Once a student contacts a faculty member concerning a grade appeal, all academic records that may be relevant to the potential complaint shall be retained until the matter is resolved.
2. If the student is not satisfied with the faculty member's response or does not receive a timely response, the student shall attempt to discuss the potential appeal with the chairperson of the department in which the course was taught. The chair can serve in a consultative or mediating role but is not authorized to change the grade. The student shall complete the efforts to achieve this informal resolution of the disagreement within 30 calendar days from the first day of classes in the semester (fall or spring) following the term for which the grade was entered.

2. Filing a Formal Appeal

If the informal resolution process does not resolve the student's concerns, the student can elect to file a formal appeal.

1. The student initiates the formal appeal process by filing an Academic Grade Appeal Form on the Academic Appeals Website. The student must complete all sections of the Form and must

provide the additional documentation specified on the website: the course syllabus, evidence of correspondence with the instructor and chair, and a written statement of the facts and circumstances giving rise to the request for a grade change. The statement must be clear, complete, accurate, and truthful, and must be based on at least one of the six conditions listed above that form the basis for a grade appeal. The student must submit the completed Academic Grade Appeal Form within 45 calendar days from the first day of classes of the regular semester (fall or spring) following the term for which the grade in question was entered. The Academic Appeals Coordinator (the Coordinator) and Academic Appeals Administrator (the Administrator) may grant extensions of this deadline in exceptional circumstances (e.g., when the student conduct process is not resolved before the appeal deadline). Students who require additional information or assistance can contact the Coordinator and/or the Administrator through the email address provided on the Academic Appeals Website.

2. The Coordinator and the Administrator will review the student's submission and notify the student of any missing documents, if the student did not file the appeal in a timely manner, or if the students' appeal is outside of the jurisdiction of the Board. The Board will not reconsider a matter on which it has ruled previously.
3. The Administrator and the Coordinator will forward a copy of the student's appeal materials to the faculty member as soon as the file is complete. . If an extension of the filing deadline for exceptional circumstances (as detailed in section 2.1 above) results in the completed filing of an appeal fewer than 21 calendar days before the end of the semester, consideration of the appeal shall be deferred until the following regular semester, unless the appeal qualifies for the Expedited Appeal Process under Section B.

The faculty member must provide a response to the Administrator and/or the Coordinator within 14 calendar days from the date the student appeal materials were provided to the faculty member. The faculty member shall immediately inform the Administrator and/or the Coordinator of circumstances that might prevent a timely reply. The student's written appeal and responses are confidential and available only to the Board members, Coordinator, Administrator, and faculty member whose grading is being appealed. After the Board has reached a decision the student may see the file but cannot make copies of the contents.

3. Board Review of Formal Appeal

The Board's decisions are final and conclude the University's consideration of the merits of a grade appeal. The Board shall review only those materials submitted as part of this appeal. The Board shall make its determination based on whether the preponderance of evidence supports the student's appeal. All parties shall be informed of the outcome.

1. After consideration of documents submitted by the parties, the Board shall decide to deny the appeal, grant the appeal, or hold a hearing.
2. If the Board elects to hold a hearing, it shall issue a notice stating the time and place of the hearing. The hearing shall be closed to the public. Either party may choose to include a representative from the university community. Neither the Coordinator nor any member of the Board may represent either party and the representative may not be a licensed attorney. If either party chooses to be represented that party shall notify the Coordinator of the name and address of the representative at least ten calendar days prior to hearing. Except for the party or parties, a representative of each party, the Board members, and the Coordinator and

Administrator, no one else shall be present at the hearing. At its discretion the Board may hear each party separately unless either party requests a joint hearing. Three Board members must be present to conduct a hearing.

3. After its deliberations, the Board shall determine by majority vote whether the student has demonstrated by the preponderance of the evidence that one or more of the conditions listed above existed.
4. If the Board denies the appeal, then it shall notify both parties in writing of its findings and the rationale.
5. If the Board grants the appeal, it shall notify both parties in writing of its findings, rationale, and recommended remedy. If the remedy is a change of grade, the faculty member has fourteen calendar days to implement the change. If the faculty member does not change the grade, then the Coordinator shall implement the change. If the Board recommends alternatives such as regrading of a specific assignment, then the relevant department chair shall appoint an ad hoc committee of qualified tenured faculty to implement the recommendation. The ad hoc committee shall complete its work within 30 calendar days of receipt of the Board recommendations. The ad hoc committee recommendation and rationale shall be signed by all members of the ad hoc committee and become part of the record of the appeal.

B. EXPEDITED APPEAL PROCESS

The Board may meet earlier than usual if a student's appeal falls under one of the circumstances listed below.

1. A candidate for graduation in May wishes to appeal a grade in a course from their final spring semester.
2. A disqualified graduate or post-baccalaureate student wishes to appeal a grade received in a spring semester to be granted enrollment in the subsequent summer or fall term.
3. A graduate or post-baccalaureate student in a certificate program wishes to appeal a grade received in a spring semester to be granted enrollment in the subsequent summer or fall term.
4. A Coordinator determines that a situation is demonstrably outside of the student's control and necessitates an earlier decision.

The Executive Committee of the Academic Senate shall designate an Ad Hoc Academic Appeals Board for expedited appeals. Board members serving during the spring semester in question shall be asked to serve on the summer committee. If not enough of those members are available to constitute a quorum, the Executive Committee of the Academic Senate shall ask other faculty and/or students, preferably previous Board members, to fill a quorum. If a faculty member is unavailable, the faculty member may authorize another faculty member to respond on their behalf.

C. REVIEW OF GRADE APPEALS PROCEDURE

If allegations are raised that any of the above appeal processes were not followed, then the Vice President for Student Affairs and Strategic Enrollment Management or designee will review the records of the appeal process to determine if the above procedures were followed and if any procedural error was material. If it is determined within three weeks, that procedures were followed and/or that any procedural error was immaterial, then the decision of the Board will stand. If it is determined that a failure to follow procedures represented a material error, then the matter will be referred back to the Board with a written explanation of the error.

D. ACADEMIC GRADE APPEALS COORDINATOR AND ACADEMIC GRADE APPEALS ADMINISTRATOR

The Coordinator of Academic Grade Appeals shall be chosen by the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Administrator of Academic Grade Appeals shall be chosen by the Vice President for Student Affairs and Strategic Enrollment Management. Duties shall include:

1. Maintaining a record of all academic appeals, and, no later than the beginning of the fall semester, providing to the President and the Academic Senate a report listing the number of appeals heard and the disposition of each during the previous academic year;
2. Coordinating the Board's activities by convening the Board, providing them with the appropriate background information, and scheduling all necessary meetings and hearings;
3. Interpreting university policy and procedures for students;
4. As needed, advising students, faculty, department chairs and deans on the appeals process and the issues raised in a particular appeal;
5. Ensuring the confidentiality and the rights of all parties are protected;
6. Being a neutral facilitator of the process rather than an advocate for either side; and
7. Making recommendations to the Board and to the appropriate Academic Senate committee when changes in university policy appear to be necessary.

Source: Academic Standards Committee

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