

## **Grade Appeal**

*Faculty Senate Bill 00-A-01 begins here.*

It is the responsibility of the faculty members of Southeast Missouri State University to communicate to students early in the term a clear statement of the grading practices and procedures that will be used to determine the student's final grade. Grading procedures and criteria should be included in the course outline provided to students. If a student believes those practices and procedures were not consistently and accurately followed when the faculty member determined the student's final grade for the course, the student shall have the right to appeal the case first with the faculty member, then with the department chair, and finally, with a committee of faculty members. It should be noted that grade appeals are primarily for instances of capricious grading on the part of the faculty member and it is the obligation of the student to prove this capriciousness. The issuing of grades is an important responsibility of the faculty and should be treated as such. For instances not dealing with capricious grading, other avenues of appeal may be open to students, including actions involving the University Student Affairs Committee.

In order to maintain accurate records, faculty members are recommended to retain certain items for various time periods. These are:

- A. Grade records. These should be retained for at least one year following the completion of an academic year.
- B. Class outlines. These should be retained for at least one year following the completion of an academic year.

Course papers/projects/etc. These should be retained by the instructor for a period of at least one semester following the completion of a course. When graded assignments are returned to students during a course, students should be alerted to retain these materials themselves until the grading and appeal periods have been completed.

### **Grade Appeal Procedures:**

Students are responsible for meeting the standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled. The establishment of the criteria for grades and the evaluation of student academic performance are responsibilities of the instructor.

This grade appeal procedure is primarily for the review of allegedly capricious grading or incorrect recording of a grade, and not for review of the instructor's evaluation of the student's academic performance. Capricious grading, as that term is used here, comprises any of the following

- A. The assignment of a grade to a particular student on some basis other than the performance in the course;
- B. The assignment of a grade to a particular student according to more exacting or demanding standards than were applied to other students in the course;
- C. The assignment of a grade by a substantial departure from the instructor's previously announced standards.

For instances concerning appeals not involving capricious grading, other appeals processes may be initiated.

### **Appeal Steps:**

Students should be encouraged to resolve immediate grading questions when they occur and keep copies of exams, projects, and other graded assignments at least until grade reports are received following the completion of a course.

#### **Step 1.**

If the final course grade is in question, the student should first discuss the grade fully with the instructor of the course. This informal appeal may occur at any time within the first six weeks of the next regular semester (Fall or Spring) following the receipt of the grade, but it is strongly suggested that this inquiry take place as soon as possible.

If an informal appeal does not resolve the problem, the student may file a formal written appeal to the instructor by October 1 (Fall semester) or March 1 (Spring semester). Included in the written appeal should be the basis for the appeal and copies of pertinent documents which support the appeal. The letter should include the full name of the student, the student's social security number, course number, course title, semester and year enrolled, section number, and the name of the instructor. The instructor of the course should respond in writing to this appeal request within two weeks of receiving the request and no later than October 15 (Fall) or March 15 (Spring). If the instructor is no longer available on campus, the department chair may try to contact the instructor or may act in place of the instructor. The unavailability of the instructor may necessitate a slight change in time frame, if so determined by the department chair.

### **Step 2.**

If the matter cannot be resolved by interaction with the instructor for any reason, the student may file a written appeal with the department chair within two weeks of receiving the instructor's response, or by November 1 (Fall) or April 1 (Spring). The department chair may request a meeting with the student and the instructor in order to mediate a possible settlement of the disagreement and must respond to the appeal within two weeks, or by November 15 (Fall) or April 15 (Spring). It is neither the right nor within the responsibility of the department chair to change the grade, but rather to find whether any error may have been made and to counsel the faculty member on this regard. If the instructor is no longer available on campus, the department chair may try to contact the instructor or may act in place of the instructor. The unavailability of the instructor may necessitate a slight change in time frame, if so determined by the department chair. In the event that the Department Chair is the instructor whose grade is being questioned, the College Dean will function as noted above. Should the Dean or other administrative officer be the instructor whose grade is being questioned, the Chair of the department to which the administrator is assigned will handle the appeal process.

If the student still believes the grade was issued in error, one further step may be taken.

### **Step 3.**

If the matter is still not resolved through mediation with the department chair, a three member committee shall be appointed by the chair to handle the final appeal. This committee shall be made up of three full-time tenured or tenure track faculty members, two of whom should be from outside the department in which the appeal was initiated, and may be a regular standing committee or a committee specially convened as circumstances warrant. A written appeal, including supporting documentation, must be made by the student to this committee. This appeal should be received in the departmental office no more than two weeks following the department chair's recommendation. It is requested that the committee then investigate the matter and render a decision within one month. This committee may reject the student's appeal, ask the faculty member to change the grade to an appropriate level, or, as a last resort, change the grade themselves. The decision of the faculty appeal committee constitutes the final level of university appeal open to the student.

Under no circumstances may a grade appeal be initiated more than one year after the grade has been issued.

*Approved by Faculty Senate, Bill 00-A-01 - February 16, 2000*

*Approved by Board of Regents - March 24, 2000*