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## **Policy AC022: Grade Appeal**

**Recommended for Approval by:** Scott E. Miller, Senior VP for Academic Affairs and Provost

**Approved by:** Dale-Elizabeth Pehrsson, President

**Effective Date:** 07/01/2022

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### **A. Intent**

To describe the reasons and procedure for student appeal of a final course grade.

### **B. Definition(s)**

Administration: The collective group of academic and student affairs administrative officers.

### **C. Policy**

The Administration of Pennsylvania Western University will not change a properly assigned grade – that is, one based upon recorded grades for quizzes, exams, assignments, projects, and other grade criteria as indicated on the course syllabus or outline of a faculty member. However, when a student alleges violations of sound academic grading procedures, the PennWest Administration and faculty mutually support a student appeal procedure that provides both the student and the faculty member a fair process to substantiate and/or refute those allegations.

#### **Conditions for Appeal**

Since the grading process involves the instructor's judgment of the student's academic performance, the only issue under consideration for final grade appeal is whether the student can provide clear evidence that the assignment of the grade was a result of:

- (a) a calculation error, or
- (b) unsubstantiated academic evaluation by the instructor.

In the case of unsubstantiated academic evaluation, evidence would need to show that the instructor's calculation of the student's grade was inconsistent with their policy for calculating grades as outlined in their course syllabus, written instructions, and/or communicated grading rubric for the relevant assignments. In this case, the instructor may be found to have made significant, unannounced and/or unwarranted deviations from grading procedures set at the beginning of the course.

A grade appeal is not relevant in cases where there is disagreement between the student and

instructor on the subjective professional evaluation of the instructor.

**D. Procedure(s)**

1. Students wishing to appeal a final grade must initiate the appeal within thirty (30) calendar days after the beginning of the semester following the issuance of the grade. Summer shall not constitute a semester for purposes of calculating the appeal period for grades issued in the Spring semester; Winter session shall not constitute a semester for purposes of calculating the appeal period for grades issued in the Fall semester.
2. The student must first submit a written grade appeal, stating the grounds for appeal, to the faculty member who issued the grade, with a copy to their department chair. The student is also encouraged to meet with the faculty member to attempt to resolve the grade dispute. If the appeal is resolved, the faculty member will notify the registrar of the grade change, with a copy to the department chair.
  - If the instructor is on leave or no longer employed by the university, the student should appeal directly to the department chairperson, who shall make a reasonable attempt to contact the instructor for resolution or response to the appeal. If the instructor cannot be contacted, the student may proceed through the appeal process with the department chairperson serving to represent the instructor in the appeal to the best of their ability. The department chairperson may also appoint an alternate faculty member (preferably from the same discipline as the original instructor) to represent the interests of the instructor in the appeal process.
3. If the student's appeal is not resolved with the faculty member, then the student may appeal in writing, stating the grounds for appeal, to the faculty member's department chair. Again, the grounds for appeal are limited to the two stated in this policy. Such an appeal must be submitted within 15 days of receipt of the negative appeal decision by the faculty member. The student is encouraged to meet with the department chair regarding the appeal. If the faculty member is also the chairperson, this level of appeal would go directly to the academic dean.
4. The chairperson shall notify in writing the student and faculty member of their findings regarding the appeal and the decision within 15 calendar days of their receipt of the appeal from the student.
  - If the decision is in favor of the faculty member, the student would be advised of other appeal options within this policy.
  - If the decision is in favor of the student, the department chair will appoint a committee of faculty to be comprised of no fewer than two faculty from the same discipline or department associated with the course in question. The committee will be asked to review the student's evidence and assessment results from the faculty member to determine a grade for the student. The committee may request grading examples from the instructor associated with other students in the same course section, as needed and if available. This reassessment must be completed by the committee within 21 days of committee formation by the department chair. Consistent with the established grade change process, once the committee has determined the grade, the committee will submit the grade to the department chair, who shall forward the grade to the academic dean to submit to the registrar as a grade change. The department chair will provide notification to the faculty member and student. The student does not have grade appeal rights to the decision of this committee, and this would constitute the end of the appeal process.

5. If an accord is not reached through the chairperson, the student may then appeal in writing, stating the grounds for appeal, to the academic dean, who may appoint a designee to handle the appeal. Again, the grounds for appeal are limited to the two stated in this policy. Such an appeal must be in writing and must be filed with the dean within 15 calendar days from the date of the final written determination of the department chair. The academic dean may solicit input from the faculty member and department chair regarding their decisions in evaluating the student appeal.
  - If the decision is in favor of the faculty member, the student would be advised of the limited, final appeal option within this policy.
  - If the decision is in favor of the student, the academic dean will appoint a committee of faculty to be comprised of no fewer than two faculty from the same discipline or department associated with the course in question. The committee will be asked to review the student's evidence and assessment results from the faculty member to determine a grade for the student. The committee may request grading examples from the instructor associated with other students in the same course section, as needed and if available. This reassessment must be completed by the committee within 21 days of committee formation by the academic dean. Consistent with the established grade change process, once the committee has determined the grade, the committee will submit the grade to the department chair, who shall forward the grade to the academic dean to submit to the registrar as a grade change. The department chair will provide notification to the faculty member and student. The student does not have grade appeal rights to the decision of this committee, and this would constitute the end of the appeal process.
6. The final source of appeal is the provost, who may appoint a designee to handle the appeal. This final step may only be taken in one of the following circumstances: (1) there was an error in procedure or interpretation of this policy that was so substantial as to effectively deny the student a fair hearing; or (2) new and significant evidence, which could not have been presented by diligent preparation at the prior levels of appeal, has become available. If such an appeal is granted, it must be submitted in writing and filed with the provost within 15 calendar days from the date of the final written determination of the academic dean. The provost may solicit input from the faculty member, department chair, and academic dean regarding their decisions in evaluating the student appeal.
  - If the decision is in favor of the faculty member, the student would be advised of the decision and that there are no further appeals available.
  - If the decision is in favor of the student, the provost will instruct the academic dean to appoint a committee of faculty to be comprised of no fewer than two faculty from the same discipline or department associated with the course in question. The committee will be asked to review the student's evidence and assessment results from the faculty member to determine a grade for the student. The committee may request grading examples from the instructor associated with other students in the same course section, as needed and if available. This reassessment must be completed by the committee within 21 days of committee formation by the academic dean. Consistent with the established grade change process, once the committee has determined the grade, the committee will submit the grade to the department chair, who shall forward the grade to the academic dean to submit to the registrar as a grade change. The department chair will provide notification to the faculty member, student, and provost. The student

does not have grade appeal rights to the decision of this committee, and this would constitute the end of the appeal process.

**E. Related policies**

Repeating a Course Policy (AC032)

**F. Contact Information**

For additional information, please contact the department chair of the relevant department, or the Office of the Dean for the relevant college.

**G. Policy Review Schedule**

All policies will be reviewed every two years or on an as needed basis if a change in BOG, PASSHE or Pennsylvania law would create the need for an immediate change.