

ADMINISTRATIVE MEMORANDUM

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

No. 10-07
April 30, 2008

This memorandum supersedes Administrative Memorandum No. 4-03, issued July 1, 2003.

GRADE APPEALS SYSTEM

This administrative memorandum establishes the policy and procedures governing the grade appeals system at the Purdue University North Central Campus. This document is based on recommendations made by the Faculty Council on April 27, 1981 (*Faculty Council Document No. 2-86*) and additional revisions made on April 24, 1992 (*Faculty Council Document No. 10-91*), December 11, 1998 (*Faculty Council Document No. 6-98*), March 28, 2003 (*Faculty Senate Document No. 5-02*) and October 12, 2007 (*Faculty Senate Document No. 07-03*).

1. General

- a) In the academic community, grades are a measure of student achievement toward fulfillment of course objectives. The responsibility for assessing student achievement and assigning grades rests with the faculty, and except for unusual circumstances, the grade given is final.
- b) The Grade Appeals System affords recourse to a student who has evidence or believes that evidence exists to show that an inappropriate grade has been assigned in a course as a result of prejudice, arbitrariness, or other improper conditions. Additionally a student may challenge the determination or reduction of a grade based on alleged scholastic dishonesty.
- c) The only University authorities empowered to change grades are the instructor of record of the course in question and the Executive Secretary of the Grade Appeals Committee acting for the duly constituted Hearing Panel of the North Central Campus Grade Appeals Committee as described hereafter.
- d) Informal attempts must be made to resolve grade appeals at the lowest possible level.
- e) Graduate students who wish to appeal grades received in regular course work on this campus may do so through the Grade Appeals System. Cases involving the decisions of graduate examination committees, the acceptance of graduate theses, and the application of professional standards relating to the retention of graduate students shall be handled by procedures authorized by the Graduate Council (West Lafayette Campus) rather than the Grade Appeals System.



PURDUE UNIVERSITY NORTH CENTRAL

- f) When a student initiates a formal grade appeal, he/she should be prepared to state in what way his/her grade assignment was prejudiced, arbitrary, or otherwise improper. At that time he/she may seek the assistance of his/her academic advisor, the Dean of Students and/or the Executive Secretary of the Grade Appeals Committee.
- g) In appealing a grade, the burden of proof is on the student, except in the case of alleged academic dishonesty, when the instructor must support the allegation.
- h) There may be instances where the instructor of record is unavailable, for reasons such as leave status, having left the employ of the University, or death. In such a case, the Chair of the department offering the course in question shall designate a member of the department to respond to the appeal; the chair may choose to designate himself or herself, or may appoint another tenured member of the department because of special curricular expertise.
- i) All references in this document to “days” refer to calendar days unless otherwise specified.

2. Grade Appeals Committee

- a) A single Grade Appeals Committee shall be established on the Purdue University North Central Campus to hear grade appeals that are not resolved informally at a lower level. The committee shall consist of faculty members, six (6) student members and an Executive Secretary. For the purposes of this Administrative Memorandum, faculty members are defined as tenured and tenure-track faculty, continuing lecturers and clinical/professional faculty. However, no Grade Appeals Hearing Panel shall have more than two continuing lecturers and/or clinical/professional faculty serving as members. The faculty members on the committee shall be selected by having each of the Academic Departments on campus elect one (1) faculty member and one (1) faculty alternate, each of whom shall serve a two-year term. Terms of the member and the alternate from each department shall be staggered.

Biological Sciences/Chemistry Department - 1 member (plus 1 alternate)

Business and Organizational Leadership & Supervision Department - 1 member (plus 1 alternate)

Communication Department - 1 member (plus 1 alternate)

Computer & Information Technology Department - 1 member (plus 1 alternate)

Education Department - 1 member (plus 1 alternate)

Engineering Technology Department - 1 member (plus 1 alternate)

English and Modern Languages Department - 1 member (plus 1 alternate)

Mathematics/Statistics /Physics Department - 1 member (plus 1 alternate)

Nursing Department - 1 member (plus 1 alternate)

Social Sciences Department - 1 member (plus 1 alternate)

The six (6) students shall be selected by the Student Government for one-year terms. In addition, six (6) student alternates will also be selected. The Executive Secretary, and an alternate to this position, who shall be members of the faculty, shall be selected by the Student Affairs Committee with the approval of the Faculty Senate for a two-year term. Terms of the Executive Secretary and the Alternate Executive Secretary shall be staggered.

- b) The regular members and alternates of the Grade Appeals Committee shall be elected in the spring and commence serving immediately after the last date on which grades are due for the spring semester. Similarly, the Executive Secretary, and the Alternate to this position, shall be selected by the Student Affairs Committee in the spring and commence serving immediately after the last date on which grades are due for the spring semester. A replacement will be elected from the corresponding department to complete the term of a faculty member who is unwilling or unable to do so. If the Executive Secretary or the Alternate Executive Secretary is unable to finish the term, a replacement shall be selected by the Student Affairs Committee with the approval of Faculty Senate to fill the unexpired term. During the time that the position of Executive Secretary is vacant, the Alternate Executive Secretary shall serve as Executive Secretary until the position of Executive Secretary is filled. If a grade appeal reaches the stage of a formal appeal (see d. below) during the time that the Alternate Executive Secretary is serving as Executive Secretary, the Alternate Executive Secretary shall continue to serve in that capacity for that appeal only until a decision is reached, and the newly selected Executive Secretary shall serve as Alternate Executive Secretary for that appeal only.
- c) The Executive Secretary shall not participate on any hearing panels. He/she shall be notified whenever a formal appeal is made. The Executive Secretary shall make certain that all procedures contained herein are followed. He/she shall advise both the student and the faculty member involved of procedures to be followed and of the rights and responsibilities of each. He/she shall be present at all hearing sessions and ensure that all members of the panel have all the information and materials necessary for the hearing. If the Executive Secretary is the faculty member involved in the appeal, the Alternate Executive Secretary will serve as Executive Secretary for that appeal.

3. Initiating a Grade Appeal: The Informal Process

- a) A student who wishes to appeal a grade must file notice of intention to appeal with the Executive Secretary. This must be done within thirty (30) days after the start of the regular semester following the one in which the questioned grade was given. The student, after informing the Executive Secretary of the intention to appeal, must then demonstrate that he/she has met with the following people in an informal attempt to resolve the situation:
- *The Instructor (or, if the instructor is not available, then the Chair of the Department offering the course or designee, see 1.h above);*
 - *The Chair of the Department offering the course; and*
 - *The Dean of the College offering the course (or, in his or her absence, the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs or her/his designee.*

It is expected that these people are to be approached in the order listed above. The student will have a maximum of thirty (30) days after informing the Executive Secretary of the intent to appeal to complete this process. The Executive Secretary

may, to avoid undue hardship or injustice, extend the time limit when it appears necessary; such extension shall be at the sole discretion of the Executive Secretary.

4. Pursuing a Grade Appeal: The Formal Process

- a) If a mutually acceptable decision is not reached informally, the student shall submit a detailed statement of appeal, with supporting documentation, to the Executive Secretary who shall promptly give written notice of the formal appeal to both the student and the responding faculty member. This written notice shall be accompanied by a copy of the student's detailed statement as well as the procedures and sequence of events to be followed in conducting the hearing. The first meeting of the Hearing Panel shall be held not less than five (5) days and, whenever practical, not more than ten (10) days after receiving the written notice from the Executive Secretary.
- b) The responding faculty member shall promptly make available to the Executive Secretary all pertinent grading records and a written response to the student's detailed statements. In advance of the hearing, the Executive Secretary may, at his/her sole discretion, make available to the student those records (or portion thereof) which he/she judges to be relevant in light of the student's allegations.
- c) The Hearing Panel will be composed of four (4) faculty members and two (2) students. In cases of alleged academic dishonesty, the panel will be composed of four (4) faculty members and four (4) student members. Neither members of the same department as the instructor of record nor relatives of either party involved will be eligible to serve on the Hearing Panel. Determination of the composition of each hearing panel will be by mutual option of both the responding instructor and the student involved in the appeal. At the time of notification of the formal appeal, the Executive Secretary will provide both the responding faculty member and the student an opportunity to strike one (1) faculty member and two (2) student members from the Grade Appeals Committee. In cases of alleged academic dishonesty, the responding faculty member and the student will be provided the opportunity to strike one (1) faculty member and one (1) student member each. The Executive Secretary shall then select the Hearing Panel from the Committee members not struck by either the responding instructor or the student involved in the appeal.

5. Conduct of Grade Appeals Hearings

- a) Prior to the formal hearing, the Hearing Panel will receive from the Executive Secretary only the following information about the grade appeal:
 - *The name of the student and the instructor of record, and of the responding faculty member in those cases where the instructor of record is not available;*
 - *The name and offering date of the course in which the disputed grade was issued;*
 - *The grade issued and the grade change sought.*

The student's appeal statement, evidence and documentation shall be presented to the panel by the student only during the formal hearing.

- b) The members of the Hearing Panel shall elect, by majority vote, one of the tenured or tenure-track faculty members to act as chairperson of the hearing.

- c) In its various considerations, the Hearing Panel must address itself primarily to the complaint(s) specified in the student's original letter of appeal to the Executive Secretary. The decision as to what constitutes pertinent evidence rests exclusively with the Hearing Panel.
- d) The hearing shall be closed unless both parties agree in writing that it be open. The hearing location and the number of individuals that can be conveniently accommodated shall be agreed upon by both parties and finalized by the Executive Secretary. The student and the responding instructor are both entitled to be accompanied at the hearing by advisors of their choice. Because the hearings are administrative and not judicial in nature, neither advisors nor witnesses may be lawyers. Both parties, and their advisors, have the right to present evidence and witnesses on their behalf, and to confront and question opposing witnesses. A list of the evidence and witnesses must be submitted to the Executive Secretary prior to the meeting.
- e) If the duly notified student complainant does not appear for the hearing, the complaint shall be dismissed, the case closed, and these actions not subject to further hearing. If, however, the duly notified responding faculty member does not appear, the hearing will continue on the presumption that there is no desire to challenge evidence or witnesses presented by the student. If emergency circumstances beyond the student's or the responding faculty member's control intervene to prevent attendance at the hearing, the student or faculty member must inform the Executive Secretary immediately to request an extension of time; such extension will be granted at the Executive Secretary's sole discretion. If an extension is granted, the Executive Secretary shall reschedule the hearing with the same panel and shall notify the student, the responding faculty member and the panel members of the new date, time and place of the hearing.
- f) An official audio recording shall be made of each hearing, and filed by the Executive Secretary for one year from the date the hearing panel files its report. The recording will be confidential and used only if further appeal is granted by the Grade Appeals Committee or under legal compulsion. Records will be kept in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs after each grade appeal is completed.
- g) At the conclusion of the hearing, the Hearing Panel may, by majority vote of its membership, recommend changing the original grade. The grade may be raised, lowered or left the same and need not be the grade requested by the student complainant. A written report of the Hearing Panel's decision shall be sent to both parties no later than ten (10) calendar days after the conclusion of the hearing. The Hearing Panel's decision is final and shall not be subject to further hearing or appeal. If the instructor who originally gave the grade is not available or is not willing to initiate any recommended grade change, the Executive Secretary, acting for the Hearing Panel, shall file the change with the Registrar who shall record the new grade.

6. Appeal Process in the Case of Procedural Violations

- a) Prior to the formal hearing, the student, the responding instructor, or a member of the Hearing Panel may request review of the hearing process on the basis of evidence that a substantial procedural irregularity has occurred. The process shall be initiated by filing a personally signed notice of appeal to the chairperson of the Hearing Panel. The notice shall be accompanied by a statement of the alleged violation.

- b) During the formal hearing, the student, the responding instructor, or any member of the Hearing Panel may request that the chairperson review the conduct of the hearing on the basis of an alleged substantial procedural irregularity.
- c) In the event that a review is requested, the hearing process shall be suspended and a special closed meeting of the members of the Hearing Panel shall be convened to review the allegation. If the Hearing Panel, by majority vote, finds that any substantial procedural violation has taken place, the Hearing Panel shall be disbanded and an alternate hearing panel constituted from among the Alternate Members of the Grade Appeals Committee. The panel's decision to disband or to continue the hearing process shall be final.
- d) The Alternate Hearing Panel shall be selected by the Alternate Executive Secretary from the alternate members of the Grade Appeals Committee according to the procedure in *Article 4.c*. In the event that the Alternate Executive Secretary has been serving as the Executive Secretary, a new temporary Alternate Executive Secretary shall be chosen by majority vote of the members of the Alternate Grade Appeals Committee from among its membership. The Alternate Hearing Panel shall hear the case *de novo* per *Article. 5. Conduct of a Grade Appeals Hearings*. The decision and conduct of the panel are final and shall not be subject to further hearing or review.

7. **Other Academic/Grade Jurisdictions**

- a) Informal boards or committees may be established within academic departments/units to resolve grade appeals, although the hearing procedure herein described must remain as an alternative for the student.
- b) Students involved in cases of alleged academic dishonesty may be subject to disciplinary penalties under *Regulations Governing Student Conduct: Disciplinary Proceedings and Appeals*.



James B. Dworkin
Chancellor

Cc: Full- & Part-time Faculty
Gold Book
Dean of Students
Attachments (2)

THE GRADE APPEALS PROCESS

A Note to the Student Initiating a Grade Appeal

At Purdue University North Central, the grade appeal process has been instituted to permit a student who believes, and can produce evidence to validate that belief, that he or she was discriminated against by a professor in the awarding of a grade for a particular course. There are three grounds on which such an appeal may be made:

1. **Prejudice.** In this case, the student alleges that the professor treated him or her differently than the other members of the class and that the grade was awarded on the basis of unique and discriminatory standards, by which the other students were not similarly judged.
2. **Arbitrariness.** In this case, the student alleges that the professor awarded him or her a grade according to standards that were not noted in the syllabus or mentioned during any class session.
3. **Academic Dishonesty.** In this case, the student has been awarded a grade that reflects the professor's response to an incident (or more) of cheating, plagiarism, or other dishonesty. The student contests that accusation, and can present evidence that she or he indeed did not cheat or commit another form of academic dishonesty.

The Grade Appeals Process also allows for the possibility that in extraordinarily rare circumstances, an appeal may be pursued on “otherwise improper” grounds. Whether such an appeal may be allowed depends on the judgment of the Executive Secretary of the Grade Appeals Committee at the time the student wishes to commence an appeal.

In any case, you need to know that no other grounds exist for appealing a grade. Should you elect to pursue an appeal, after completing the required paperwork and attempting to resolve the conflict at the informal level, the Process directs the Executive Secretary to convene a Hearing Panel to evaluate your case. This Panel is empowered to direct the Executive Secretary to resolve the dispute in one of three ways:

1. The Panel may accept the evidence presented by the student and direct the Secretary to raise the grade.
2. The Panel may accept the evidence presented by the professor and direct the Secretary to not change the grade.
3. The Panel may decide that the grade may have been awarded in error, but that on the basis of the evidence, it should actually have been lower than what was awarded, and may direct the Secretary to change the grade to a lower one.

Finally, the Grade Appeals Process recognizes the right of the student to due process. However, it also recognizes that bringing an appeal is a serious charge of professional misconduct against a professor. Should the Hearing Panel decide that the appeal was pursued on grounds other than those noted earlier, or that it was pursued for spurious or illegitimate reasons, the Panel can direct the Secretary to not only leave the grade as it stands, but to also cause a letter of complaint against the student to be placed in his or her permanent file. Thus the appeal process is designed to resolve serious errors associated with the award of a grade, and must be undertaken with care.

PURDUE UNIVERSITY NORTH CENTRAL

Grade Appeals Form

Student Information	
Name:	PNC ID#:
Course (Number & Title):	
Semester & Year:	
Grade Change Desired: FROM: _____ TO: _____	
Specific Grounds for Appeal (check one or more): <input type="checkbox"/> Prejudice ¹ <input type="checkbox"/> Arbitrariness ² <input type="checkbox"/> Contested Academic Dishonesty ³	
Other Extraordinary Circumstances (Please specify in attached Statement of Grounds for Appeals)	
Date Appeal Started:	Date:
Initialed by Student:	Initialed by Executive Secretary:
Date of meeting with instructor to attempt informal resolution OR responding instructor if instructor of record is unavailable. In that case, see Department Chair:	
Instructor:	Date:
Deadline for submission of Statement of Appeal and documentation.	Date:
If extension granted by Executive Secretary.	Revised Date:

SIGNATURES

The following signatures must be obtained, in order, in the attempt to resolve the appeal by informal means. Each person may express an opinion as to the merits of the appeal by location of their signature.

Department Chair: (of department offering course)	Date:	Grounds Reviewed:
	Pursuit Advisable or Inadvisable?	
College Dean (or designee):	Date:	Grounds Reviewed:
	Pursuit Advisable or Inadvisable?	

After obtaining the required signatures, **return** the signed form to the Executive Secretary of the Grade Appeals Committee by the deadline for consultation about whether a formal appeal ought to be pursued. If you decide to continue, the Executive Secretary will advise you of the next steps.

¹ **Prejudice** - Your grade was awarded on the basis of unique standards; you were singled out for treatment different from that received by everyone else in the class.

² **Arbitrariness** - Your grade was awarded on the basis of standards not mentioned on the syllabus and not discussed at any time in class.

³ **Contested Dishonesty** - You have been accused of Academic Dishonesty and can present evidence to prove the accusation wrong.