

CAP's Preliminary Recommendation on Grade Appeals

TO: Steering Committee
FROM: Committee on Academic Programs
RE: Preliminary Recommendation on Grade Appeals
DATE: March 26, 2014

Background:

Currently, the College has a “Student Complaint Appeal - Undergraduate” policy <http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8642> and a “Student Complaint Appeal – Graduate” policy <http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8682>. Both were developed through governance in 1999. Although not specifically designated as grade appeal policies, these are used largely for that purpose, especially since there are other policies and laws for dealing with discrimination and harassment.

On May 7, 2012, Steering charged CAP and CFA jointly with revisiting these policies. It charged CAP with creating a policy specifically for grade appeals, and asked CFA to consider whether there should be a “student complaint appeal” policy apart from a grade appeal policy. In October, 2013, the chairs of both CAP and CFA explained to Steering that they saw no reason for this charge to be framed as a joint charge, since there is no need to develop a grade appeal policy and a “student complaint appeal” policy at the same moment. Furthermore, the chair of CFA explained that a process for handling student complaints on issues aside from grades will necessarily be included in the Professional Behavior policy it is currently working on. At its October 16, 2013 meeting, the Steering Committee also noted that the concept of a “complaint appeal” policy is inherently contradictory, since a student can *appeal* a grade but cannot *appeal* a complaint. Steering has dropped the “student complaint appeal” charge to CFA. Below we reproduce the charge to CAP as given on May 7, 2012.

Charge:

Steering asks CAP to do the following:

- To create a policy that is specifically for grade appeals.
- To consider whether a single grade appeal policy can serve both undergraduate and graduate students or whether two policies are needed.

In carrying out this work, CAP may choose to draw upon the existing Student Complaint Appeal policy or may want to begin its work afresh.

Testimony:

Steering recommends that, in formulating a preliminary recommendation, CAP should solicit testimony from faculty, students, and staff; it may do so through consulting the executive boards of Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Student Government. In addition, it should consult the Council of Deans and the director of Graduate Studies. Prior to formalizing this preliminary recommendation, CAP sought input from the groups indicated by Steering.

Preliminary Recommendation:

The grade appeal policy applies only to *final* course grades for both undergraduate and graduate level courses offered in any term and in any modality, not to grades earned on individual assignments or tests. All other student appeals are governed by the Student Complaint Appeal - Undergraduate Policy <http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8642> and the Student Complaint Appeal Graduate Policy <http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8682>.

Undergraduate or graduate students who wish to appeal a course grade must first attempt to resolve this matter through discussion with the course instructor. If the student and instructor are unable to reach a satisfactory resolution regarding a disputed grade, or if the student was unable to establish contact with the professor of the course, the student may file a written appeal with the chair of the department in which the course was offered. A student who wishes to file a written grade appeal must inform the department chair within a period of fifteen calendar days after meeting with the instructor of the course. In cases where the student was unable to establish contact with the professor, a written appeal should be filed with the department chair within thirty calendar days after the end of the semester in which the grade was posted. For the purposes of grade appeals “end of the semester” is defined as the last day that grades are due in a given term. This date can be found on the TCNJ academic calendar. In cases where grades are submitted after the official deadline, a student may file a grievance up to thirty days after the grade is posted. It is the responsibility of the student to provide evidence that indicated that the grade was submitted after the official deadline (such as through documentation from records and registration). In cases where the chair was the instructor of the course in which the grade is disputed, or if the chair feels it necessary to recuse him or herself, the chair shall appoint a tenured faculty member from the department to consider the appeal. Grade appeals at the department level may be handled individually by the chair, by the chair’s designee, or by an ad-hoc committee convened to hear an individual student’s specific grievance. Some departments may have a standing committee that addresses grade appeals as they arise.

It is the responsibility of the student to submit a written statement to the department chair (or chair’s designee) outlining the basis and grounds of the complaint. Appropriate documentation must be submitted as necessary to support the appeal. Within thirty calendar days after the receipt of the student’s written appeal, the department chair (or designee in the case of recusal) is responsible for responding to the student with a request for additional information, notification that the grade will be upheld, or notification that grade will be changed.

Upon receipt of the chair’s decision, a student may appeal the decision to the Dean’s office of the school in which the course was offered. It is the responsibility of the student to file a written appeal (with appropriate documentation) within thirty calendar days after receiving the chair’s decision. In cases where a Dean must recuse him or herself, the Office of Academic Affairs shall appoint another Dean at the College to act on the grade appeal. Upon receipt of a student’s official appeal of a course grade, it is the responsibility of the Dean to render a decision regarding the best protocol to handle the grievance. As such, a student grade appeal may be addressed individually by the Dean, by an appropriate designee from his or her office or school, or by a special committee convened to address the given grade appeal. It is the responsibility of the Dean to respond with a decision on a grade appeal within thirty calendar days of the start of

the academic term following the semester in which the grade appeal was submitted to the Dean; for example, a grade appeal submitted to the Dean in the spring semester would need to be resolved within thirty days of the beginning of the next fall semester.

A student may appeal the decision of a Dean's office to the Office of Academic Affairs (the provost or a provost-level designee). However, the basis of this appeal cannot simply be dissatisfaction with the decision of the Dean. Rather, the basis for such an appeal may only occur on the grounds that the Dean, or her/his designee(s), did not follow established College policy. Students who wish to appeal a grade to the Office of Academic Affairs must do so within thirty calendar days after receiving the Dean's decision, and must specifically outline how appropriate College policies were not followed during the previous review processes. The Office of Academic affairs has the authority to decide if the student's appeal has merit and may choose to review the matter further, and present a final decision regarding the grade in question. If the Office of Academic Affairs denies the basis of the student's appeal, then the decision of the Dean or her/his designee(s) is final.