

## University Policy: Student Academic Grade Grievances Policy

**Policy Category:** Academic Policies

**Office Responsible for Review of this Policy:** Office of the Provost

**Related University Policies:** Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy

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### I. SCOPE

The Policy on Student Academic Grade Grievances provides a formal process for students to grieve a final grade in an undergraduate or graduate course.

### II. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to provide the American University community with the process for submitting an academic grade grievance. This policy applies only to final course grades. Grades on individual assignments and exams may not be grieved until a final course grade is assigned and only if they impacted the final course grade.

Judgment regarding a student's academic performance in a course is solely the instructor of record's responsibility; disagreement with the instructor's professional judgment about the quality of academic work is not a basis for a grievance.

Students may grieve a grade only if:

- a. an instructor fails to enter a course grade by 10 (ten) business days after the last day of the semester in which the course was taken; or
- b. there was an error in calculation which had a material impact on the final course grade; or
- c. the instructor failed to comply with the syllabus or posted revisions to the syllabus, or other written and established course requirements, or the University discrimination policies, which had a material impact on the final course grade.

Only complaints based on the above criteria are grievable.

### III. DEFINITIONS

*Instructor unavailable to grade.* Instructors are required to evaluate all work and assign grades for each student in their course. If an instructor is unavailable to evaluate a student's work due to illness, death, or other emergency, or has failed to respond in a reasonable time to the Chair's/Division Director's request to enter an outstanding grade, the instructor will be considered unavailable to grade. A determination that an instructor is unavailable should only be made in extraordinary circumstances.

*Department Chair or Division Director:* The Chair of the department or the Director of the division in which the course or program is offered, or the Dean's designee in the academic unit in which the course is offered

*Dean:* The Dean of the academic unit in which the course or program is offered. The Dean may choose to appoint the unit's undergraduate or graduate Associate Dean as his or her designee.

#### **IV. POLICY**

##### *A. Resolution Process*

i. If a student disputes a course grade, the student must notify the instructor of record within ten (10) business days from the posting of the course grade. Both parties are encouraged to resolve the issue in an informal manner. Instructors must correct grades if they have made an error in calculation.

ii. If no informal resolution can be reached (which includes a situation where the instructor is unavailable for a discussion), the student may seek the review of the Department Chair or Division Director within the school or college that the course is offered. Such review must be sought no later than five (5) business days after attempts at informal resolution have failed. The student's written grievance must fully describe the nature of the complaint and the informal resolution efforts, and should include any relevant evidence or documentation.

iii. Upon receipt of the grievance, the Chair/Director will, within ten (10) business days of receipt, notify the instructor of the grievance, consult with the student and the instructor, review any relevant evidence related to the course grade, and enter judgement on the merits of the grade grievance.

1. If the student alleges that the final course grade resulted from a violation of the University's discrimination policies, the Chair/Director will immediately refer the case to the Deputy Title IX Officer for Faculty who will review the case in accordance with the [University's Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Policy](#).

2. If the instructor has not entered a course grade within ten (10) business days of the end of the semester in which the course was offered, the Chair/Director will direct the instructor to enter a course grade.

i. If the instructor is unavailable to evaluate the student's work, as defined in Section II, the Chair/Director will consult the academic unit's Associate Dean and designate an instructor within the same department/division to act as the instructor of record and evaluate and grade the student's work. The Associate Dean will provide any necessary documentation to the Office of the Registrar to facilitate the change in instructor of record.

3. If the Chair/Director determines there is no grievable basis, as described in Section I, for the complaint, then the Chair/Director may dismiss the case. The dismissal shall be issued in writing to the student and the instructor.
  - i The student may appeal such a dismissal to the Dean; such an appeal must be in writing and transmitted to the Dean within five (5) business days of the Chair's/Director's written dismissal.
  - ii If, after review of the record, the Dean determines that the complaint is grievable, the Dean will determine the corrective action to be taken, including but not limited to recalculating the grade, and shall issue the decision in writing to the instructor, Chair/Director, and the student. If the Dean determines that the complaint is not grievable, the Dean shall issue the decision in writing to the student, Chair/Director, and instructor. In either case, the Dean's decision is final.
4. If the Chair/Director determines that there is evidence that the grade was computed in error or did not comply with the syllabus or a posted revision to the syllabus, other written and established course requirements, and/or university policy, the Chair/Director will issue a written recommendation for corrective actions, including but not limited to recalculating the grade.
  - i If the student and instructor agree to the proposed corrective action, the process is concluded. The Chair/Director is responsible for ensuring that the corrective action is implemented.
  - ii If either the student or instructor disagree with the Chair's/Director's recommendation for corrective action, either party may appeal in writing to the Dean within five (5) business days of the Chair's/Director's written recommendation.
  - iii The Dean will review all submitted statements and evidence, including the Chair's/Director's recommendation. The Dean may require corrective action or determine that no corrective action is warranted. The Dean's decision will be issued in writing to the instructor, Chair/Director, and the student. In either case, the Dean's decision is final.

#### B. *Records*

- i. All records pertaining to a grade grievance case shall be maintained confidentially for a period of three years by the Department/Division in which the grievance occurred.
- ii. The student and instructor involved shall be given reasonable access to the case file before, during, and after the proceeding.

## V. EFFECTIVE DATE AND APPROVAL

This policy needs to be signed by the appropriate officer (listed below) before it is considered approved.

Approved:

Provost: Scott A. Bar

Date Approved: 9/14/16