



AOP 13.14: GRADE APPEAL AND ACADEMIC REVIEW BOARD

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Academic Operating Policy and Procedure (AOP) is to promote an understanding and standardization of the Academic Review Board's operating policies and procedures.

REVIEW

This AOP will be reviewed every four years or whenever circumstances require an earlier review by the Executive Vice Provost for Academic Affairs with recommendations for revisions presented to the Provost and Executive Vice President.

POLICY/PROCEDURE

Grade Appeal Process Through Academic Review Board

A. Composition of The Board

The Academic Review Board will be composed of one member of the teaching faculty from each of the schools or colleges of the University; there shall be one alternate from each of the schools or colleges. Members will be elected by their University division (in the same manner and at the same time as Faculty Senate representatives). The member and alternate who represent the Graduate School and are elected by the Graduate faculty shall be full members of that faculty. The election of the Graduate faculty representatives will be coordinated by the Graduate Council on a two-year basis. In addition to the elected members, the Board will also include a student recommended by the Student Association president and three faculty members at large appointed by the Provost and Executive Vice President, who should ensure adequate minority representation. The student member serves one year. Faculty members serve two years and alternates two years, beginning on July 1 following their election; they may be reelected. The Dean of Students and the Dean of Graduate School shall serve as ex-officio (non-voting) members. The Provost and Executive Vice President will select the interim chair from among the faculty membership. The interim chair will convene the Board to conduct the election of the Board Chair.

B. Statement of Policy

Student performance should be evaluated according to academic criteria, not on the basis of opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards.

The instructor (defined as one who has the responsibility for a class, directed individual study, or thesis) has the authority in class over all matters affecting the conduct of the class, including assignment of grades. The instructor shall be presumed to have assigned the proper grade until it is proven otherwise. The burden of proof to the contrary rests with the student.

Students shall have protection through orderly appellate procedures against prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation. The method of grading by instructors should be made clear to students, and instructors should be required to justify disputed grades. All records on which grades are based should be retained on file for a minimum of one year.

C. Appeal Procedure

The following procedure will apply in all grade appeals. If a student believes that he/she has extenuating circumstances, however, such as an upcoming graduation, a request should be made to the Provost and Executive Vice President's Office to expedite the appeal. Expedited appeals will go straight to the Provost and Executive Vice President's Office for referral to a hearing panel or decision. In the case of summer or another time when the regular grade appeal committee is unavailable, the Provost and Executive Vice President's Office may empanel a special committee to hear the appeal.

- For purposes of this policy, business days are defined as Mondays – Fridays during which the University is open.
 - All timeframes shall be strictly enforced. Should any party need additional time, a written request for additional time shall be made to the Provost and Executive Vice President. Extensions shall be granted only in extenuating circumstances.
 - All decisions should be based solely upon the material presented. Under no circumstances shall past appeals made against the instructor or filed by the student be considered.
 - All documentation regarding the appeal shall be included with each succeeding appeal.
 - The grade being appealed shall remain in effect until the appeal process is concluded. Any associated effects (loss of eligibility or privilege of any kind) shall be invoked, even though an appeal is pending or planned.
1. The student is to take their complaint in writing to the instructor involved within 15 business days of the beginning of the next regular semester (Fall, Spring). Grade appeals will not be handled during the summer session unless there are extenuating circumstances. The instructor shall have 5 business days to respond in writing to the complaint.
 2. If the student does not obtain satisfaction within 5 business days of presenting the written complaint to the instructor, the student shall have 5 business days to initiate a grade appeal form. The directions for doing so may be obtained from any academic dean's office or from the Registrar's Office. The complaint should be described fully on the grade appeal form and the nature of this complaint shall remain constant throughout the appeal process.

3. The department head will then have 5 business days to rule on the grade appeal after receipt and issue a written ruling to the student and instructor. Either the student or the instructor may appeal this ruling to the academic dean to whom the department head reports within 5 business days of the issuance of the decision. To appeal, the student or instructor shall provide written notice of their desire to appeal to the department head and dean..
4. The dean will rule on the grade appeal and issue a written ruling to the student and instructor within 5 business days of the receipt of the appeal. Either the student or the instructor may appeal this ruling to the Provost and Executive Vice President within 5 business days of the issuance of the decision. The Provost and Executive Vice President's Office may then refer the case to the Academic Review Board within 5 business days. Note: If the appeal were to arrive in the Provost Office with less than two weeks left in the spring semester, the appeal would be referred to the Academic Review Board at the beginning of the following fall semester unless extenuating circumstances are found to exist.
5. Hearing procedure. The following guidelines are established for the direction of the Academic Review Board conducting formal hearings on academic appeals:
 - a. The hearing shall be scheduled as soon as possible but not more than 15 business days after the appeal is presented to the Provost and Executive Vice President's Office unless an extension is required to comply with 5b.
 - b. The instructor and student will be allowed at least five (5) business days to prepare for the hearing which will include a consultation with the Academic Review Board Chair to discuss and clarify the procedures of the Board. The instructor and student may request additional time by showing cause in writing to the chair.
 - c. The instructor and student shall have the right to appear with an advisor if they so choose at their own personal expense. If the advisor is an attorney, the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President must be notified two (2) business days prior to the hearing. The instructor and/or the student is responsible for presenting his/her case and the advisor may not address members of the review board or witnesses.
 - d. A majority of the hearing Board members (or their alternates) shall constitute a quorum. In the event a quorum is not present, both the student and instructor must agree for the hearing to proceed, otherwise the hearing will be rescheduled.
 - e. Academic Review Board hearings are of a private, confidential nature. They are closed to the public.
 - f. The instructor shall be strongly encouraged to appear in person or virtually to present his/her case to the Academic Review Board, and the instructor may call witnesses on his/her behalf. However, the instructor may elect not

to appear before the Review Board. Should the instructor elect not to appear, the hearing shall be held in his/her absence. The failure of an instructor to appear must be noted without prejudice; however, the Board will act upon the evidence presented to it whether or not the instructor is present. The student must appear in person or virtually to present his/her case and may call witnesses on his/her behalf. Both the student and the instructor must provide to the chair a list of witnesses they intend to call at least three (3) business days before the hearing along with any written statements s/he would like to present.

- g. It will be left to the discretion of the Academic Review Board whether or not to permit the introduction of any particular written statement. If written evidence is to be presented against the instructor or student, the other party shall be allowed to see the actual signed statements at least 1 business day before the hearing. Unsigned statements shall not be admissible as evidence.
- h. The instructor or student shall have the right to challenge any member of the Academic Review Board for good cause and request that the individual be disqualified for that hearing. This dismissal of a challenged hearing Board member shall be at the discretion of the hearing Board Chair. Should the Chair be directly involved in the case, the Chair shall excuse himself/herself and a Chair Pro Tempore shall be selected by the members of the Academic Review Board for that hearing.
- i. The instructor and student shall have an opportunity to be present during the presentation of all evidence and to challenge the admissibility of any evidence. They shall each have the opportunity to question all witnesses. The Chair of the Academic Review Board shall supervise any questioning of this nature, and, at the Chair's discretion, may strike any questions which are not relevant to the purpose of the hearing. The Board may question the instructor, the student, and any witnesses.
- j. The recommendation in each case shall be made by a majority of Academic Review Board members present and voting.
- k. Recommendations of the Board and the factual basis upon which the recommendations are made will be issued in writing to the Provost and Executive Vice President for a final decision within 5 business days of the hearing. The Provost and Executive Vice President's Office shall transmit the recommendations and the Provost's decision to the instructor and the student within 10 business days of receiving the recommendations of the Board.

D. Retention of Records

As part of the University's grade appeal policy, faculty members are required to keep records on grades, examinations, projects, term papers, and other pertinent material not returned to the students on file for a minimum of one year.

REVIEWED:

/s/ Peter L. Ryan
Executive Vice Provost and
Dean of the Graduate School

08/24/2020
Date

/s/ David Shaw
Provost and Executive Vice President

08/24/2020
Date

/s/ Rebecca Robichaux-Davis
President, Robert Holland Faculty Senate

08/24/2020
Date

/s/ Tracey N. Baham
Director
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APPROVED:

/s/ Mark Keenum
President

08/24/2020
Date