

Appeals Policies

Grade Appeals Policy

I. Introduction

The University of Alaska is committed to the ideal of academic freedom and so recognizes that the assignment of grades is a faculty responsibility. Therefore, the University administration shall not influence or affect an assigned grade or the review of an assigned grade.

The following procedures are designed to provide a means for students to seek review of final course grades alleged to be arbitrary and capricious. Before taking formal action, a student must attempt to resolve the issue informally with the instructor of the course. A student who files a written request for review under the following procedures shall be expected to abide by the final disposition of the review, as provided below, and may not seek further review of the matter under any other procedure within the university.

II. Definitions

- A. A "grade" refers to final letter grades A, B, C, D, F, and Pass. The I (incomplete) designates a temporary grade for one year, and is not a final grade, so it is not subject to appeal until it becomes final.
- B. For the purpose of this procedure, "arbitrary and capricious" grading means:
 1. the assignment of a course grade to a student on some basis other than performance in the course, or
 2. the assignment of a course grade to a student by resorting to standards different from those which were applied to other students in that course, or
 3. the assignment of a course grade by a substantial, unreasonable and unannounced departure from the instructor's previously articulated standards.
- C. "Grading errors" denotes errors in the calculation of grades rather than errors in judgment.
- D. As used in the schedule for review of academic decisions, a class day is any day of scheduled instruction, excluding Saturday and Sunday, included on the academic calendar in effect at the time of a review. Final examination periods are counted as class days.
- E. "Department chair" for the purposes of this policy denotes the administrative chair of the academic unit offering the course (e.g., head, chair or coordinator of an academic department, or the campus director if the faculty member is in the College of Rural and Community Development).
- F. The "dean/director" is the administrative chair of the college or school offering the course or program from which the academic decision or action arises. For students at extended campuses the director of the campus may substitute for the dean/director of the unit offering the course or program.
- G. "Final grade" for the purposes of this policy is the grade assigned for a course upon its completion.
- H. A "grading error" is a mathematical miscalculation of a final grade or an inaccurate recording of the final grade.
- I. The next regular semester is the fall or spring semester following that in which the disputed academic decision was made. For example, it would be the fall semester for a final grade issued for a course completed during the previous spring semester or summer session. The spring semester is the next regular semester for an academic decision made during the previous fall semester.

III. Procedures

- A. Errors by an instructor in determining and recording a grade or by the university staff in transcribing the grade are sources of error that can be readily corrected through the student's prompt attention following the normal change of grade procedure.

1. It is a student's obligation to notify the instructor of any possible error immediately by the most direct means available. If this is through an oral conversation and/or the issue is not immediately resolved, it is the student's responsibility to provide the instructor with a signed, written request for review of the grade, with a copy to the unit department chair and the dean of the college or school in which the course was offered.
 2. Notification must be received by the instructor and/or department chair within 15 days from the first day of instruction of the next regular semester (i.e., fall semester for grade issued at the end of the previous spring semester or summer session; spring semester for grade issued at the end of the previous fall semester).
 3. The instructor is responsible for notifying the student in writing of his or her final judgment concerning the grade in question within 5 days of receipt of the request, and for promptly submitting the appropriate change of grade form to the Registrar's Office if an error occurred.
 4. If the student does not receive a response from the instructor or the unit department chair by the required deadline, the student must seek the assistance of the dean of the college or school in which the course was offered.
 5. If the instructor is no longer an employee of the university or is otherwise unavailable, the student must bring the matter to the attention of the unit department chair who will make every effort to contact the instructor by the 15th class day of the next regular semester.
 - a. If the instructor can not be contacted but course records are available, the department chair will effect resolution within 5 class days of notification by the student. The department chair may correct a grading error through the regular change of grade process on behalf of the instructor.
 - b. If the instructor can not be contacted and course records are either unavailable or indecisive, the student may request a review following the procedure outlined below.
 - c. If the instructor can be contacted and elects to participate, then a constructive participation is to be welcomed by the review committee. The procedures of Paragraph III.A.5.a. or Paragraph III.A.5.b. will be instituted if the instructor withdraws from participation.
 6. There may be extenuating circumstances when the deadlines cannot be met due to illness, mail disruption, or other situations over which the student may have no control. In such a case, upon request from the student, the dean of individual college, after review of supporting documentation provided by the student, may recommend to the grade appeals committee that the deadlines be adjusted accordingly. An extension of the deadline will be limited to one semester but every effort should be made to complete the appeal process within the current semester.
- B. If no such error occurred, the remaining option is by review for alleged arbitrary and capricious grading, or for instances where the course instructor is unavailable and satisfaction is not forthcoming from the appropriate department chair.
1. This review is initiated by the student through a signed, written request to the department chair with a copy to the dean of the college or school in which the course was offered.
 - a. The student's request for review may be submitted using university forms specifically designed for this purpose and available at the Registrar's Office.
 - b. By submitting a request for a review, the student acknowledges that no additional mechanisms exist within the university for the review of the grade, and that the university's administration can not influence or affect the outcome of the review.
 - c. The request for a review must be received no later than 20 days after the first day of instruction in the next regular semester (i.e., fall semester for grade issued at the end of the previous spring semester or summer session; spring semester for grade issued at the end of the previous fall semester) or within 5 days of receipt of notification of the process by the dean/director of the college or school in which the course was offered.
 - d. The request must detail the basis for the allegation that a grade was improper and the result of arbitrary and capricious grading and must present the relevant evidence.

2. It is the responsibility of the department chair to formally notify both the instructor who issued the grade and the dean of the unit's college or school that a request for a review of grade has been received.
3. If the instructor of the course is also the department chair, the Dean of the College will designate another department chair within the college to act as the department's representative for all proceedings. If the instructor of the course is also the Dean of the College, the Provost will designate another Dean within the University to act as the college's monitor of all proceedings.
4. The dean will appoint a 5 member review committee composed of the following:
 - a. One non-voting tenure-track faculty member from the academic unit in which the course was offered (other than the instructor of the course). This individual shall serve in an advisory role.
 - b. Two tenure-track faculty members from within the college or school but outside of the unit in which the course was offered. If available, one of these two members will be selected from the members of the UAF Faculty Appeals and Oversight Committee.
 - c. One tenure track faculty member from outside the college or school in which the course was offered. If available, this member is to be selected from the members of the UAF Faculty Appeals and Oversight Committee.
 - d. The fifth member to be appointed by the dean will be a non-voting student representative.
 - e. The campus judicial officer or his/her designee shall serve as a nonvoting facilitator for grade appeals hearings. This individual shall serve in an advisory role to help preserve consistent hearing protocol and records.
5. The committee must schedule a mutually agreeable date, time and location for the appeal hearing within 10 working days of receipt of the student's request.
 - a. During this and subsequent meetings, all parties involved shall protect the confidentiality of the matter according to the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and any other applicable federal, state or university policies.
 - b. Throughout the proceedings, the committee will encourage a mutually agreeable resolution.
 - c. The mandatory first item of business at this meeting is for the committee to rule on the validity of the student's request. Grounds for dismissal of the request for review are:
 - 1) This is not the first properly prepared request for appeal of the particular grade.
 - 2) The actions of the instructor do not constitute arbitrary and capricious grading, as defined herein.
 - 3) The request was not made within the policy deadlines.
 - 4) The student has not taken prior action to resolve the grade conflict with the instructor, as described under section III, A.
 - d. In the event that the committee votes to dismiss the request, a written notice of dismissal must be forwarded to the student, instructor, department chair and dean within five days of the decision, and will state clearly the reasoning for the dismissal of the request.
6. Acceptance for consideration of the student's request will result in the following:
 - a. A request for and receipt of a formal response from the instructor to the student's allegation.
 - b. A second meeting scheduled to meet within 10 days of the decision to review the request.
 - 1) The student and instructor will be invited to attend the meeting.
 - 2) The meeting will be closed to outside participation, and neither the student nor instructor may be accompanied by an advocate or representative. Other matters of format will be announced in advance.
 - 3) The proceedings will be tape recorded and the tapes will be stored with the campus Judicial Officer.
 - 4) The meeting must be informal, non-confrontational and fact-finding, where both the student and instructor may provide additional relevant and useful information and can provide clarification of facts for materials previously submitted.
7. The final decision of the committee will be made in private by a majority vote.

- a. Actions which the committee can take if it accepts the student's allegation of arbitrary and capricious grading must be directed towards a fair and just resolution, and may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 1) direct the instructor to grade again the student's work under the supervision of the department chair,
 - 2) direct the instructor to administer a new final examination and/or paper in the course,
 - 3) direct a change of the student's registration status (i.e., withdrawn, audit, dropped) in the course.
- b. The academic decision review committee proceedings will result in the preparation of written findings and conclusions. Conclusions will result in one of the following:
 - 1) the request for a grade change is denied.
 - 2) the request for a grade change is upheld; the review committee requests the course instructor to change the grade; and the course instructor changes the grade in accordance with MAU rules and procedures.
 - 3) the request for a grade change is upheld; the course instructor is either unavailable to change the grade or refuses to, and the review committee directs the dean/director to initiate the process specified by MAU rules and procedures to change the grade to that specified by the review committee.
- c. A formal, written report of the decision must be forwarded to the student, instructor, department chair, dean and the Registrar's Office within five days of the meeting.
- d. The decision of the committee is final.

Appeals Policy for Academic Decisions other than Grades

I. Introduction

The University of Alaska is committed to the ideal of academic freedom and so recognizes that academic decisions are a faculty responsibility. Therefore, the University administration shall not unduly influence or affect the review of academic decisions that are a faculty responsibility.

The following procedures are designed to provide a means for students to seek review of academic decisions alleged to be arbitrary and capricious. These academic decisions may involve non-admission to or dismissal from any UAF program that involve pass/fail decisions by a committee of faculty on non-course examinations (such as qualifying, comprehensive or thesis examinations) or satisfactory/unsatisfactory evaluations on student previews (such as the annual review of graduate students performance). Before taking formal action, a student must attempt to resolve the issue informally. A student who files a written request for review under the following procedures shall be expected to abide by the final disposition of the review, as provided below, and may not seek further review of the matter under any other procedure within the university.

II. Definitions

- A. As used in the schedule for review of academic decisions, a class day is any day of scheduled instruction, excluding Saturday and Sunday, included on the academic calendar in effect at the time of a review. Final examination periods are counted as class days.

- B. "Department Chair" for the purposes of this policy denotes the administrative head of the academic unit offering the program (e.g., head, chair or coordinator of an academic department, or division coordinator or program chair if the faculty member is in the College of Rural and Community Development).
- C. "Committee of Faculty" for the purposes of this policy denotes the group of faculty who rendered the initial decision being appealed. Such groups may include, but are not limited to: graduate examinations committees, graduate advisory committees, and thesis defense committees.
- D. The "dean/director" is the administrative head of the college or school offering the course or program from which the academic decision or action arises. For students at extended campuses the director of the campus may substitute for the dean/director of the unit offering the course or program.
- E. The next regular semester is the fall or spring semester following that in which the disputed academic decision was made. For example, it would be the fall semester for a final grade issued for a course completed during the previous spring semester or summer session. The spring semester is the next regular semester for an academic decision made during the previous fall semester.

III. Procedures

A. A student wishing to appeal an academic decision other than a grade assignment must first request an informal review of the decision.

1. Notification must be received by the Provost within 15 days from the first day of instruction of the semester in which the decision takes effect.
2. There may be extenuating circumstances when the deadlines cannot be met due to illness, mail disruption, or other situations over which the student may have no control. In such a case, upon request from the student, the Provost, after review of supporting documentation provided by the student, may adjust the deadlines accordingly. An extension of the deadline will be limited to one semester but every effort should be made to complete the appeal process within the current semester.
3. In cases where the decision was rendered by a committee of faculty (such as those dealing with graduate examinations and evaluations), the Provost will request the appropriate committee to conduct an informal review of its decision. The committee of faculty will determine whether its original decision should be overturned or changed in any way. The committee of faculty will submit its recommendation to the Provost through the department chair and Dean/Director within 10 days.
4. In all other matters, The Provost will request the appropriate department chair to conduct an informal review of the decision. The department chair will determine whether the original decision should be overturned or changed in any way. The department chair will submit his/her recommendation to the provost through the dean/director within 10 days. In the event that the department chair is directly involved, the provost can ask the dean/director to conduct an informal review and submit his/her recommendations directly to him.
5. The Provost will consult with the student on the committee of faculty's or department chair's recommendation. If the student does not find that recommendation acceptable, he/she may request the Provost to conduct a formal review.

B. The formal review will be conducted as follows.

1. This formal review is initiated by the student through a signed, written request to the Provost.

- a. The student's request for formal review may be submitted using university forms specifically designed for this purpose and available from the Office of the Provost.
 - b. By submitting a request for a review, the student acknowledges that no additional mechanisms exist within the University for the formal Review of the decision, and that the university's administration including the college dean/director cannot influence or affect the outcome of the formal review.
 - c. The request for a formal review must be received no later than 10 days after the student has learned the outcome of the informal review (III.A.4.).
 - d. The request must detail the basis for the allegation that the decision was made on a basis other than sound professional judgment based upon standard academic policies, procedures and practices.
2. The Provost will appoint a 5-member review committee composed of the following:
- a. One tenure-track faculty member from the academic unit in which the decision was made.
 - b. Two tenure-track faculty members from within the college or school, but outside of the unit in which the decision was made. If available, one of these two members will be selected from the members of the UAF Faculty Appeals and Oversight Committee.
 - c. One tenure track faculty member from outside the college or school in which the decision was made. If available, this member is to be selected from the members of the UAF Faculty Appeals and Oversight Committee.
 - d. The fifth member to be appointed by the Provost will be a non-voting student representative.
 - e. The campus judicial officer or his/her designee shall serve as a non-voting facilitator for appeals hearings. This individual shall serve in an advisory role to help preserve consistent hearing protocol and records.
 - f. The department chair of the program in which the decision was made will act as the program's monitor of all proceedings.
3. The committee must schedule a mutually agreeable date, time and location for the appeal hearing within 10 working days of receipt of the student's formal request.
- a. During this and subsequent meetings, all parties involved shall protect the confidentiality of the matter according to the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and any other applicable federal, state or university policies.
 - b. Throughout the proceedings, the committee will encourage a mutually agreeable resolution.
 - c. The mandatory first item of business at this meeting is for the committee to rule on the validity of the student's request. Grounds for dismissal of the request for review are:
 - i. The student has not provided sufficient reason in support of the allegation that the academic decision was arbitrary and capricious.
 - ii. This is not the first properly prepared request for appeal.
 - iii. The request was not made within the policy deadlines.
 - d. In the event that the committee votes to dismiss the request, a written notice of dismissal must be forwarded to the student, instructor, department chair, dean/director and provost within 5 days of the decision, and will state clearly the reasoning for the dismissal of the request.
4. Acceptance for consideration of the student's request will result in the following:
- a. A request for, and receipt of, a formal written response from the program department chair to the student's allegation.

- b. A second meeting scheduled to meet within 10 days of the decision to review the request.
 - i. The student and the department chair or a representative of the program will be invited to attend the meeting.
 - ii. The meeting will be closed to outside participation, and neither the student nor the instructor or department chair may be accompanied by an advocate or representative. Other matters of format will be announced in advance.
 - iii. The proceedings will be tape-recorded and the tapes will be stored with the campus Judicial Officer.
 - iv. The meeting must be informal, non-confrontational and fact-finding, where both the student and instructor or department chair may provide additional relevant and useful information and can provide clarification of facts for materials previously submitted.
- 5. The final decision of the committee will be made in private by a majority vote.
 - a. Actions which the committee can take if it accepts the student's allegation may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - i. direct the program instructor or department chair to reconsider the decision,
 - ii. provide a final alternative decision.
 - b. The academic decision review committee proceedings will result in the preparation of written findings and conclusions.
 - c. A formal, written report of the decision must be forwarded to the student, instructor, program/department chair, dean and Provost within five days of the meeting. The Provost shall then be responsible for communicating the decision to other relevant offices (e.g., Admissions, Registrar).
 - d. The decision of the committee is final.

C. The entire process must be completed by the end of the semester in which the decision first took effect.