

**GRADUATE POLICY COMMITTEE
MINUTES
APRIL 4, 2005**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

George Bates, Chair, Biology
Dianne Harrison, Graduate Studies
Anne Rowe, Dean of Faculties
Srinivas Palanki, Engineering
John Geringer, Music
Mary Karen Dahl, Theatre
Kathleen Erndl, Religion
Elizabeth Platt, Education
Bettye Ann Case, Mathematics
Wendy Crook, Social Work
Steven Pfeiffer, Education
Gary Kleck, Criminology
Jeanne Heitmeyer, Human Sciences
Leonard "Chick" LaPointe, Communication
Kathleen Erndl, Religion
David Johnson, Humanities
Charles Ouimet, Medicine

ALSO PRESENT:

Hunt Hawkins, English
Sissi Carroll, Education
Joseph McElrath, Arts and
Sciences
Jennifer Buchanan, Dean of the
Faculties Office
Maryhelen Jones, University
Libraries
Judy Devine, Graduate Studies
Ruth Feiock, Graduate Studies
Kim Maddox, Social Work
Lisa Beverly, Graduate Studies

Proposal for Revisions to the Grade Appeals System – Representing the Council of Associate and Assistant Deans (CAAD), Kim Maddox, Social Work, and Jennifer Buchanan, Dean of Faculties Office, presented a proposal to revise the grade appeals system. Dr. Buchanan reported that in early discussions CAAD realized that various schools and colleges were interpreting the grade appeal system differently. It was felt that the *General Bulletin* was not clear on the process. It was felt that the process needs to be streamlined.

Handouts on the current system and the proposed changes were provided.

A **motion** was made by Dr. Johnson and **seconded** by Dr. Young which reads:

It is recommended that the following changes be made to the Grade Appeals System:

The purpose of the grade appeals system is to afford an opportunity for an undergraduate or graduate student to appeal a final course grade under certain circumstances. Faculty judgment of students' academic performance is inherent in the grading process and hence should not be overturned except when the student can show that the grade awarded represents a gross violation of the instructor's own specified grading standards and therefore was awarded in an arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory manner. The grading standards utilized during the grade appeals process are those that were contained in the instructor's syllabus at the beginning of the semester. This system does not apply to preliminary or comprehensive exams or

to thesis or dissertation defenses; these issues are reviewed by the Student Academic Relations Committee via the Dean of the Faculties.

Step 1.

Within 30 calendar days following the date that final grades are made available to students, the student must contact the instructor in question to discuss the grade and attempt to resolve any differences. The student should document any attempts to contact the instructor in order to establish that the appeal was begun within this 30-day period. In the event that the instructor is not available, the student should provide that documentation to the instructor's program or department chair. **Either the student or the instructor may consult with the appropriate program or department chair during this process.**

Step 2.

If no resolution is reached within this 30-day period, after the student's documented attempt, the student has an additional 15 calendar days to submit a written statement to the program or department chair. This statement must include an account of attempts to resolve the issue, as well as the evidence that forms the basis for the appeal.

Within 20 calendar days thereafter, the department or program chair will arrange for a meeting of a grade appeals screening committee composed of three students enrolled in the academic unit offering the course to review the appeal. Appropriate students who have no conflict of interest will be chosen to serve on this screening committee by a student organization associated with the program or department, if such an organization exists. **If none exists** or if members of such an organization are not available, the department or program chair will select appropriate students who have no conflict of interest. Both the student and the instructor may attend the meeting.

The role of the screening committee is solely to determine whether the student has presented sufficient evidence to warrant further review. Within five calendar days after this meeting, the screening committee will render its decision in writing (recommend/do not recommend further review) to the program or department chair, the student, and the instructor. A negative decision will end the appeal. A positive decision will trigger the next step in the process.

Step 3.

Within 20 calendar days of a positive decision from the grade appeals screening committee, the program or department chair will appoint and arrange for a meeting of a grade appeals board. This board is composed of three faculty members and two students other than those who served on the screening committee.

The purpose of this board is to determine whether or not to uphold the final grade assigned by the instructor. The board will consider only the evidence provided by the student and the instructor in making the determination. Both the student and the

instructor may attend the meeting.

The grade will be upheld unless the evidence shows that the grade was awarded in an arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory manner, as a result of a gross violation of the instructor's own grading standards. If the original grade is not upheld, the board will recommend that an alternative grade be assigned by the program or department chair.

If the student has evidence that this grade appeals process has deviated substantially from these established procedures, resulting in a biased decision, the student may consult with the Dean of the Faculties regarding referral to the Student Academic Relations Committee.

It was noted that the steps in the proposal do not preclude the chair of the department from being involved in the process. The intent is to give the department chair some discretion in being involved.

Discussion ensued that it may be more appropriate to exclude the word "gross" when referring to a violation of the instructor's own grading standards. A friendly amendment was made by Dr. Johnson to add a sentence at the end of Step 1 which states, **"Either the student or the instructor may consult with the appropriate program or department chair during this process."** and to add **"If none exists or"** prior to "if members of such an organization are not available, the department or program chair will select appropriate students who have no conflict of interest" in Step 2.

The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:55pm

The next meeting is on Friday, April 15, 2005.