

# Grade and Program Dismissal Appeals Committee (GAPDAC)

## Policies and Procedures

### Introduction

The Grade and Program Dismissal Appeals Committee was established to review student requests for changes in grade or reinstatement in programs. Requests for changes in grades take one of two forms: the request is either to change an incorrect grade or to request a late drop for a course or a late withdrawal for all courses. Both grade change situation procedures and the program dismissal procedure are discussed below.

### Course Grade Appeal

This set of policies applies when a student wants to appeal a final grade that has been recorded by the Registrar on the student's academic record. Appeal panels are assembled from the faculty under the authority of and by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs or designate.

Throughout this process, the Ombudsman Office (Penny (269) 387-0718) is available to students and instructors for assistance on procedures.

The accepted bases of course grade appeals are:

- a) Grades were calculated in a manner inconsistent with University policy, the syllabus, or changes to the syllabus.
- b) The grade(s) was/were erroneously calculated.
- c) Grading/performance standards were arbitrarily or unequally applied.
- d) The instructor failed to assign or remove an Incomplete or to initiate a grade change as agreed upon with the student.

A grade appeal cannot be made in response to a grade penalty assessed as a result of an official finding of responsibility for academic integrity violations. Such a finding will have been made through the procedures provided in the academic integrity policy.

In situations involving a – d above, there are three steps to the appeal process.

1. Informal meeting with the instructor: A student is encouraged to begin the appeal process by meeting with the instructor who assigned the grade. Such meetings often help students to understand the grading practices of instructors and often lead to resolution of differences over grades.

2. Written appeal and conference with the academic unit chair/director: A student must submit a letter requesting an appeal to the academic unit chair/director. This letter must be received by the academic unit chair/director within sixty business days of the last day of the semester or session in which the grade was recorded on a student's record. The

Ombudsman or designate may grant an extension should a genuine hardship arise (e., illness, death in the immediate family).

The letter must identify the basis of the appeal and must state in detail why the student believes that the grade should be changed.

While a chair/director may not change any grade without permission of the instructor, the chair/director can serve as an intermediary to help the student either halt the appeal process (if there seems no legitimate basis) or proceed to the next step of the process (step 3 below or action outside the GAPDAC process).

Following a conference with the student, the chair/director must respond in writing to the student with a copy to both the instructor and GAPDAC coordinator within five business days. In this letter, the chair/director should confirm the meeting with the student, recap their discussion, and state whether the student has an appeal which meets the established criteria (a, b, c, or d above). The chair/director cannot change the student's grade without the instructor's agreement.

Note: Grade appeals or other complaints based on charges of discrimination or sexual harassment should be taken to the Office of Institutional Equity or other office, pursuant to other University policies and procedures.

3. Appeal to committee: After the chair/director has completed the response to the student's appeal, and regardless of the outcome of step 2, the student may appeal to the Grade and Program Dismissal Appeal Committee (GAPDAC). This appeal must be initiated within twenty business days of the completion of step #2. If the student has requested a meeting with the academic unit chair/director and has not been granted such a meeting within fifteen business days of the student's request, the student may then initiate an appeal to GAPDAC.

The student will initiate an appeal through the Ombudsman Office. The Ombudsman Office or designate will schedule a meeting of GAPDAC using procedures determined by the Professional Concerns Committee of the Faculty Senate. The GAPDAC will consist of at least three members drawn from a panel of faculty established for this purpose. In a grade appeal, both the student(s) and the instructor should provide a written statement describing the situation under consideration. An appearance to provide additional information at the appeal by either the instructor or the student(s) may be requested by the appeals committee.

Students making an appeal must complete the appeals form as well as the student information form. The student will need to contact the Instructor to have him/her complete the instructor information form.

GAPDAC can effectuate a grade change by majority vote. The decision of the hearing panel is final and not subject to appeal.

Instructor unavailable to assign grade. Circumstances may arise that prevent an instructor from assigning a grade in a timely manner. In such instances, the academic unit chair/director will make reasonable efforts to contact and ask the instructor to supply a grade. If these efforts are unsuccessful, the instructor's academic chair/director will appoint another qualified faculty member to assign the grade.

### **Program Dismissal Appeals**

This section applies when a student wants to appeal a decision to dismiss the student from an academic program for reasons other than charges of violations of academic integrity policies.

Appeal panels are assembled and scheduled using procedures determined by the Professional Concerns Committee of the Faculty Senate, and coordinated through the Ombudsman Office or designate. Throughout this process, the Ombudsman Office (Penny (269) 387-0718) is available to students and instructors for assistance on procedures and clarification of the rights of all parties.

The accepted bases of course program dismissal appeals are:

- a) The program dismissal decision was made in a manner inconsistent with University policy or the program policy.
- b) The program dismissal procedures were not followed.
- c) Evaluation/performance standards were arbitrarily or unequally applied.

A program dismissal appeal cannot be made in response to an academic integrity or conduct dismissal from the University. The student's status, as dismissed from the program, will remain unaltered until a successful appeal is completed.

Note: A program dismissal appeal based on charges of discrimination or sexual harassment should be taken to the Office of Institutional Equity or other office, pursuant to other University policies and procedures.

For program dismissal appeals that meet the criteria listed above, the process consists of two steps, discussion with program chair/director and appeal to the GAPDAC committee.

Discussion with program chair/director: A student must submit a letter requesting an appeal to the academic unit chair/director. This letter must be received by the academic unit chair/director within sixty days of the date of dismissal. The Ombudsman Office or designate may grant an extension should a genuine hardship arise. The letter must explain the basis of the appeal and must state in detail why the student believes s/he should be reinstated in the program.

Whether a chair/director can reinstate a student into a program depends on the policies and practices of the respective academic unit. If the chair/director can make such a decision and does so, the process ends here. If the chair/director denies the student's request, the student may appeal to the GAPDAC.

Appeal to committee: The student may appeal to a Grade and Program Dismissal Appeals Committee (GAPDAC). This appeal must be initiated within twenty business days of the appeal denial by the chair/director. The student will initiate an appeal through the Ombudsman Office or designate will schedule a meeting of GAPDAC using procedures approved by the Professional Concerns Committee of the Faculty Senate. The GAPDAC committee will consist of three members drawn from a panel of faculty established for this purpose. In a program dismissal, the student appellant should attend the meeting of the appeal panel and must provide a written statement describing the grounds for appeal. A University representative from the program must attend the meeting and must provide a written statement describing the grounds for and circumstances of the dismissal.

Students making an appeal must complete the appeals form as well as the student information form. The student will contact the Instructor to have him/her complete the instructor information form.

GAPDAC may reverse or sustain a program dismissal by a majority vote. The decision of the hearing panel is final and not subject to appeal.