Department of Political Science
Guidelines for Grade Appeals

Scope of Review

The Grade Appeals Committee (GAC) will review student grade appeals that fall into its scope of competence. To be considered, grade appeals must be based on specific concerns about the grading process and not on differences in judgment or opinion concerning academic performance. A grade appeal must present documented evidence that one or more of the following occurred:

1. The grading decision was made on some basis other than academic performance and other than as a penalty for academic misconduct.

2. The grading decision was based upon standards unreasonably different from those which were applied to other students in the same course and section.

3. The grading decision was based on an unreasonable departure from previously articulated standards.

Process

Once the Chair of the GAC receives a formal grade appeal, s/he will distribute it to the GAC for review. The GAC will determine whether the appeal fits within the scope of reviewable appeals. If it does not, the appeal will not go forward and the Chair will communicate that decision to the student and the Department Chairperson. If the appeal falls within the scope of the GAC, the Chair will email both the student and the instructor (cc to the Chairperson).

Students

The Chair of the GAC sends an email to the student with a cc to the Chairperson requesting the following:

1. Copies of graded papers and exams returned by the instructor, if such have not been submitted with the actual appeal.

2. All email correspondence between student and instructor.

3. Any additional substantiating evidence relating to other factors involved in the appeal.

Instructors

The Chair of the GAC also emails the instructor with a cc to the Chairperson requesting the following:

1. Any unreturned graded papers, midterms, final exams still in the professor’s possession

2. A breakdown/explanation of the student’s grades, grading percentage allocation, and so on

3. A copy of the grade book and attendance records pertinent to the case

4. Any substantiating emails between student and instructor
5. A brief write-up of the instructor’s position on the appeal

6. A copy of the course syllabus

Depending on the issues raised in the grade appeal, the GAC may ask the student and/or the instructor to submit only those from the above-listed documents that it deems pertinent to the case.

Once the Chair of the GAC receives the documents from both the student and the instructor, s/he distributes them to the GAC for review. There will be at least one day per semester, which will be set at the beginning of the semester, when the GAC will convene to hear all grade appeals. Additional or alternative dates can be added as needed.

After the date of this meeting is established, the Chair will write to the student informing her/him of the date of the hearing and laying out the process for the student so that s/he knows what to expect and feels comfortable presenting her/his case. Students do not have to attend, but they will forfeit additional opportunities for a hearing.

The Chair will share all substantiating documents with each member of the GAC either electronically, or as a paper packet at least one week before the GAC is set to meet. All GAC members will examine both the documents submitted by the student and those submitted by the instructor. They must come to the meeting well informed about the case in question.

On the day of the hearing, the members of the GAC listen to the student and then ask questions to clarify matters. Students are given 5-10 minutes to present their case and to explain the reason for their appeal.

After the student leaves the hearing, the GAC deliberates on the decision. If the GAC feels it is necessary, the instructor will have the opportunity to clarify or respond to the arguments presented by the student during the hearing.

Once the GAC reaches a decision, the Chair of the GAC informs the student and the instructor of the outcome of the hearing.

The Chair of the GAC then writes to the student with a cc to the Chairperson to inform both of the GAC’s decision. The Chair then also writes to the instructor with a cc to the Chairperson recommending either that s/he uphold or change the grade to what the GAC deemed fair. The instructor then has fourteen (14) calendar days from the receipt of the decision to render her/his decision in the case.

The GAC will meet in the fall semester to review appeals of spring semester and summer session grades, and it will meet in the spring semester to review appeals of fall semester and winter session grades.