SUBJECT: Grade Appeal

DATE: June 2018

PURPOSE: To provide a detailed explanation of the process used to complete a student grade appeal. Related OP: 34.03; COHS Faculty Handbook

REVIEW: The policy will be reviewed when changes are made to the process or related OPs.

PROCEDURE

A student who thinks that his/her grade in a class is incorrect has access to a process in order to appeal that grade (OP 34.03). The College of Human Sciences follows the procedures as provided in the University Operating Policy.

General background information
- Grade appeals are handled by the Associate Dean for Students or designee
- A grade may be formally appealed only when there is demonstrable evidence that prejudicial, arbitrary, or capricious action has influence the grade
- Only final grades may be appealed (not grades on an individual assignment)
- Only letter grades may be appealed (not “plus” or “minus”)
- The burden of proof rests with the student
- Appeals in the College of Human Sciences deal only with the courses offered by the College
- For graduate students, the final disposition of the appeal will be forwarded to the dean of the Graduate School
- Issues of academic honesty are not handled through the grade appeal process but instead through the Office of Student Life (Academic Integrity)

If a student feels the assigned grade in a class is incorrect, he/she should discuss the grade with the course instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of that discussion, he/she should contact the department chairperson to seek resolution. The department chairperson can take whatever action is deemed necessary to resolve the issue, and every effort should be made to resolve the issue at this level. If the student is still not satisfied, then a formal grade appeal can be filed.

The formal grade appeal is filed with the Associate Dean for Students or as a backup with the Associate Dean for Faculty and Academics. The appeal is filed using the Texas Tech University Grade Appeal Form (OP 34.03 Attachment) and must be filed within 45 calendar days of the next long semester after the term in which the grade was received (start date of the semester is the first day of classes). The appeal must include supporting material that explains the circumstance leading to the appeal and clearly stating how the instructor behaved in a prejudicial, arbitrary, or capricious manner.

When the appeal is filed and when the Associate Dean for Students is satisfied that the student has made good-faith efforts to solve the problem with the faculty member and then the department chair, he/she will initiate the grade appeal process. The Associate Dean will send an electronic copy of the appeal to the student, the instructor, and the department chair. Paper copies can be provided if electronic delivery is not possible. The instructor
should be asked to provide a response regarding the circumstances of the grade assignment and any issues raised in the student’s appeal documents. The department chair can provide supplemental information regarding interaction with the student and/or faculty member as appropriate. Information received from the instructor and department chair will be sent to the student, the instructor, and the department chair. As a best practice, all communication (other than with the committee) should be copied to all three interested parties.

Two students are needed for the Grade Appeal Committee. The student members should be of the same classification as the appealing student (graduate vs undergraduate) and should be selected from departments different from that of the appealing student and the faculty member involved. Once the appeal has been filed, the Associate Dean will solicit nominees from department chairs for student members. The Associate Dean will then contact student nominees to see who is available and willing to serve and then select the members. Once the student members have been identified, the Grade Appeal Committee can be convened. If a chairperson has not been appointed, one will be selected from among the faculty representatives, typically by the Associate Dean. An alternate committee member may be appointed if the appeal involves a faculty member on the committee. It is often difficult for faculty members to serve in the appeal process involving a faculty member in their own department. However, it is important that all departments be represented, so a faculty member from each department must agree to serve.

The Associate Dean for Students will convene the Grade Appeal Committee to provide the appeal information, explain the process, and schedule hearings. The committee members can request additional information as they deem appropriate before and after the hearing. A staff member in the Dean’s Office will be available to support the committee by scheduling meetings, making meeting arrangements, providing copies, etc.

Committee members will examine the facts of the appeal, holding further meetings as they deem necessary. Due process to all parties to the dispute will be followed. It is not necessary for the parties to appear unless requested by the committee, but parties have the right to appear if they wish. Parties should not be present at the meeting at the same time. They should be scheduled in such a way that the likelihood of contact outside the meeting is minimized. The Associate Dean for Students will serve as an ex officio, non-voting member of the committee. The associate dean may attend hearings, but will not be present during deliberations.

Within two weeks of the conclusion of their hearings, deliberation, or receipt of requested additional information, the committee will provide to the Associate Dean a written recommendation as to whether the grade should be changed, and if so, to what other grade. They may also make other recommendations deemed advisable in settling each specific appeal. Committee members who voted in favor of the decision must sign the recommendation; dissenting members may sign if they wish. The Associate Dean will provide the committee recommendation to the Dean.

The final decision on a grade appeal is the responsibility of the dean of the college administering the course. Once that decision is made, the results should be reported electronically or in writing (typically by the Associate Dean) to the student, the instructor, the department chairperson, and to the grade appeal committee members. If the grade is to be changed, the instructor will be instructed to file a grade change form.
A copy of the committee recommendation and the dean’s decision will be placed in the student’s academic file. A copy of all paperwork and communication related to the appeal should be retained by the Associate Dean for three years as specified by the State of Texas Records Retention Schedule.

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED

OP 34.03 Student Grade Appeal

OP 34.03 Student Grade Appeal attachment

Grade Appeal Committee