

January 15, 2009

Handbook Committee Recommendations to the Faculty Senate

- 1) Change Handbook section 2.3.3, which states that “The adjunct faculty shall elect a voting representative. . . for a two-year term” to “The adjunct faculty shall elect a voting representative. . . for a one-year term.” This will be in accordance with 2.3.4 which correctly states that the term is one year.
- 2) Change Handbook section (2.3.5 Section 1) from “ the immediate past president shall sit as a voting member of the council until the next president no longer president” to “the immediate past president shall sit as a voting member of the Senate for a period of two years” in order to avoid ambiguity should the “next president” not serve his or her full term.
- 3) The Faculty Research Committee has advised the Handbook Committee that they are moving to electronic submission of proposal applications. Thus, for consistency, two changes need to be made in the faculty handbook. In chapter 17 page 9 item g should be changed to read: “Submit one original copy and one electronic copy as an email attachment, both with form attached.” Likewise, on chapter 17, page 10, item f should now read: “Submit one original copy and one electronic copy as an email attachment, both with form attached.”
- 4) Include in an appendix to the Faculty Handbook, a standard grade appeals form drafted by the Grade Appeals Committee (see attached). No such form exists at the current time.
- 5) Additionally, the Handbook Committee supports the Grade Appeals Committee’s suggested revision to the grade appeals procedure articulated in the Handbook (again, see attached). This revision is largely a matter of editing and clarifying procedures already in practice and does not call for any fundamental changes in the grade appeal process.

Recommended Revision to the Grade Appeals Procedure

5.4.1. Grade Appeals Procedure (Undergraduate)²

Preamble: It is the prerogative and responsibility of members of the faculty to determine the final grade for each student according to criteria clearly defined and explained in the syllabus.

Whenever students feel that their rights and interests have been seriously jeopardized by way of unfair, arbitrary or malicious exercise of faculty grading prerogatives, and desire to appeal the final grade, the following appeal procedures shall be followed.

- 1. Conversation with the Instructor.** The student who desires to appeal must seek an appointment with the faculty member who awarded the grade within five working days ~~receiving notification~~ **of the day when the final course grades were posted**. The purpose of this appointment is to request clarification of the basis for the evaluation. If the student is unable to locate the faculty member personally, the request may be presented to the head of the department in which the course is offered. During these conversations, the student shall have access to all of ~~the~~ **his or her** exams and papers **that have not previously been** returned to the student for the period covered by the grade. Provision of material returned to the student is the responsibility of the student. A faculty member who chooses not to return papers to the student should keep graded exams and papers for a minimum of the next regular semester following the completion of a term (see Keeping Papers in Section 5.3.1.). If the complaint is not resolved by way of such discussions and the student is still convinced that the grade is arbitrary or unjust, a formal appeal may be made to the Faculty Grade Appeals Committee.
- 2. Appeal to the Faculty Grade Appeals Committee.** Within five working days of the conversation with the faculty member who awarded the grade **(or the department head, if necessary, as described above)**, the student desiring to proceed with a formal appeal shall present in writing the reasons on which the appeal is based, together with any and all supporting documents. Such appeal shall be addressed to the Faculty Grade Appeals Committee and be personally delivered to the head of the department in which the course in question is offered. **Check the UTC web site or departmental office for the required form.**

a. Procedure

Upon receipt of a formal appeal, the head of the department **(or the dean, if the department head is the faculty member whose grade is being appealed)** involved shall notify the faculty member who awarded the grade and shall immediately appoint two members of the department faculty to serve ~~on the~~ **as observers at the appeals hearing and as informational resources for the** Faculty Grade Appeals Committee. The head shall forward those names, and the written appeal, together with all relevant material and information concerning the case to the dean of the college or school. **The dean shall then meet with the student to counsel the student and discuss the appeals process. If the student wishes to continue with his or her appeal the dean, with the cooperation of the Committee chair, who** will call, as soon as possible, a meeting of the Faculty Grade Appeals Committee.

b. Composition

The Faculty Grade Appeals Committee shall consist of three (3) faculty members and two (2) alternate faculty members (who can be called on if one of the three regular members is unavailable or is in the same department as the appealing student) elected annually by the Faculty Senate. In addition, two (2) ~~non-voting~~ faculty members shall be selected at the time of an appeal by the head of the department (or dean of the appropriate college) in which the appealed course is offered to serve as observers at the appeals hearing and as informational resources for the Committee. These ~~faculty temporary members may participate in the discussion~~ are invited to answer questions asked them of the Committee, but otherwise are observers only, ~~but~~ and will be excused before deliberations begin. The student may also invite up to two observers, but they are to be observers only. ~~The chair shall be the~~ The dean of the academic unit involved shall convene the meeting but the Committee chair shall run the hearing. Should the dean be the course professor involved in the appeal, the Provost will serve in place of the dean as chair. ~~The chair~~ dean shall not vote on an appeal except in cases of a tie vote. A quorum for this committee will consist of three (3) members of the Grade Appeals Committee.

c. Responsibilities of the Committee, **Department Head and Dean.**

- 1) The responsibility of the Grade Appeals Committee is to hear undergraduate student appeals whenever students feel that their rights have been seriously jeopardized by way of unfair, arbitrary or malicious exercise of faculty grading prerogatives and desire to appeal the grade. The committee reviews grades after a student who is appealing has followed the current published procedures.
- 2) As soon as possible after the **complete appeal is received in the Dean's office** ~~committee is formed~~, the dean shall inquire of the student and the faculty member involved whether either desires a hearing before the committee. If no hearing is requested **within 5 business days**, the committee shall determine the appeal and issue its ruling on the basis of the record. If either party requests a hearing **within 5 business days**, such a hearing will be held within ten working days of the request, at which time both the student and the faculty member shall be afforded the opportunity to present further evidence. Within five working days after the hearing, the committee shall, on the basis of all the material before it, determine the appeal and issue its ruling as it deems appropriate, either upholding the grade or requesting the faculty member to change it accordingly. **As soon as possible after this ruling is made, the Dean (or Provost, if appropriate) shall notify the faculty member and the student about the Committee's ruling, by email and hard copy.** Either party shall have the right to appeal to the Chancellor of the University.

d. **Grade Appeals Committee Guidelines**

If a student appeals a grade to the Grade Appeals Committee, the following guidelines will be used in the appeal process:

- 1) The burden of proof in the appeal lies with the student. Instructors should maintain, however, documents related to the assignment of grades for a period of at least one semester to facilitate the investigation of improperly assigned grades. If requested, instructors shall make copies of all relevant documents available to the student, **following FERPA guidelines. If the student requests the hearing but fails to appear at the hearing without sufficient cause the grade appeal will be denied and cannot be refiled.**

- 2) Grade appeals may be warranted in the case of deviations from the syllabus. This constraint should not be interpreted to mean that instructors may not change grading criteria during the course of the semester, **as long as all students in the class are notified of these changes in a timely manner.** Events may necessitate such changes.
- 3) Grade appeals should never be based upon a student's individual needs or circumstances; students do not have the right to appeal a grade because of their health, anxiety, family circumstances or other such circumstances. Grades should only be based upon student performance.
- 4) Instructors have a right to set standards for a course consistent with department parameters including the number and types of exams, amount of outside work required, attendance policies, class discussion requirements, exam time limits or any other grading criteria. It is the responsibility of the instructor to clearly outline these standards in the syllabus. Students may not use the issue of an instructor's standards (e.g., "an instructor was too hard") as the basis for a grade appeal.
- 5) Students may not use the grade appeal procedure as a bargaining mechanism. Grade change recommendations will be based on already completed coursework.
- 6) Student claims of unjust assignment of grades based upon the perception that an instructor did not like or was biased against the student must still stand the burden of objective proof. If proof can be provided that the instructor was biased or disliked a student, then the possibility of arbitrary or capricious assignment of grades may result in a successful appeal.
- 7) The outcome of a grade appeal is a recommendation only. If the Grade Appeal Committee finds with the student, the instructor may request the committee to explain its decision in writing. If the instructor refuses to change the grade, a copy of the committee's rationale shall be provided to all ~~other~~ administrators ~~asked by the student to provide relief~~ **who are part of the appeals process.** The student may appeal to the Chancellor.

e. Appeal to the Chancellor.

Within five working days of the decision of the Faculty Grade Appeals Committee, the student or the faculty member may present, in writing, a request for review by the Chancellor of the University. In such event, the Chancellor shall immediately request the complete record of the case from the Faculty Grade Appeals Committee and shall make a decision on the basis of the record. The Chancellor has the ultimate authority on this campus to decide whether the grade will be changed and to effect such a change. In the event that a decision of the committee against the student is upheld by the Chancellor, that decision shall be final. If the Chancellor upholds a decision of the Faculty Grade Appeals Committee against the faculty member, the faculty member shall be requested to change the grade in accordance with the committee's ruling.

²It is recognized that the following time frames are maximal, and that in cases where a failing grade prevents a student from continuing in the course, the appeals procedure can be accelerated.

UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT CHATTANOOGA
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GRADE APPEAL REQUEST

I. Student Information. Read the policy on the reverse side and complete the following information. (Please print.)

Name: _____

Local Address : _____ Phone: (h)

_____ (w)

City State Zip

UTC E-mail Address: _____ (c)

Current admission classification: _____ Major: _____ Projected Graduation Date: _____

I am appealing a grade of _____ received in _____ from

_____ during

Letter Grade

Dept/Course Number/Section

Professor of Record

_____ that I believe is an () unfair grade, () arbitrary grade, or a () malicious grade.

Semester and Year

I have attached a written letter of appeal explaining the reason(s) on which the appeal is based and supporting documentation (including a copy of the course syllabus and grades received on coursework during the semester), and I authorize the release of my academic records to the Dean's Office of my College.

Student's Signature
Date

II. Request for Grade Appeal

We acknowledge that the first two steps of the appeal procedure (consultation with the instructor and department head/director) have been followed, and this complaint has not been resolved.

Student's Signature
Date

Instructor's Signature
Date

Department Head's Signature
Date

III. Recommendation of Grade Appeals Committee:

Recommendation made:

Chair of the Faculty Grade Appeals Committee
Date

Date

Dean of the College

Committee Members present:

Signature Date

Date

Signature

Signature
Date

Date

Signature

If the student and/or faculty member rejects the recommendation of the Grade Appeals Committee, the appeal documents will be forwarded to the UTC Chancellor.

Appeal received in Dean's Office: _____ by _____
Date/Time Staff Member's Initials

____ Student has talked with the Dean; will proceed with appeal _____ will not proceed with appeal

____ UTC Grade Appeals Committee members contacted

____ Department Head contacted; Observers
appointed/contacted _____

____ Professor of Record contacted _____ Student contacted

Scheduled date/time/location of appeal hearing

____ Documentation received from Professor of Record and distributed to Grade Appeals Committee,
professor of record, _____ student, observers

____ Student notified of Committee's decision by email and hard copy; Committee, professor of record,
observers, and Chancellor's Office notified