NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY
POLICY FOR GRADE APPEAL

The procedure outlined below applies to a situation where a student initiates a grade appeal request. This same policy is to be used when a student contests a faculty member’s allegation of academic dishonesty.

Only the faculty member who assigned the original grade has the authority to change that grade unless the grade is appealed and the appeal is successful. In the event the faculty member is no longer with the university, the authority to change the grade, including the authority to make up an incomplete, is delegated to the department chair or dean. (Faculty Handbook – Section 5.3.9) The Grade Appeal Policy below is based upon this section of the NAU Faculty Handbook.

A grade assigned by an instructor may be appealed only by following the procedures defined below. In every case, the burden of proof rests upon the student to show reason why the grade should be changed. A grade change should be granted only in instances where the instructor deviated substantially from the accepted and specified standards of proficiency of the University and/or academic department as established by the Faculty Handbook and/or College/Department Academic Policy Manual. Generally such deviations are evidenced by a departure from the course syllabus, alleged preferential treatment of another student, or classroom policies applied unevenly across students enrolled in the class. In all instances, the instructor(s) involved must be given full opportunity to present his/her position before an action is taken.

The student must initiate the appeal process within the next regular term following the term in which the course work was completed. For example, appeal of a course grade received for a fall or winter intersession term must be initiated during the following spring term; a spring or summer term grade must be initiated during the following fall term.

Group grade appeals are not permitted unless approved by the Provost or designee.

Definitions:
“Meeting” is defined by the presence of all parties to the grade appeal either physically in one location or via electronic means.
“Designated Administrator” refers to the individual in charge of carrying out the specific step of the process. Generally this will be an assistant/associate dean, department chair or director. Terminology varies among the academic units.
“Appellant” is the individual bringing the appeal to the College-level Committee or the ASC Sub-committee. In most cases this will be the student, but it could be a faculty member if the grade had been changed in Step 3 by the Designated Administrator or in step 4 by the College Committee.
“Respondent” is the individual who assigned the grade being challenged. If the appellant is a student, the respondent is the faculty member who assigned the grade or the Designated Administrator if the faculty member is no longer an employee of NAU. If the
appellant is a faculty member, the respondent is the designated administrator who changed the grade in Step 3 or the Chair of the College Committee from Step 3. “Statement of Issues” is a written record of the specific reasons the grade is being appealed if the appellant is a student. If the appellant at the College-level Committee hearing is a faculty member, the “Statement of Issues” is a document which refutes the reasons given by the Designated Administrator for changing the grade in Step 3. “Formal Meeting” is defined as the meeting which results from the written communication to the instructor requesting a meeting to discuss the assigned grade. (See Step 1 below) “Informal Meeting” is a meeting between a student and instructor where the student’s stated purpose is to ascertain the reasons for the assignment of his/her grade in the course. An “informal meeting” is not considered sufficient to initiate the grade appeal process.

**Procedures for the Grade Appeal**

**Step 1**
A written communication by the student to the instructor indicating a desire to review the grade is considered initiation of the appeal process. This written communication may be in the form of an email or a letter.

**Step 2:**
Following receipt of the written communication from the student, a student-instructor meeting must be held. The meeting may be in person or via the telephone, and must be conducted or scheduled within two weeks of the receipt of the written communication. The student may bring a silent observer to this meeting provided the instructor is notified no less than two working days prior to the meeting. If the initial student-instructor meeting does not produce satisfaction, the student has two weeks to notify, in writing, the designated administrator of the academic unit of the intent to proceed to Step 3.

If the faculty member who taught the course is no longer employed at NAU, the appeal is filed with the academic unit administrator. Upon receiving a written request from the student, the academic unit administrator will schedule a meeting with the student. The student must present to the academic unit administrator a written “Statement of Issues” at least one week prior to the meeting. The student may bring a silent observer to this meeting provided the designated administrator is notified no less than two working days prior to the meeting. If this meeting does not resolve the complaint, the student has two weeks to notify the Dean of the college of the intent to proceed to Step 4. This request must be in writing and must be accompanied by a “Statement of Issues.”

If the faculty member who taught the course is on sabbatical/leave or other kind of assignment, he/she has the option of participating or not participating in the grade appeal process. If the faculty member chooses to participate in the process, paragraph one of Step 2 is followed. If the faculty member chooses not to participate in the process, paragraph two of Step 2 is followed.

**Step 3:**
Upon receiving a written request from the student, the designated administrator will call a meeting of the student, instructor, and him/herself. This meeting may be conducted via telephone or ITV. The student must present to the designated administrator a “Statement of Issues” at least one week prior to the meeting. This statement must be shared with the instructor at least three working days prior to the above mentioned meeting. The student may bring a silent observer to the meeting provided the designated administrator is notified no less than two working days prior to the meeting. The faculty member must be present during the proceedings in Step 3 unless the faculty member is no longer employed at NAU, is on sabbatical/leave or other kind of assignment and chooses not to participate in the process.

Following the meeting, a letter, with receipt confirmation, shall be sent to the student and the faculty member documenting the meeting and confirming the decision that was made. This letter constitutes the official minutes of the meeting and shall include a copy of the student’s “Statement of Issues.” The designated administrator may affirm or change the grade based upon the evidence presented.

If the instructor of the course is a department chair or the administrator of the academic unit, Step 3 of the process is conducted by a Dean-designated administrator within the College.

If this meeting does not resolve the appeal, the student or instructor has 10 working days following receipt of the letter to notify the Dean of the college of the intent to proceed to Step 4. This request must be in writing and must be accompanied by a “Statement of Issues.”

**Step 4:**
Upon receiving a request from the appellant, the college Dean or designee will appoint and convene an ad hoc committee composed of the persons listed below to hear the appeal. The appellant and/or the respondent may present additional written statements supporting his/her position up to one week prior to the Committee meeting. Requests for information by either the student or faculty member must be made to the Committee chair at least 15 working days prior to the meeting. If the Committee chair considers a request to be a potential violation of confidentiality, he/she should contact the Associate Provost for Academic Administration (APAA) for final resolution of the request. No material may be presented less than five working days prior to the meeting of the ad hoc committee. No new material may be presented at the Committee meeting. Material requests by the Committee Chair to the appellant and/or respondent must be honored within 10 working days.

All materials submitted by the appellant and respondent must be given to the individual designated as the Chair of the ad hoc committee. Committee members, appellant and respondent must receive all materials no later than two working days prior to the meeting.
Step 4 of the grade appeal process will be conducted only during the fall and spring academic terms.

The minutes of the Student/Faculty/Designated Administrator meeting will be forwarded to the Chair of the ad hoc committee. During the Committee meeting, the appellant and respondent will be given full opportunity to present their positions.

The Dean's ad hoc committee shall consist of:

a. Dean of the college, or designee, who chairs the committee. This individual must be different from the individuals who served as the designated administrators in steps 2 and 3;

b. Two faculty members from the department in which the course being appealed is offered. If two faculty members from the department cannot be found, faculty from other academic units in the college/school may be appointed;

c. Two faculty members from an academic unit outside the department in which the course being appealed is offered. These faculty members may come from the same college/school as the department in which the course is being appealed or they may come from a different college/school;

d. The ASNAU senator, or designee, who is the representative of that college/school. If this individual is not available, the Chair of this Committee may appoint another student to fulfill this role.

e. A representative of the Office of the Provost, in an advisory capacity;

Process to be followed by the ad hoc Committee:
It is required that all parties to the grade appeal be present in person or via electronic means during the fact finding phase of the meeting. The appellant may bring a silent observer to this Committee hearing provided the chair of the committee is notified no less than two working days prior to the meeting.

Format for College-level Grade Appeal Hearing:
Introduction of Committee members
Charge to Committee by Chair
Process Statement by Provost Office Representative
Presentation of Information by Appellant
Presentation of Information by Respondent
Questions from Committee Members
Response to Respondent presentation by Appellant
Response to Appellant presentation by Respondent
Questions from Committee Members
Meeting Ending Statement by Chair
Deliberations and Vote

The fact finding phase of the meeting should generally last between 30 and 45 minutes.
The chair shall vote only in the event of a tie. Minutes of the meeting shall be taken by someone other than the person chairing the meeting and shall be prepared in summary form. These minutes are kept in the office of the Dean; a copy is forwarded to the representative from the Provost’s Office. The appellant and respondent will be sent copies of the minutes and may propose corrections to the minutes before they are released to any party outside of the Committee.

It is recommended that the fact-finding portion of the meeting in which the appellant and respondent present their information be taped. No taping of the Committee’s deliberations is allowed. The tape will be retained in the Office of the Dean and disposed of according to Arizona Statutes on Records Retention. Any member of the committee or party present at the committee meeting (defined as a participant) is authorized to have access to the tape. Any requests from non-participants in the meeting will be referred to university legal counsel for resolution. A letter will be sent to the appellant and respondent indicating the decision of the committee, and the rationale behind this decision.

Step 5:
Should either the student or the instructor not be satisfied with the decision of the College ad-hoc committee, the matter may be appealed in writing to the Office of the Provost. The only grounds for appeal to the Provost’s Office are violations of due process at any stage of the grade appeal.

The appeal request will be forwarded via the Associate Provost for Academic Administration to the Chair of the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) who shall be responsible for calling a meeting of a subcommittee of the ASC composed of at least six individuals. Both the appellant and respondent must be notified in writing of the hearing at this level and the procedures to be followed.

At a meeting specifically scheduled to consider only the grade appeal, the ASC sub-committee will conduct a review of the process of the appeal at all levels based on the particular circumstances of the case, the rules of the University, the rulings of the Arizona Board of Regents, and the laws of the State of Arizona. The review shall be focused solely on the process carried out by the various individuals involved in the various stages of the grade appeal. The ASC sub-committee may invite the appellant and other relevant individuals to the hearing if it decides the individual’s presence is required to provide the information necessary for the sub-committee to make an informed decision.

Format for ASC Sub-committee Grade Appeal Hearing
When no outside parties are present

Charge to Committee by Chair of Sub-committee
Review of Appeal Statement by Appellant
Review of College Committee Minutes
Committee Discussion, Deliberations and Vote
Format for ASC Sub-committee Grade Appeal Hearing
When One or more Invited Individuals are Present

Charge to Committee by Chair of Sub-committee
Review of Appeal Statement by Appellant
Review of College Committee Minutes
Presentation of Information by Appellant
Presentation of Information by Respondent
Questions from Committee Members
Response to Respondent presentation by Appellant
Response to Appellant presentation by Respondent
Questions from Committee Members
Committee Discussion, Deliberations and Vote

The decision reached by the ASC Sub-committee will be communicated to the Appellant, the Respondent and the Dean of the College.

The decisions reached by the ASC Sub-committee shall become a matter of University record in the Office of the Provost. This decision shall be final and end any further campus involvement. There is no appeal beyond this level.

Approved:
Academic Standards Committee – March 4, 2005
Dr. LizGrobsmith, Provost – March 9, 2005