

## Approved AS Committee 3/7 2019

### Grade Appeals

Great Basin College respects an instructor's qualifications and upholds the rights of academic freedom, including the rights of an instructor to determine the academic standards of any course. This includes all facets of a course: scope, content (i.e., topics, lectures, readings), learning objectives, measurements, requirements, grading standards, methodologies used, and other factors related to completion of the course. Instructors are responsible for informing students of grading criteria for an entire course at the beginning of the semester. Criteria for specific assignments may be established at the beginning of a course or at the time an assignment is provided to students. Instructors have the right to modify assignment grading criteria and/or course grading if necessary. It is recognized, as part of academic freedom and practice in higher education that instructors have varied standards and methods for grading that may relate to academic or technical disciplines, individual teaching styles, or other factors.

Students with legitimate concerns have the right to appeal a grade according to the procedures described below and within 30 days after the final grade is issued.

It is expected that all communication in an appeal be respectful, civil and professional. Failure to do so may result in a dismissal of the appeal.

### Purpose

A grade appeal considers the final grade for a course. A grade appeal relates to charges of unfair actions, grading errors, errors in calculation, and the like. A student cannot challenge an instructor's grading standard or course expectations. If a grade appeal reaches the final arbitration process it may be necessary to review all course-work assigned to arrive at a fair conclusion.

A grade appeal considers whether the final grade was fair and appropriate.

It is the student's responsibility to demonstrate the final grade is inappropriate. This requires very clear evidentiary details from the student regarding the grade. This written explanation needs be very clear and civil, and shall relate to the students experience with an instructor. It is inappropriate for a student to use the alleged experiences or the grades of other class members in a grade appeal.

### Procedure

A grade appeal must be made within 30 calendar days of the end of the semester, including final's week. Failure to initiate a grade appeal within this time frame results in forfeiture of the right to challenge a grade.

*While the requirement to challenge a grade must be completed within the 30-day period, students need to be aware that instructors may not be available during summer months or winter break. This can delay the process until faculty return the semester following a long break. In the event an instructor will not be available during these times, the student will be notified.*

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### **Step 1: Student Contacts Instructor**

The student must contact the instructor within 30 days providing a detailed explanation of the issue. If the instructor is unavailable (i.e., winter or summer breaks), the student will contact the department chair in which the instructor teaches to initiate the grade appeal process. While notification may be made, the process can be delayed due to schedules. The student will be notified of the outcome.

NOTE: If a course is taught by a part-time instructor, a department chair or other designee may serve in the capacity of the instructor.

The first step for the student is to complete the Grade Appeal Form. In this form, the student shall describe in detail the nature of the grade appeal. The student is required to provide the evidence to support the appeal. This section needs to be detailed and will serve as the basis for the grade appeal if no resolution is achieved at Step 1.

NOTE: narrative or personal encounters that are considered hostile, threatening, or otherwise inappropriate will be reviewed by the appropriate administrator. In this case, the student will be requested to re-write the complaint in a courteous fashion. A re-write of the grade appeal must be provided within the original 30-day time frame from the end of the semester. Failure to re-write accordingly results in forfeiture of the right to challenge a grade.

Once available, the instructor has 15 calendar days to evaluate and respond to the student with a recommended resolution (which can involve the rejection of the appeal) or to advance to the formal appeal process. The student has 10 calendar days to accept or reject the recommendation. If a student does not respond within 10 calendar days, the right to challenge a grade is forfeited.

If a resolution to the appeal is reached by the student and the instructor, the instructor shall provide written notification of the resolution to the student and the department chair/program lead. The student and faculty member will sign the notification signifying agreement with the conclusion.

### **Step 2. Consultation with Department/Program**

If the matter is not resolved informally, a student shall begin the formal appeal process beginning at Step 2. As is the case with Step 1, this process may be delayed to accommodate faculty summer/winter breaks.

1. The instructor will forward the student grade appeal form to the department chair where the course is taught to initiate Step 2. This step begins when the instructor notifies the department chair of an appropriate timeline.

Depending on the course, the department chair will determine whether a Bachelor program supervisor or the department chair is the appropriate mediator for Step 2. In the event the course is taught by the department chair, the Faculty Senate Chair will consult with the department or program supervisor to select a suitable mediator. The designated mediator will be the Appeal Lead (AL) for the remainder of the appeal process.

2. The instructor shall prepare a written response to the grade appeal that shall be forwarded to the AL to accompany the student grade appeal form. The instructor may include supporting documents as

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needed and may consult other faculty about the matter. The instructor has 15 days to submit the narrative and any supporting documents.

The AL may seek more information from both parties.

3. Within 15 days of receipt of the faculty response, the AL will arrange for a mediation meeting involving the student, instructor and the AL. This meeting can be done in person, via telephone, Skype, or email depending on the circumstances.

4. The AL must make a decision within 5 days of the mediation meeting. The AL shall prepare a written explanation of the decision that is sent to both the student and faculty member.

If a resolution is agreed upon, notification of that decision will be forwarded to the appropriate dean and the grade appeal is closed.

In the event either party is not satisfied with the resolution, either party may initiate Step 3 by informing the AL of that decision. The AL then forwards all material to the Faculty Senate Chair who will then forward the appeal packet to the chair of Academic Standards, a standing faculty senate committee.

### Step 3. Academic Standards Committee Hearing

NOTE: The Academic Standards Committee (ASC) cannot convene during the summer or winter break. Required hearings will be delayed until the following semester.

The Academic Standards Committee is a formal body that arbitrates the grade appeal process and does so in an ethical manner. Both the student as well as the faculty member shall receive a fair and balanced hearing from the committee. The committee represents a broad spectrum of faculty and staff who collectively serve to fairly consider student and instructor perspectives for grade appeals. Step 3 involves a formal hearing in which the committee reviews materials presented from both sides. The student or faculty member may attend the hearing, but their presence is not required.

In order to hold a hearing, at least five Academic Standards Committee members must be present, and at least three of these must be teaching faculty.

### Suggested changes:

In order to hold a hearing, a five-person subcommittee will be formed. The subcommittee shall comprise four Academic Standards Committee members. Two members shall be academic faculty and two shall be administrative faculty. As well, a dean who does not supervise the division of the instructor in the grade appeal shall serve as a member of the hearing. All members of the hearing committee are equal voting members. The composition of the hearing subcommittee is intended to provide fairness in evaluating the issue for both the student and faculty member.

1. Within 15 days of notification from the Faculty Senate Chair, the ASC will arrange for a hearing that can be attended by either the student or instructor. The AL may be present if requested by the committee, the faculty member, or the student. In the event a student or instructor is not in close proximity of a GBC campus and cannot appear in person, he or she will be available for a hearing via electronic means or telephone.

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2. The ASC will make a recommendation for resolution within 15 days of the hearing. This report will be made available to the student, instructor, the AL, and the appropriate dean. In general, a decision made by the Academic Standards Committee is final and the grade appeal process closes.

### Step 4.

In the event a student or faculty member disagrees with the decision of the ASC, the challenging party will provide a detailed explanation in writing to both the VPAA and the ACS within 5 days of the Step 3 decision. The ASC will provide to the VPAA documents related to the appeal upon receipt of the challenge.

The VPAA will determine if he or she will hear further arguments and will notify the ASC and the challenging party with 5 days of receipt of the request. The VPAA can decide to maintain the ASC decision or overturn that decision and will provide a written explanation of the decision to the challenging party and the ASC.