

## **English Department Grade Grievance Policy Updated January 2016**

The Department of English Language and Literature expects instructors to set fair and consistent grading procedures. Students may inquire about a grade and initiate a grade grievance if they have grounds to believe that an instructor has deviated from previously stated grading standards or applied such standards inconsistently.

Two principles should be clearly understood as part of the context of any grade grievance:

A grade given by a faculty member may be changed only by that faculty member (Faculty Code B 5.01). A grade given in a class taught by a teaching assistant may be changed only by the faculty supervisor of the course.

While the Department wishes to see demonstrably unfair grades rectified, it will not automatically invoke the full procedure described below for every grievance. For example, a grievance based on the argument that one instructor's grading standards are stricter than those of others will not be pursued.

### **I. Consultation with Instructor**

The student should first confer with his/her instructor (and with the course supervisor, if there is one) to make sure that both are aware of all the pertinent facts and to identify the issues that are in dispute. This initial inquiry should take place within the first fifteen\* University business days of the first full term following the term in which the disputed grade was issued.

### **II. Formal Complaints to Grade Grievance Officer and Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS)**

If the first step does not lead to a resolution, the student should then write a letter of complaint and append to it all the written work for the course. The letter of complaint should include: 1. specific evidence that the grade was given in error or was arbitrarily determined, 2. a summary of the student's initial consultation with the course instructor, and 3. a summary of aspects of the case that remain in dispute. If the grievance pertains to English 124 or English 125, these materials should be submitted to the EDWP Director, who serves as grade grievance officer. For all other courses, the materials should be submitted to the English Department grade grievance officer. Grievances should be filed by end of the fifth\* week of classes in the first full term following the term in which the disputed grade was issued.

The grade grievance officer will forward the student's letter to the instructor and invite the instructor to explain in writing how the final grade was determined and respond to the specific claims made by the student. Any such communication will be made available to the student.

If the grievance cannot be resolved in conversations between the instructor, the student, and the grade grievance officer, the case goes forward to the Director of Undergraduate Studies (DUS) in the English department. All pertinent written documents will be forwarded to the DUS, and the DUS will also meet separately with the officer, the instructor, and the student to obtain their accounts of the case. The DUS will determine whether sufficient evidence exists to convene the Department's Grade Grievance Committee to review the case. If the DUS determines that there is insufficient evidence for the grade grievance, the matter is considered closed, and the original grade stands.

### **III. Review of the case by the Grade Grievance Committee**

Once it has been determined that a Departmental Grade Grievance Committee will review the case, the committee will be empaneled and a date set on which the committee will meet. Committee members will be provided with copies of the student's complaint and the instructor's reply; the student and the instructor may also submit a written response to these materials in advance of the meeting.

After the meeting at which they review the case, the Grade Grievance Committee will have ten\* University business days to determine its recommendation and submit a written report to the DUS. If the Grade Grievance Committee decides that a grade change is not warranted, the DUS will convey this in writing to the student and the instructor. The original grade will stand and the matter is considered closed. If the committee recommends a grade change, the DUS will communicate that decision directly to the instructor. The instructor will then be asked to respond in writing within five\* University business days to the DUS indicating whether or not he/she will abide by the Grade Grievance Committee's recommendation. If the instructor agrees to a grade change, the DUS will inform the student in writing of the instructor's decision, and the student's final course grade will be changed. The matter is considered closed.

If an instructor does not accept the Grade Grievance Committee's recommendation to change the final grade, the original grade will stand. By College policy, a final course grade rests solely with the instructor and, as such, a course grade cannot be changed without the instructor's consent. When this occurs, the DUS will provide to the student written notification of the committee's recommendation and the instructor's decision. The matter is considered closed; there is no appeal beyond the Department.

If a grade change is permitted, a Supplemental Grade Report must be submitted by the instructor so the student can have the grade reported on his/her academic record.

For further information please contact the Undergraduate Administrator at 734-764-6330

\*All time frames are based on faculty availability and are subject to change without warning. Students should consult with the department for specific timing.