Important Information and Tips for Grade Appeals

A. **Can I appeal a test grade or the grade on a specific paper?** No, you can only appeal a final course or seminar grade. However, an assignment/test grade can certainly effect the overall grade; if it does, this may be part of the appeal of the final course grade once it is posted. Students should contact the instructor with questions about assignment/test grades immediately.

B. **If you are appealing a grade in two or more classes**, you must submit a separate appeal for each final class grade.

C. **When does the timeframe for appeals begin?** The timeframe begins the day the Registrar posts the student's final grade. The student has five (5) school days to request the instructor to reconsider the grade. A "school day" is any weekday (not Sat. or Sun.) that classes are scheduled, including the summer term(s). While face-to-face communication is encouraged, the grade appeal policy requires that the requests to the instructor and department chair must be in writing (email preferred) and include a reason for reconsideration.

D. **Please include all written correspondence with the instructor and unit head (**e.g., department chair) regarding the grade appeal. Emails are preferred as the written exchanges should include the original date/time stamps. This is for the purpose of determining whether deadlines have been observed.

E. **How long should my rationale be?** Your rationale does not need to be long—but it does need to be concise. It is critical that you explain why the situation leading to your appeal meets one or more of the criteria for grade appeals. Keep in mind that the screening committee members who review your appeal likely are not familiar with the subject, the class environment, your instructor or you.

F. **Should I include documents?** Yes, if they are relevant to your appeal. In your rationale, you should explain why each document you include is important. Please number document pages for easy reference. If you want the committee to examine a specific section of a document, be sure to state that request, explain why doing so is important, and reference the page number and location on the page. Do not assume the committee members will interpret documents the same way you do without explanation. In other words, tell the committee what you want them to see and how to interpret/understand the materials you provide.

G. **When will the University Grade Appeal Committee (UGAC) hear my case?** It depends. Grade appeals are not automatically heard by the UGAC. Appeals first go through a screening committee comprised of the Vice President of the Student Government Association, the Associate Provost, and the Dean of Students. The screening committee is authorized to deny or approve further consideration by the UGAC.

H. **What are examples of the grade appeal criteria?** See below for examples. If you are unsure of whether your situation meets one or more criteria for a grade appeal, feel free to call and consult with the Office of the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at (765) 285-3716. Please see exact language of each criterion on previous page.

    1. **Grade calculation**: instructor records 57 points on Canvas for a paper that had been awarded 75 points and returned to back to you. *Usually these situations can be corrected without a grade appeal if the student contacts the instructor in a timely manner.*

2. **More…demanding standards**: student can provide evidence the instructor used a different, stricter rubric to grade his/her paper than the rubric used with other students' papers *and the resulting grade led to a change in the overall course grade*.

3. **Basis other than performance**: student expressed concern about instructor's teaching to department chair. Student is able to provide evidence that the course grade was in retaliation for the complaint.

4. **Substantial departure from…previously announced standards**: instructor provided grading criteria on the syllabus for the final paper which was worth a major portion of the grade. After the papers were graded and returned, the instructor informed the class that different criteria were used—this change led to a drop in the student's final course grade from a B to a C. *Note: if the instructor had announced the change before the paper was due in sufficient time for students to adjust their work, or if the change was minor and did not affect the overall grade, a grade appeal based on this criteria would likely not prevail.*

I. **What are the typical reasons that grade appeals are denied further consideration by the screening committee?** Grade appeals typically fail because (a) the student is appealing a grade for a reason not covered by the policy, (b) the student did not provide a sufficient case for the basis of the appeal, or (c) the student waited too long to appeal the grade. For example:

1. The student appeals an individual assignment (test, paper, etc.) grade before the course ends or the assignment grade had no effect on the final course grade.

2. The student appeals because he/she "worked hard and deserved a better grade." Working hard is important, but grades typically are not awarded for effort only.

3. The student doesn't agree with the faculty member's evaluation of a paper or a response on a test. Faculty members have the right to make subjective determinations about the submitted work based on their experience, education, and expertise.

4. The student argues that the teacher did not explain the material well, did not provide timely feedback, or was disorganized in the class. All of these may be true, but none of these reasons will warrant further consideration of the appeal.

5. The student claims that the instructor "doesn't like me" or "wasn't fair." Again, both may be true. However, the first does not necessarily mean the grade was based on the instructor/student relationship. "Being unfair" may be a reason for further consideration of an appeal, but only if the claim is backed by evidence.

6. The student believed he/she was awarded an improper grade for a spring 2015 class but had already gone home to Fort Wayne for the summer. When the student returned to Muncie for the fall 2015 semester, he appealed the grade to his instructor. In this case, the deadline to contact the instructor was the 5th "school day" which occurred in late May during the summer term. The deadline has passed; the student has waited too long to submit a formal appeal.

II. **Finally, it is up to the student to provide the information needed to support the appeal.** It is sometimes helpful to say that the student has the "burden of proof" in an appeal. If the student wants other students to submit information in support of the appeal, the student is responsible for obtaining that information. The screening and full University Grade appeal committees will not seek out information on behalf of the student other than to ask the instructor to respond to the student's appeal and provide a syllabus.