

**West Virginia State University
Academic Appeals Committee
Faculty Senate Report
Friday March 4, 2016**

The Academic Appeals Committee has met once since our last report to discuss an appeal. Our synopsis of the appeal is below.

Synopsis:

The Academic Appeals Committee (Dr. Jessica Barnes-Pietruszynski, Dr. Marc Porter, Dr. Arnold Hartstein and Dr. Sean Collins) met on September 17, 2015 to discuss the appeal of a student who was contesting a grade in Art 203, a class taught by Dr. Paula Clendenin. The student felt their final grade of B should have been changed to an A because the final exam project (the assignment that determined the B grade) was approved by Dr. Clendenin and that they had asked for her direction and followed the directions she provided. Dr. Clendenin stated that while she did approve the project, it was not completed satisfactorily and that her approval does not guarantee a particular grade. She also stated that the project was not completed and that the student had admittedly not done all the work they had originally planned to and that it was reflected in the project's overall quality and subsequent grade. Upon review by the chair (Dr. Joshua Martin), and dean (Dr. Scott Woodard), both felt that the student's grade should be unchanged. The Provost received the file next and concurred with the earlier determinations that the grade should remain unchanged. Since the mission of the Academic Appeals Committee is to review pertinent information to provide recommendations *to the Provost* regarding grade appeals, his support of the decisions of the instructor, chair and dean effectively recused us from making a recommendation in either direction. Thus the Provost's signature officially served as the final ruling on this appeal.

We are attaching the section on grade appeals from the University Catalog. Please refer to section B, numbers 5-7, for the correct procedure for grade appeals and the intervention of the Academic Appeals Committee.

As always, I thank the members of the Committee on Academic Appeals for being a collegial, hardworking body, and for your contributions. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sean A. Collins
Chair, Academic Appeals Committee

Appeals of Final Grades

A student who believes that the final grade as posted for a particular class does not accurately reflect the student's performance as determined by the grading procedure outlined on the class syllabus may wish to appeal the final grade. Prior to an official appeal of the grade, however, it is advisable for the student to ask the instructor to review his or her record of performance to determine whether the grade was accurately assigned. If it is determined that an error has occurred, the instructor can have the grade corrected by completing and processing a Special Grade Report for submission to the Office of Registration and Records. Oral discussions regarding possible errors often resolve the student's questions and are not considered to be official appeals of final grades. If the student still believes the final grade is in error after an informal review of the record, an official appeal of the final grade may be initiated. The student should monitor the appeal process at all stages, taking careful note of all deadlines as the appeal moves forward.

I. A student initiates an official appeal of a final grade by obtaining a Final Grade Appeal Form from the office of the college dean, completing and signing the form, and submitting it to the instructor through the office of the department in which the grade was awarded. The instructor will sign the form and a copy will be retained in the department office for the record while the first stage of the appeal is proceeding. This appeal must be initiated within the first thirty days after the first day of classes of the next regularly scheduled semester after the questioned grade was received: for grades assigned for a Fall Semester, no later than thirty days into the following Spring Semester; for grades assigned for Spring Semester or Summer Session, no later than thirty days into the following Fall Semester.

The instructor must respond to the Final Grade

Appeal Form with a decision within five business days (MTWRF) of receiving it.

A. If the appeal is granted:

1. The instructor indicates the reason(s) for the change on the Final Grade Appeal Form and signs and submits the form to the department office.
2. The instructor initiates a Special Grade Report to complete the official change of grade in the student's record.

B. If the appeal is not granted:

1. The instructor indicates the reasons(s) for denying the appeal on the Final Grade Appeal Form and submits the form to the student and to the department office. At this point the student's reason(s) for appeal and the instructor's reason(s) for agreement or denial have been stated on the Final Grade Appeal Form. No new written material may be added by either the student or the instructor beyond this point except at the request of those hearing an appeal.
2. The student may appeal the instructor's decision by forwarding the Final Grade Appeal Form to the department chair no later than five business days following receipt of the Final Grade Appeal Form with the instructor's decision.
3. Upon receiving the Final Grade Appeal Form, the department chair should attempt to resolve the matter. The department chair may base the decision on the documentation provided on the Final Grade Appeal Form or he/she may choose to gather additional information from the student, the instructor, or other relevant sources. The Final Grade Appeal Form with the chair's decision should be returned to the student within five business days after the form has been submitted by the student to the department chair. A copy will be retained in the department office.
4. If there is not a satisfactory resolution of the matter at the department chair level, the student may forward the Final Grade Appeal Form with the chair's decision to the college dean no later than five business days after receiving the chair's decision.
5. The college dean may (a) decide the case directly based on the documentation provided on the Final Grade Appeal Form, (b) choose to gather additional information from the student, the

instructor, or other relevant sources, or (c) request the Academic Appeals Committee (AAC) to hear the case and submit an advisory opinion on the appeal.

6. If the case is referred to the AAC for an advisory opinion, the college dean must refer the case to the committee within five business days after receiving the appeal. The AAC in turn must convene to hear the case within five business days after receiving appeal from the college dean.
 1. The instructor and the student will be invited to present information, documentation, etc., which could help to resolve the issue at a hearing before the committee.
 2. Each party may be accompanied by an advisor of his/her choice from the institution. Such an advisor may consult with but may not speak on behalf of the student or faculty member or otherwise participate in the proceedings, unless given specific permission to do so by the AAC Chair.
 3. Within five business days after the hearing, the AAC must convey its advisory opinion on the Final Grade Appeal Form to the college dean.
7. Within five business days of receiving the appeal from the student, or if the appeal is referred to the AAC within five days of receiving the advisory opinion from the AAC, the college dean will forward the determination of the dean or the AAC, as the case may be, to the Vice President for Academic Affairs on the Final Grade Appeal Form.
8. Within five business days of receiving the Final Grade Appeal Form the Vice President for Academic Affairs will either affirm or deny the determination as sent, record the reason(s) for his/her decision on the Final Grade Appeal Form, and return the form to the college dean. The Final Grade Appeal Form will constitute a full record of the action on the student's appeal.
9. If the appeal is granted, the college dean initiates a Special Grade Report to change the grade officially in the student's record.
10. The college dean distributes copies of The Final Grade Appeal Form to all parties.
11. The decision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs is final.

II. In cases involving a faculty member who has left the University, either permanently or for an extended leave of absence, the procedure is the following:

A. It is the responsibility of the student to submit the Final Grade Appeal Form to the department chair within thirty days after having received the final grade.

B. The department chair will base his/her decision on all relevant documentation available, including grade books and syllabi, and may consult with any parties who may be able to supply additional information.

C. Within ten business days after receiving the appeal, the department chair must inform the student, in writing, of the decision reached.

D. If there is not a satisfactory resolution of the issue at this stage, the student should follow the procedures stated earlier, beginning with B-4.

Finality of Grades: The awarding of a degree is based on grades of record at the time the degree is awarded. Therefore, once a student has been awarded a baccalaureate or master's degree by the University all grades used to award the degree are final and may no longer be appealed or changed.