

Student Grade Appeal: Policy & Procedure

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I. Preamble:

Rudolf Steiner College Student Grade Appeal Policy is established to assure the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty in all matters of disputed grade assignments. Rudolf Steiner College upholds the “Joint Statement of Rights and Freedoms of Students” drafted in 1967 by a consortium of national associations (www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/stud-rights.htm). Rudolf Steiner College affirms the faculty’s sole right and responsibility to provide conscientious evaluations and timely assignments of appropriate grades and that in the absence of compelling reasons, such as instructor or clerical error, prejudice or capriciousness, the grade assigned by the instructor of record is to be considered final.

II. Purpose:

This policy is instituted to protect the student against improper academic evaluation. Rudolf Steiner College recognizes the right of all students to have access to orderly procedures against prejudice or capricious academic evaluation. It also obliges students to assume responsibility for maintaining standards of academic integrity and performance as established for each course in which they are enrolled. A grade appeal is warranted anytime an assignment of an earned grade is disputed or a student questions cause of an assigned grade.

III. Definition of Terms:

Throughout the policy and procedures of this document, the words “shall”, “will”, and “must” refer to mandatory (required) actions. The words “may” and “should” refer to discretionary actions (i.e. recommended or voluntary, but not required). The word “Dean” refers to the designees Academic, Associate, or Students. The word “principals” refers to the student appellant and instructor respondent.

IV. Jurisdiction:

This policy applies solely to students’ appeals of assigned grades. Separate grievance policies have been established for discrimination and harassment grievance. Students wishing to file a grievance against an administrator, faculty or staff member because discrimination related to sex, race, color, ethnicity, age, disability, religion, or sexual orientation are advised to follow the Grievance Policy (Catalogue, Student Handbook, & Policies Manual found in Administrator’s office and on the RSC Website) and submit requisites forms.

V. Membership:

Committee Structure for Student Grade Appeals (Ideally to be established at the outset of the academic year):

- Chairperson is to be selected by the Academic Affairs Committee and is to serve for a period of two years.
- Two faculty members are selected by the Academic Affairs Committee and are to serve for one year in duration. Each faculty member will have an assigned alternate by the Academic Affairs Committee.
- At the outset of the academic year two students are selected by the Academic Dean's Office to serve for the duration of the year. The Dean's Office will name two students as alternates. The service on this committee is done voluntarily and requires each student to be enrolled and in good standing.

Chairperson's Duties:

The Chairperson is a non-voting member of the committee except in cases of tied votes. The Chairperson shall be the administrative officer of the committee. Duties incumbent upon the Chairperson shall include arranging times and places for committee meetings and hearings, as well as informing all parties and assuring all documentations are prepared, arranging for minutes to be taken of all proceedings, keeping records, and informing in writing all interested parties of the recommendations or actions of the committee.

Confidentiality Requirements:

- a) All members must abide by confidentiality agreements established upon entry into the committee. A breach of confidentiality at any level of the appeal process is a breach of ethics, the code of conduct, and FERPA.
- b) No member of the committee shall discuss personal and/or pertinent information relating to a specific grade appeal with any persons who are non-committee members except at the request of the committee as a part of the hearing process defined in this document.
- c) No member of the committee shall discuss personal and/or pertinent information relating to a specific grievance with any of the principals throughout the course of the investigation and following the recommendation of the committee except at the request of the committee and/or at a hearing.
- d) All written documentation and recommendations relating to individual grade appeals shall be marked and handled "confidential", and are only for the use of those directly involved in the grade appeal (interested parties). All documents, tapes, etc., relevant to an individual grade appeal shall be appropriately maintained for three years in locked file drawers located in the Academic Dean's Office and then shredded at termination of three years. Members of the committee shall not discuss the facts of any grade appeal through electronic mail.

VI. Grade Appeal Procedure:

Students wishing to avail themselves of the grade appeal process may receive information and assistance from the Office of the Dean of Students. Students may expect:

- 1) A definition of the basis of the appeal using the criteria specified in this procedure.
- 2) An explanation of the options available to the student for resolving the grade dispute.
- 3) Suggestions regarding the steps toward informal resolution.
- 4) Assistance in completing the grade appeal form and in compiling supporting documentation as is needed.

A. Informal Process Deadlines:

One month following the end of a semester.

A good faith effort to settle a dispute involving grade assignments must be made before filing a formal grade appeal. Even after an appeal is filed, efforts to resolve the dispute by informal means should continue.

B. Informal Resolution Process:

There are three essential steps in initiating an informal resolution process concerning grade assignments. In order to file a formal appeal, the student shall be required to submit a log of contacts, appointments (both requested and granted), and outcomes documenting his or her attempts to achieve informal resolution at each step.

1. Step 1: The student must consult with faculty member(s) involved to try to reach an agreement. If the faculty member does not respond or if the student is unable to reach agreement in a reasonable length of time, keeping in mind the filing deadline, then the student shall proceed to step 2.
2. Step 2: The student shall consult with the person at the next level of supervision if Step 1 does not result in a satisfactory agreement. If the parties do not respond or reach agreement in a reasonable length of time then the student shall proceed to step 3.
3. Step 3: The process shall continue at the level of the Office of the Academic Dean. If the issue remains unresolved at this level then the student shall file a formal grade appeal.

*Note: Grade appeals involving administrators and/or Deans who have served as instructors for the course should be directed to the Student Grade Appeal Committee after step 1.

C. Formal Process:

The formal appeal must be dated and fall within the one--month following the ends of the semester in which the grade is being disputed. In extenuating circumstances the Academic Dean may waive the deadline.

1. Basic Guidelines for Grade Appeals

- a) The Student Grade Appeal Committee (SGAC) presumes the grades assigned are correct and accurate. It is the responsibility of the student appealing an assigned grade to demonstrate otherwise.
- b) Students may only appeal grade assignments on the following bases:
 - 1) The instructor's refusal to or inability to assign a grade;
 - 2) The instructor is not available to review possible computational error;
 - 3) The student believes the grade assignment is inequitable or capricious, unreflective of course performance, not consistent with rubrics given for key assignments in the syllabus, or inconsistent with other grade assignments.
- c) The SGAC shall only recommend grade changes when a preponderance of the evidence supports the student's claim that his or her grade was improperly assigned.
- d) The burden of proof shall lie with the student.

2. How to File

When informal resolution has proven unsuccessful, the student may file a formal grade appeal in writing to the SGAC, stating the specific disputed grade in question and the desired resolution, accompanied by available documentary evidence. The grade appeal must be submitted by completing the Formal Notice of Student Grade Appeal form (Appendix A). This form can be obtained through the Dean of Students' Office or downloaded from the Website or LiveText.

3. Withdrawal and Termination of Formal Process

A student has the right to withdraw his/her grade appeal at any stage in the proceedings, in which case the proceedings shall terminate immediately. The student must submit a written notice of withdrawal of the grade appeal to the SGAC.

4. Preliminary Screening

The Chairperson will review the written formal grade appeal and determine if the SGAC has jurisdiction, the filing deadline has been met, and the informal process of step 1 – 3 has been completed.

- If all three conditions have not been met, the Chairperson shall respond in writing to the student, informing him or her of the lack of due process and the termination of the appeal.
- If all three conditions have been met, the Chairperson shall send written notice of a grade appeal within seven days to all parties involved in the informal process. The Chairperson shall also provide the course instructor with a complete copy of

documentation submitted by the student, and request that the instructor provide a written response and relevant documentation, including the course syllabus and grade roster, to the SGAC within ten calendar days.

- If the instructor identified in the appeal cannot be contacted through reasonable efforts because he/she is no longer or is on leave or vacation, the committee shall provide an additional notification period not exceeding one semester. If the instructor cannot be contacted by the end of one semester the Academic Dean will be requested to assign a qualified faculty member to review the grade assigned.

5. Consideration of Grade Appeals

Upon review of all relevant documentation from both student and instructor, the committee Chairperson shall establish and distribute to the principals a timeline for the resolution appeal. Any party in the College community contacted by the SGAC for information pertinent to a specific appeal shall cooperate and provide full disclosure of information. This may take the form of written responses and/or interviews accessing his or her academic expertise. The SGAC shall make its recommendations in the grade appeal based only on information received during its investigation process.

6. Hearing Process

If after all the information submitted by all parties is reviewed and the SGAC cannot determine a clear resolution, a hearing process will be convened by the Chairperson of the committee. It is the Chairperson's responsibility to reserve the appropriate facility and notify all parties involved in the hearing process.

The Committee

The committee shall determine who will be involved in the hearing. The committee may seek the advice from a "panel of experts" from the appropriate academic area in question. The committee may invite persons having information relevant to the grade appeal to testify in the hearing.

The Hearing Process

The hearing is a fact-finding information gathering proceeding, not a judicial process.

There shall be no confrontation or cross-examination of witnesses by instructor or student.

Only the committee and those currently providing information shall be present at the hearing.

The Chairperson conducts and facilitates the hearing process.

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Only the committee members shall ask questions.

All hearings will be transcribed. The transcription will be made available for review to the student, instructor and committee members in a designated place.

Once all information has been received, including information obtained from the hearings, the committee will issue a recommendation.

7. Recommendation

The SGAC shall recommend one of two courses of action: That (a) the original grade was properly assigned and should therefore remain on the student's record or (b) the original grade was improperly assigned and the student's work should therefore be reevaluated. It is not the committee's responsibility to evaluate the student's work nor shall it recommend a new grade.

If a grade change is recommended the instructor of record shall promptly notify the Student Grade Appeal Committee of the action taken. If the instructor of record does not assign a grade or if she/he does not change a grade when the necessity to do so has been established by the SGAC, it is the responsibility of the Academic Dean to assign a qualified faculty member to do so.

The SGAC recommendation shall be given to the instructor of record, the student, the instructor's Program Director, the Academic Dean, and the Office of Student Records and Transcripts if a grade change has been recommended to be made. The recommendation will be transmitted within twenty-one calendar days of the committee's information gathering process.

The recommendation shall not be subject to appeal.

VII. Annual Reports:

At the close of the academic year the SGAC Chairpersons shall write annual reports of all proceedings of the committee and submit it to the Academic Affairs Committee, The Academic Dean, and the President of the College.

VIII. Review of the Student Grade Appeal Policy and Procedure

The Student Grade Appeal Committee, through recommendations by the Academic Affairs Committee, may initiate revisions to the Student Grade Appeals Policy and Procedures.

Appendix A

Formal Notice of Student Grade Appeal Form

Student filing an appeal:

Date of filing to SGAC:

Course Number & Title:

Date of Semester Course was taken:

Instructor on Record:

Grade Assigned:

Student's Statement regarding Reasons for the Grade Appeal:

Documentation Supporting the Grade Appeal:

Documentation providing Evidence of Informal Resolution Processes Step 1 – 3 taken:

Resolution desired: