

# **UNO Psychology Department**

## **Grade Appeal Procedure**

### **Context of the Policy**

It is the intent of the UNO Psychology Department to treat all students in a fair and consistent manner. It is expected that UNO Psychology faculty, staff and students are familiar with and behave consistently with the Bylaws of the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska. The UNO Psychology Department's Grade Appeal Process is consistent with the guidelines set forth in the UNO College of Arts & Sciences Grade Appeals' Process (Appendix A) as well as the Academic Evaluation section of the Student Rights and Responsibilities in the Board of Regents Bylaws (Appendix B). The course grade appeal procedures are intended to ensure that a quick, fair, and consistent settlement is reached whenever a conflict regarding a grade conflict arises.

### **Policy**

In order to minimize misunderstandings which could result in a grade appeal, students will be provided with a syllabus, either in paper or electronic form, which clearly indicates the components of the course to be evaluated and how those components will be weighted to arrive at the final grade. Given a situation in which a student believes that he or she has been awarded a lower grade than earned, the student has the opportunity to initiate steps for resolving the dispute. There are four major phases of the UNO Psychology Department Grade Appeal Process:

1. Informal Discussion with the Instructor of the Course
2. Mediation by the Department Chair
3. Filing a Written Appeal with the Chair(s) of the Psychology Undergraduate Committee
4. Filing a Written Grade Appeal with the Arts & Sciences Educational Policy Committee

The specific steps and timeline of the UNO Psychology Department's Grade Appeal Process are summarized in the Table. All information regarding the Psychology Department's Grade Appeal Policy, including the Grade Appeal Form, will be posted on the Psychology Department's website at <http://www.unomaha.edu/psych/>. Printed copies of the policy will be also available from the department in Arts & Sciences Hall, Room 347.

### **Phase 1: Informal Discussion with the Instructor of the Course**

The student is urged to schedule a face-to-face meeting with the course instructor to attempt to informally resolve the dispute. The student initiation of communication with the faculty member should occur within the first 2 weeks of the semester following the semester in which the disputed grade was earned. The faculty will make himself/herself available to meet with the student within 2 weeks of receipt of the student's request to meet and no later than by the end of the 4th week of the semester following the semester in

which disputed grade was earned. The faculty will make himself/herself available to meet with the student within 2 weeks of receipt of the student's request to meet and no later than by the end of the 4th week of the semester following the semester in which disputed grade was earned.

### **Phase 2: Mediation by the UNO Psychology Department Chairperson**

The student will notify in writing both the faculty member and the UNO Psychology chair that the discussions with the faculty member proved unsatisfactory in resolving the disputed grade and will at that time request a meeting with the chair. This notification by the student must occur within 1 week following the meeting with the faculty member. The UNO Psychology Department chair will meet with the student within 2 weeks of receiving the student's written request. The department chair will also meet with the course instructor within this same 2-week period. In the event that the department chair is also the course instructor awarding the contested grade, the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences (CAS) will appoint a CAS faculty member outside of the psychology department to serve in this role and will follow the timeline set forth in this policy.

### **Phase 3. Appeal to the UNO Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee**

If discussions with the course instructor and the Psychology Department Chair fail to result in a satisfactory resolution, the student may submit a written appeal to the UNO Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC). This written appeal should include, but is not limited to, the Psychology Department's Grade Appeal Form as well as any other documentation the student deems relevant to the grade appeal. The student will submit all materials to the Chair of the Psychology UPC committee. The Psychology UPC Committee reserves the right to interview the student and course instructor and to request additional documentation from the parties involved in the dispute in order to aid its deliberations and render a just decision. After considering all relevant material, the committee will make a recommendation as to the fairness of the grade in question, and any suggestion for changing the grade. The UPC's recommendations will be communicated in writing by the UPC Chair to the student, the course instructor and the Psychology Department Chair.

### **Phase 4. Appeal to the College of Arts & Sciences' Educational Policy Committee**

Both the student and the instructor have the right to appeal the UNO Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee's recommendation on procedural grounds. The grade appeal procedures of the College of Arts and Sciences are available in the College of Arts & Sciences Dean's office in Arts & Sciences, Room 280, and are posted on the college website at <http://www.unomaha.edu/cas/gradeappeal.php>. Such appeals must be submitted before the end of the fall or spring semester following the semester in which the grade was assigned. The UNO Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee will consider the appeal and render a decision within 2 weeks of receiving the student's completed Grade Appeal Form.

Table. *Summary of UNO Psychology Department's Grade Appeal Process Steps and Timeline*

<b>P H A S E</b>	<b>S T E P S</b>	<b>W E E K*</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF ACTION REQUIRED</b>	<b>SUMMARY OF PARTIES INVOLVED**</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
1	1	2	The student will initiate a discussion with the faculty member awarding the disputed grade.	The <b>student</b> and faculty member	The student initiation of communication with the faculty member should occur within the first 2 weeks of the semester following the semester in which the disputed grade was earned.
1	2	4	The faculty member will meet with the student to discuss between student and faculty member providing the contested grade to arrive at an agreement about the contest grade	The <b>faculty member</b> and the student	The faculty will make himself/herself available to meet with the student within 2 weeks of receipt of the student's request to meet and no later than by the end of the 4 <sup>th</sup> week of the semester following the semester in which disputed grade was earned.
2	3	5	The student will notify in writing both the faculty member and the UNO Psychology chair that the discussions with the faculty member proved unsatisfactory in resolving the disputed grade and will at that time request a meeting with the chair	The <b>student</b> , faculty member, and UNO Psychology Department Chair	Student must make appropriate notifications within 1 week of meeting with the faculty member.
2	4a	7	The UNO Psychology Department Chairperson will meet with the student to attempt to resolve the disputed grade issue	The <b>UNO Psychology Department Chairperson</b> , and the student	The UNO Psychology Department chair will meet with the student within 2 weeks of receiving the student's written request
2	4b	7	The UNO Psychology Department Chairperson will meet with the faculty member involved in the grade dispute to attempt to resolve the contested grade issue	The <b>UNO Psychology Department Chairperson</b> and the faculty member	The UNO Psychology Department chair will also meet with the faculty member within 2 weeks of receiving the student's notification of an unsatisfactory resolution with the faculty member

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3	5	8	Following an unsuccessful mediation by the Chair of the UNO Psychology Department to resolve the grade dispute, the student may submit the Psychology Department's Grade Appeal Form to the Chair of the Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee along with any documentation	The student and the Chair of the Undergraduate Program Committee	The student will have 1 week to file the Psychology Department's Grade Appeal Form and appropriate documentation with the Chair of the Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee
3	6	10	Adjudication by the UNO Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee	The UNO Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee, the student and the faculty member	The UNO Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee will consider the appeal and render a decision within 2 weeks of receiving the student's completed Grade Appeal Form
4	7		The student or faculty member may appeal to the UNO College of Arts & Sciences' Educational Policy Committee via its Chair, pending the perceived unsatisfactory resolution by the UNO Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee	The student, and the Chair of the UNO College of Arts & Sciences Educational Policy Committee	A student or instructor who wishes to appeal the Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee's decision must submit a written appeal to the Chair of the College of Arts & Sciences Educational Policy Committee within 30 calendar day after the Psychology Undergraduate Program Committee delivers its decision. A copy of the College of Arts & Sciences Grade Appeal Procedure can be found in Appendix A and at <a href="http://www.unomaha.edu/cas/gradeappeal.php">http://www.unomaha.edu/cas/gradeappeal.php</a>

**\* Week indicates the week of the semester in which the activity is to be completed. It is intended that the week will refer to the end of a calendar week or Saturday.**

**\*\* Bold responsibilities indicates the person responsible for initiating the action**

## UNO Psychology Department Grade Appeal Form

Student Name:: \_\_\_\_\_ NU ID \_\_\_\_\_

Appeal for Grade Earned in \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Earned \_\_\_\_ Semester Earned Grade \_\_\_\_\_  
(Course Name and Number)

Please type the answers to the questions below, and provide any documentation relevant to your appeal and attach it to this form.

Please indicate the grade to which you believe you are entitled: \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain the basis for your appeal in the space below. You may attach additional page if needed.

## **Appendix A**

### **UNO College of Arts & Sciences**

#### **University of Nebraska and College of Arts and Sciences Grade Appeal Policies**

The College of Arts and Sciences establishes the following policies for review of grade appeal cases. Either the student or instructor may appeal the decision of a departmental grade appeal committee to the Educational Policy Committee. Appeals should be directed to the Chair of the EPC. A separate procedure is provided for cases involving questions of academic integrity.

##### **I. Mandate**

From Chapter 5, Section 5.3 of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents Bylaws:

**Academic Evaluation.** Students shall be informed of the requirements, standards, objectives, and evaluation procedures at the beginning of each individual course. Each student shall be given a performance evaluation during the progress of the course if requested. Each College or school shall provide for a faculty-student appeals committee for students who believe that evaluation of their academic progress has been prejudiced or capricious. Such procedure shall provide for changing a student's evaluation upon the committee's finding that an academic evaluation by a member of a faculty has been improper.

##### **II. Departmental Procedures**

A. All departments must have and publish a grade appeal procedure in keeping with the requirements of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents Bylaws and Policies. Students are expected to exhaust all remedies for appeal at the department level before appealing a grade decision to the EPC.

B. Under normal circumstances, students must initiate a grade appeal within the first 60 calendar days after the final grade is issued in a course, excluding summer semesters. Departments must communicate a decision to both the student and the instructor within 30 calendar days after a grade appeal is initiated by a student through consultation with either the instructor or department chair, excluding summer semesters.

C. All departments must submit a report on any departmental grade appeal committee hearing to the CAS Dean's office within 15 calendar days of the committee's decision. Such reports are to include:

1. a copy of the department's grade appeal policy;
2. a list of all grade appeal committee members;
3. copies of any documents consulted in developing the committee's decision; and
4. a written statement from the department chair or grade appeal committee chair including:
  - a. an explanation of how the department's procedures were followed;
  - b. a timeline of the appeals process;
  - c. a rationale for the committee decision; and
  - d. when applicable, an explanation of how the final course grade was calculated.

### **III. EPC Appeal Procedures**

A. Under normal circumstances, any student or instructor wishing to file an appeal of a departmental grade appeal committee decision must submit a written appeal to the Chair of the EPC within 30 calendar days (excluding summer semesters) after the department grade appeal committee delivers its decision. Such appeals must include the following:

1. an account of the facts surrounding the awarding of the disputed grade;
2. a complete account of steps taken at the department level to resolve the dispute;
3. copies of all documents presented to the department committee, including a copy of the course syllabus; and
4. an explanation of how the relevant grades were calculated.

B. Upon receiving the written appeal, the chair of the EPC will schedule a committee meeting for consideration of the appeal and will forward the relevant documents to all committee members. Committee members for grade appeals must include at least one student representative. The department chair and committee, instructor, and student will be notified of the appeal and informed of the right to examine a copy of the appeal.

C. In ruling on grade appeals, the EPC will not attempt to resolve disputes about a student's knowledge of a particular subject matter. The EPC's responsibilities extend to determinations about whether evaluation of a student has been prejudiced or capricious, and whether departmental grade appeal procedures have been followed so as to have extended a fair and proper hearing at the department level to all principle parties in the dispute.

D. Upon examination of the written appeal, one of the following courses of action may be taken:

- 1) The EPC may determine that it requires additional information to resolve the case. If so, it will request such information and then reconvene at a later time.
- 2) The EPC may determine that remedies at the department level have not been exhausted, and may decline to consider the case until further action is taken at the department level.
- 3) The EPC may determine that it concurs with the judgment of the departmental committee, agrees that a fair and proper hearing has been accorded at the department level, and will adopt the department's recommendation on the matter as its own.
- 4) The EPC may decide to open a grade appeal hearing, only if at least four members of the EPC grade appeal committee vote to open such a hearing. The ground for opening a hearing is a finding of some credible evidence, based on the written appeal, that either the grading decision was improper due to prejudice or caprice, or that a fair and proper hearing was not accorded at the department level, or both. Prejudice generally means that bias or other inappropriate factors have improperly influenced a decision. Capricious generally means that the decision was irrational, whimsical, or failed to properly follow procedures.

### **IV. Grade Appeal Hearing Procedures**

When a grade appeal hearing is opened by the EPC, both the instructor and the student will be invited to present their cases. The EPC also may choose to invite testimony from other members of the department or other parties whose testimony is relevant to the case. Grade appeal hearing procedures will be sent to both the instructor and student. The EPC grade appeal committee will so conduct itself that:

- 1) its members are fully cognizant of its procedures before their deliberations begin;
- 2) no one is kept waiting more than 30 minutes to appear; and
- 3) confidentiality is maintained.

All principal parties to the dispute who appear before the committee will be entitled to hear whatever any person invited before the committee has to say, and an opportunity for rebuttal will be extended to all speakers. All those who speak before the committee will confine themselves to answering the committee's questions or to rebuttal; they will not be allowed to speak otherwise and should be informed of this provision beforehand. Following the hearing, any person providing testimony will be dismissed so that the committee may deliberate. All written materials relevant to a case must be made available to committee members and principal parties to the dispute at least 48 hours prior to any meeting in

which the case will be considered. After that time, additional written material will not be accepted unless the EPC requests it and makes it available to all parties to the dispute. A final decision will be determined by majority vote of the EPC grade appeal committee. The committee will determine whether evaluation of the student's academic progress has been prejudiced or capricious. If the committee finds that an academic evaluation by an instructor has been improper, it will determine how the student's evaluation should be changed accordingly. The CAS Dean will be requested to submit any such changes to the Registrar. The EPC grade appeal committee's decision will be communicated in a written letter to the CAS Dean, with copies provided to all principal parties in the dispute and the department. The letter will provide a justification for and explanation of the decision, and will be submitted within 15 calendar days after the decision is made, exclusive of summer semesters.

#### **V. Summary Timetable**

Under normal circumstances, the following timetable is to be followed in the appeals process. All dates are exclusive of summer semesters: Students must initiate grade appeals within the first 60 calendar days of the semester following the semester in which the course was taken. Departmental grade appeal committees must communicate a decision to both the student and instructor within 30 calendar days after the student appeal was initiated through consultation with the instructor or department chair. A student or instructor who wishes to appeal a departmental grade appeal committee decision must submit a written appeal to the Chair of the EPC within 30 calendar days after the department grade appeal committee delivers its decision. If the EPC grade appeal committee chooses to open a grade appeal hearing, the committee will communicate its decision in a letter to the CAS Dean within 15 calendar days after the decision is made. All written materials relevant to a case must be made available to committee members and principal parties to the dispute at least 48 hours prior to any meeting in which the case will be considered.

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## Appendix B

### *University of Nebraska Student Rights and Responsibilities in Board of Regents Bylaws*

Students, like all members of the academic community, have the responsibility to create and support an educational environment. Each member of the community should be treated with respect and dignity. Each has the right to learn. This right imposes a duty not to infringe upon the rights of others. The academic community should assure its members those opportunities, protections and privileges that provide the best climate for learning (Bylaws of the Board of Regents, Section 5.0.). UNO shall publicize and keep current all rules, regulations, and policies concerning students, and insure that they are readily available to all students and other interested persons. (Bylaws of the Board of Regents, Section 5.1.)

**Academic Evaluation.** Students shall be informed of the requirements, standards, objectives and evaluation procedures at the beginning of each individual course. Each student shall be given a performance evaluation during the progress of the course if requested. Each college or school shall provide for a faculty-student appeals committee for students who believe that evaluation of their academic progress has been prejudiced or capricious. Such procedure shall provide for changing a student's evaluation upon the committee's finding that an academic evaluation by a member of the faculty has been improper. Procedures for appealing evaluation of academic progress are provided by each college or school unit. Generally, but not necessarily conclusively, the procedures are similar to the following: Students wanting to appeal a grade (evaluation that has been prejudiced or capricious), shall attempt to discuss the matter directly with the instructor. If the student and the instructor do not reach a satisfactory agreement, the student may submit an appeal in writing to the chairperson of the department in which the course is offered. If the student and chairperson do not reach a satisfactory agreement, the student may submit an appeal in writing to the Dean of the College in which the course was offered. The decision made at this level, which would include a hearing by a faculty-student appeals committee, will be final. Each college or school shall provide a mechanism by which students have an opportunity to report their perceptions of courses and the methods by which they are being taught, provided, however, that such mechanism shall protect members of the faculty from capricious and uninformed judgments. (Bylaws of the Board of Regents, Section 5.3)