

Grade Appeal Policy Draft, March 5, 2010

Preamble

Instructors are responsible for clearly articulating the basis for determining students' grades. Sharing the bases for grades is essential to ensure fair and equitable treatment of students and their work. A student has the right to be informed in a timely and clear manner of the basis for the evaluation of his or her academic performance in a course, and a student is entitled to fair, equitable treatment in his or her academic relationships with members of the faculty. In most, if not all instances, the College expects any misunderstanding regarding grading will be resolved informally, either in writing or in discussions, between a student and an instructor. The following appeal process is only for final grades. This policy applies to cases where a final grade is an F as well as to cases where a final grade other than an F prohibits or precludes a student from progressing in a major or minor or from graduating. This does not imply that a student may appeal a final grade other than an F, WF, or U because it contributes to a cumulative or major GPA that falls below 2.00.

Informal Appeal Process

A student who believes that he or she has a legitimate grievance that his or her coursework has been evaluated in a prejudicial or capricious manner in the calculation of his or her final failing grade should first make a request in writing to the faculty member involved to confirm that no computational or clerical error has been made. The student must make this request soon after notice of the grade has been given and not later than two weeks from the start of the following semester. The instructor must respond to the student in writing within two weeks of receipt of the request. Ideally, the student and faculty member should then meet to discuss the final grade in question. If the communication between the instructor and student results in the instructor requesting to change a grade, then the instructor must submit a petition to change the grade to the Associate Dean of Faculty for Academic Advising and the petition must be brought before the Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) for consideration. If the student is studying away from Skidmore College in the following semester, the request for an explanation still must be filed within two weeks from the start of that semester, but the informal appeals process will be deferred until the student returns to his or her studies on campus.

Formal Appeal Process

If the student is not satisfied with the instructor's explanation, or if a meeting with the faculty member was not possible or not advised, or if the instructor did not respond within two weeks of receipt of the student's request, then the student may report the grievance in writing with supporting documentation to the appropriate department chair or program director and submit a copy of the report to the Dean of Faculty and the Associate Dean of Faculty for Academic Advising. If the instructor is the department chair or program director, the request may be addressed to the Dean of Faculty. The student must make this request within four weeks after having sent his or her initial request for an explanation from the instructor. The student's supporting documentation must provide evidence of prejudicial or capricious grading. In particular, the student must provide evidence of one or more of the following conditions:

- a. The instructor used inappropriate criteria in determining a final failing grade.
- b. The instructor assigned a grade on some basis other than performance in the course.
- c. The instructor did not adhere to stated procedures or grading standards.

The department chair or program director must respond to the student in writing within two weeks of receipt of the request. The department chair or program director will contact the instructor to obtain an explanation of the criteria and standards used in evaluating the student's course work. If, after consultation with the faculty member (when possible) and after a review of the written evidence, the department chair or program director finds legitimate cause for the complaint, he or she will try to work toward an equitable solution with the student and faculty member. If the solution results in the instructor requesting to change a grade, then the instructor must submit a petition to change the grade with the Associate Dean of Faculty for Academic Advising and the petition must be brought before the CAS for consideration.

If the department chair or program director concludes there is no cause for the complaint, or if there is a disagreement between the department chair or program director and the faculty member, the student may request in writing a review by the Dean of Faculty and the Associate Dean of Faculty for Academic Advising, the faculty member, and the department chair or program director. The request must be submitted to the Dean of the Faculty and the Associate Dean of Faculty for Academic Advising by the end of the semester following the semester in which the grade was awarded.

The written request must include a full account of the incident or circumstances giving rise to the complaint of prejudicial or capricious grading. If the Dean of Faculty and the Associate Dean of Faculty for Academic Advising conclude there is no cause for complaint, the Dean of Faculty will inform the student, the instructor, and the department chair or program director in writing that the appeal has been denied. If, however, the review results in the instructor requesting to change a grade, then the instructor must submit a petition to change the grade with the Associate Dean of Faculty for Academic Advising and the petition must be brought before the CAS for consideration.

If the Dean of Faculty and the Associate Dean of Faculty for Academic Advising recommend changing the final failing grade to a passing letter grade, and if the faculty member who gave the original grade objects to changing the final failing grade to a passing letter grade, then the Dean of Faculty, in consultation with the Associate Dean of Faculty for Academic Advising and the department chair or program director, may recommend to the faculty member changing the grade to Satisfactory.

If the faculty member rejects the recommendation of the Dean of Faculty, Associate Dean of Faculty for Academic Advising, and the department chair or program director, to change the final failing grade to a passing grade or to Satisfactory, the Dean of Faculty, with the Associate Dean of Faculty for Academic Advising, may submit a petition to change the grade to the CAS for consideration. Only the faculty representatives on CAS have the authority to change the final

failing grade to Satisfactory, and only following a vote where the majority of the faculty representatives on CAS approves the change.

A student's failure to meet time limits will result in denial of the student's appeal. If the faculty member, department chair, or dean fails to meet a deadline, the appeal will move to the next level, but ultimate resolution must be determined by the faculty representatives of the CAS.