School of Graduate Studies: Appeals and Grievance Process

Appeals and Grievances. Exceptions, and Grade Appeals. Graduate students are responsible for meeting the terms and conditions of the School of Graduate Studies and the individual program requirements. Unusual circumstances may give rise to request specific exceptions to policy, provide grounds for filing a grievance, or provide a basis for appealing a grade. Each scenario has its own procedure.

Exceptions to Graduate Policy

In cases where exception to graduate school policies or other regulations seems justified, a student should follow this procedure:

1. Request for specific exception to graduate school policy is presented by the student in writing to the graduate program coordinator of his/her program. This request should include clearly stated reasons that may justify an exception and should be submitted to the program at least 30 days before the term for which the request would be effective.
2. The graduate program (or academic department) will forward the student’s request and the program’s recommendation regarding the request to the School of Graduate Studies.
3. The School of Graduate Studies will convene the Committee on Exceptions to Graduate Policy for consideration of the request. (The Committee is made up of one graduate faculty representative from each of the four colleges and one graduate student representative.) Students will be notified of the Committee’s decision within one week.
4. Actions by the Committee on Exceptions to Graduate Policy are binding. Decisions may be appealed to the Provost, in writing, within thirty days of the student being notified of actions/decisions. However, the Provost isn’t authorized to overturn a decision made by the Committee. The Provost can only request the Committee reconsider the decision.

Requests for exceptions involving college or department policies, procedures, or other academic matters, including those that supersede graduate school policy, will be resolved by the appropriate unit within the college. Such appeals are initiated by students through their advisers. Since NCFD students are not assigned an adviser, they may appeal directly to the college or department where the problem occurred. In either case, appropriate appeal procedures will then be followed as established by the individual college or department within the college.

Grievances

A grievance is a request for specific action to solve a problem or redress an injury done to the individual presenting it. When that individual is a student and is responding to treatment received as a student, it is a student grievance. However, if a student wishes to challenge an academic decision that impacts their grade, the Student Grade Appeal procedures should be used.

A grievance may concern the actions taken by any UW-Whitewater employee who is a member of any college, department, office, administrative unit or committee of the University. A grievance may not necessarily be directed at a particular individual but rather at a policy or rule which the student believes to be unfair. The basis for a grievance is to raise a problem for the purpose of resolving it by the parties closest to it. This is true whether the issues involve an
instructor, administrator, service personnel or members of any University department, college, division, administrative unit or committee.

A cause of action would involve a specific injury to the student or a specific problem. A remedy should be available. If no remedy is available or if punishment of someone is sought, the procedures for complaints rather than grievances should be used (see University Handbook, Sections VI-F and VI-A). Process timelines are established to enable review and resolution within a reasonable time after the problem occurred. This assists problem solving when memories and facts are still fresh. Written appeals and responses need not be lengthy but rather describe events, relevant facts and reasoning, so that parties are clear about what is at issue and why decisions are being made the way they are.

The following are the steps, both informal and formal, that the University has established relevant to the resolution of a grievance.

1. Problem occurs.
2. Within 14 calendar days, discuss it with the person whose actions are in question (informal).
3. If no satisfaction, within 7 calendar days, talk it over with the Chair or supervisor of the person (informal).
4. Chair/supervisor will attempt to resolve within 14 calendar days (informal).
5. If no satisfaction, student has 7 calendar days to write it up as a formal grievance, including why dissatisfied with recommended resolution and propose a remedy (formal).
6. Within 14 calendar days, the Dean or Director will attempt resolution or make the final decision (formal).

**Grade Appeals**
At the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater it is expected that instructors will evaluate students regularly and consistently by criteria and guidelines presented to students at the beginning of each grading period. If a student has reason to believe the grade is incorrect, the student may act on that by taking the following steps in chronological order. A complaint which is timely and filed under any other student complaint procedure and then referred for processing under these procedures, shall be considered to have met the deadline for filing as a grade appeal. The process for filing a grade appeal is the same at the graduate and undergraduate levels, and begins with an informal process, before moving to a formal process.

**Informal Process**
1. Consult the instructor whose grade is being appealed. This consultation must take place within 7 calendar days of start of classes after the grading period in question.
2. If the student/instructor conference is unsatisfactory or if the instructor is unwilling or unable to participate, within 7 calendar days the student may schedule a conference with the chair of the department in which the course was offered.
3. After hearing the student’s appeal, the chair will attempt to resolve the problem within 7 calendar days.
4. If this resolution is unsatisfactory, the student may then, within 7 calendar days after receiving the chairperson’s response, submit a written appeal to the Department’s Grade
Appeals Committee through the chairperson. This will initiate the Formal Appeal Process.

Formal Process

1. The appeal must be in writing and signed by the student.
2. The Department Grade Appeals Committee will (i) convene to examine the appeal, the response and render its conclusion in writing to the chair, student and instructor, within 14 calendar days of receipt of the appeal. (ii) While the Grade Appeals Committee cannot require the instructor to change a student’s grade, the Committee can recommend such a change to the instructor and to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies.
3. Should the student wish to appeal beyond the department, the student may submit the Committee findings and the basis for the further appeal to the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, within 3 calendar days of presentation of Committee findings. The Dean will review the student’s appeal and the findings of the Committee, and recommend appropriate action to the department and the instructor within 14 days of receipt of the appeal.
4. If this action is unsatisfactory to the student, a final appeal may be made to the Provost who will determine whether a change in grade is to be made within 14 days of receipt of the appeal. The Provost is the only individual authorized to change a student grade without the instructor’s permission. However, the Provost may change a grade only when the faculty department committee and the Dean support such a change.

Graduate student satisfaction with their educational experience remains a preeminent concern of the Office of Graduate Studies. Students who have questions, concerns or grievances about non-policy related issues are encouraged to contact the Office of Graduate Studies (262) 472-1006