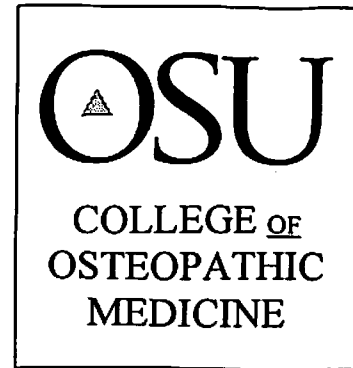


**Oklahoma State University
Center for Health Sciences**

College of Osteopathic Medicine



Category: Academic Affairs
Topic: Predoctoral Education **Code:** COM2-0205a
Subject: Appeal of Final Grade Not
Involving Allegation of Dishonesty or Misconduct
Effective Date: April 1, 1991 **Revised:** May, 2006

POLICY

- 1.01 It is the responsibility of the faculty members of the Oklahoma State University College of Osteopathic Medicine to communicate to students early in the term a clear statement of the grading practices and procedures that will be used to determine the student's final grade. If a student believes those practices and procedures were not consistently and accurately followed when the faculty member determined the student's final grade, the student shall have the right to appeal the case to the Academic Appeals Board if informal discussions fail to resolve the issue.
- 1.02 The deadline for filing grade appeals is no later than six (6) weeks after the date the grades are officially due in the Registrar's office.
- 1.03 The guidelines of the Board specify that the process is not an adversarial process. The Board makes a determined effort to provide a mechanism for exchanging information between student and instructor, and affecting reconciliation without creating an air of judicial inquiry. The intent is not to embarrass students or instructors, not to assess penalty or retribution when mistakes on either side are discovered, but to provide a forum in which honest differences of opinion are discussed rationally and peacefully. For these reasons, the Board does not have the student and the instructor appear at the same time during the proceedings.
- a. The College considers the syllabus a contract between a faculty member and each student within a course. As such, the Academic Appeals Board hears appeals based on concerns related to the course syllabus. Types of issues that might come before the Board related to a syllabus include, but are not limited to:
1. The student was not adequately informed of the details of the requirement of the course, the prerequisites for the course, and/or the grading system.

2. The evaluation system was not consistently and fairly applied to all students.
 3. Criteria for determining the final grade were changed during the course of the semester, and the students were not adequately notified of this change. It is important to note that changes in syllabi need not be made in writing as long as students are given adequate notices of the changes.
 4. All students did not receive equal notification and consideration of extra credit or other grade adjustment opportunities that were provided during the course of the semester.
 5. Items such as attendance, participation, and/or attitude were criteria for determining the final grade and were not made clear in advance to the student.
 6. The student was not adequately informed in advance of criteria used in making subjective evaluations of academic activities such as essay examinations, papers, projects, speeches, and practice teaching.
 7. The grading system included non-academic criteria.
 8. The student did not receive adequate and timely feedback on his/her performance on assignments, exams, reports, and other assignments administered during the course of the semester.
- b. When evaluating the grading system of an instructor, the Board makes no attempt to establish whether a grading system is academically sound; that is, the Board is not in a position to decide the case on the instructor's choice of one particular grading system over another. Rather, the Board must rule solely upon whether the grade was assigned fairly within the grading system adopted and announced by the faculty member. In all other instances, the case will be referred back to the department for resolution. The following guidelines have been cautiously developed to be used when examining the internal merits of any grading system:
1. Were errors made in calculating the final grade?
 2. Was the student accurately informed, in writing, of the instructor's grading system; that is, was the student clearly and precisely informed of the decision-making process the instructor was using in determining the final grade for the course?
 3. Student absence is not to be considered a valid excuse for being unaware of the details of the grading system.
 4. Subjective criteria are recognized as valid in determining a grade. The grading system can be subjective but not arbitrary, capricious or personally biased.
 5. Did the instructor consistently and fairly apply the grading system to all students?

6. Did the instructor change the grading system during the course of the semester in such a way that it put the student at a serious disadvantage or without adequately communicating the changes to the students in the class?
 7. Were all students given a chance to improve their grades when grade adjustment opportunities were made available during the course of the semester?
 8. Did the instructor single out the student for arbitrary or discriminatory treatment?
- c. It is very important to note that the Board, while considering all the above issues does not engage in the following activities:
1. Does not grade papers or examinations or challenge the instructor's evaluation of oral participation in class.
 2. Does not hear cases involving graduate oral examinations or theses.
 3. Decisions are not made on the basis of the academic soundness of the instructor's teaching methods or grading system.
 4. Decisions are not based on a general consideration of "good" or "bad" instruction.
 5. The Board does not have the academic competency in the various fields that are involved to do this; nor can the Board overcome the differences of opinion over soundness of teaching methods. Recourse against generally "bad" instruction must be handled at the department or college level; therefore, these cases will be referred back to the department for resolution.

1.04 The Academic Appeals Board is appointed on a case-by-case need; it is not a standing committee of the College. The Board consists of two (2) Basic Scientists, two (2) Clinicians, and two (2) students who are appointed by the Dean of Students/Registrar, (Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs) in consultation with the Associate Dean for Clinical Education, Associate Dean for Basic Sciences, and the Student Senate President. One (1) faculty member serves as Chair and votes only in case of a tie vote. Another faculty member is designated as the Co-Chair and serves in the absence of the Chair. The student filing the appeal has the right to refuse committee member appointments. To afford due process, careful attention should be paid to assembling an objective committee. If the student filing the appeal refuses a committee member appointment, that member of the Board shall step down and an individual will be named by the Dean of Students/Registrar to replace the Board member affected.

PROCEDURE

- 2.01 In cases where a student appeals a final course grade and where allegation of academic dishonesty are not involved, the following procedures shall be utilized:
- a. Student obtains and completes an appeal form. Appeal forms are available to students in the Dean of Students/Registrar's Office or the Office of Academic Affairs. In completing the form, the student must discuss the action with the instructor, the Course Coordinator, the Unit Dean, and the Senior Associate Dean and thereby informs each official of the pending action. This procedure may encourage any dispute to be solved before it is heard by the Academic Appeals Board. If during these discussions it becomes clear that a grade change is necessary, the instructor, the Course Coordinator, the Unit Dean, or the Senior Associate Dean can submit a change of grade form to the Registrar.
 - b. Form A is submitted to the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students accepts the form and all other supporting documents before transferring the case to the Chair of the Appeals Board.
 - d. Academic Appeals Board Chair schedules hearings for both student and instructor. Appointments for hearings are confirmed by mail. Both hearings are generally held on the same day but never simultaneously so that there will be no confrontation between student and instructor. With prior notification though the Board Chair, both parties have the right to present witnesses such as an advisor, fellow student(s), faculty member(s), or other persons to provide evidence to the Board to assist in establishing the factors of the case. The student may also be accompanied by a parent or attorney, but only in an advisory capacity; they will not be allowed to present.
 - e. Appeals Board renders decision. Written notice of the decision is sent within two (2) working days to the student, the student's advisor, the instructor, the Course Coordinator, the Unit Dean, the Dean of Students/Registrar, and the Senior Associate Dean. When the Board votes to alter a grade, the decision is sent to the Office of the Registrar and the grade is changed.
- 2.02 The procedures of the Academic Appeals Board assume that faculty will ensure the existence of relevant evidence in the form of major projects and exams. (A major project or exam that is considered worth 10% or more of the final grade.) The faculty member is expected to do this by a) returning the project or exam to the student, or b) retaining it for a period not less than the time during which an appeal can be made. It is understood that if the faculty return the work, the student shall be provided a reasonable opportunity to pick it up.

3.01 **The Emergency Academic Appeals Board:**

POLICY

- a. An Emergency Academic Appeals Board (EAAB) for the College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM) will act to expedite time sensitive grade appeals for students enrolled in the third and fourth years of the COM curriculum. The EAAB will hear appeals of "D", "U", and "N" grades. All other grade appeals will be referred to the regular Academic Appeals Board.
- b. It is the responsibility of the faculty members of the College of Osteopathic Medicine to communicate to students a clear statement of the grading practices and procedures that will be used to determine the student's final grade. If a student believes those practices and procedures were not consistently and accurately followed when the faculty member determined the student's final grade, the student shall have the right to appeal the case to the EAAB if informal discussions fail to resolve the issue.
- c. In hearing a case, the EAAB shall base its decision of changing or not changing the assigned grade solely upon whether the grade was assigned consistently and accurately within the grading system adopted and announced by the faculty member.
- d. The EAAB has the authority to instruct the Registrar to change a final course grade to any letter grade including "ST", "S", and "W".
- e. The Emergency Academic Appeals Board for the College of Osteopathic Medicine is appointed on a case-by-case need; it is not a standing committee of the College. The Board consists of two (2) Basic Scientists, two (2) Clinicians, and two (2) students who are appointed by the Dean of Students/Registrar, (Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs) in consultation with the Associate Dean for Clinical Education, Associate Dean for Basic Sciences, and the Student Senate President. One (1) faculty member serves as Chair and votes only in case of a tie vote. Another faculty member is designated as the Co-Chair and serves in the absence of the Chair. The student filing the appeal has the right to refuse committee member appointments. To afford due process, careful attention should be paid to assembling an objective committee. If the student filing the appeal refuses a committee member appointment, that member of the Board shall step down and an individual will be named by the Dean of Students/Registrar to replace the Board member affected.

PROCEDURE

- 4.01 In cases where a student appeals a final grade of "D", "U", or "N" and where allegations of academic dishonesty are not involved, the following procedures shall be utilized:
- a. Student obtains and completes an appeal form. Appeal forms are available to students in the Dean of Students/Registrar's Office or the Office of Academic Affairs. In completing the form, the student must discuss the action with the instructor, Course Coordinator, the Unit Dean, and the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The deadline for filing an emergency appeal is no later than two (2) days after final grades are due in the Registrar's office. The Senior Associate Dean, Unit Dean, and/or Course Coordinator may grant a delay for those students that may be off campus when grades are posted.
 - b. Form A is submitted to the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students accepts the form and all other supporting documents before transferring the case to the Chair of the Appeals Board.
 - c. The Board schedules hearings for both student and instructor. These are usually held on the same day but never simultaneously. With prior notification through the Board Chair, both parties have the right to present witnesses such as an advisor, fellow student(s), faculty member(s), or other persons to provide evidence to the Board to assist in establishing the factors of the case. The student may also be accompanied by a parent or attorney, but only in an advisory capacity; they will not be allowed to present. To expedite cases, hearings are usually scheduled within five (5) working days after receipt of student's written appeal.
 - d. EAAB renders decision. Written notice of the decision is sent to the student, student's advisor, instructor of record, Course Coordinator, Unit Dean, Dean of Students/Registrar, and Senior Associate Dean. Decisions will be rendered within twenty-four (24) hours after the date of hearing. When the Board votes to change a grade, the decision is sent to the Office of the Registrar and the grade is changed.