



College of Letters & Science

## **Grievance/Grade Appeal Procedure For Undergraduate Students**

### **Informal Resolution of Grievance/Grade Appeal**

According to UWM Policies and Procedures 1.02(1), “the University Faculty has charge of all educational matters which concern more than one college, school or division, or which are otherwise of general interest.” UWM Policies and Procedures 2.03(1) states that the College Faculty has the duty and power “to control matters involving scholarship, including the advancement of students, and dismissal for defective scholarship.” For each course, the Faculty (in S-28 of “Selected Academic and Administrative Policies”) has invested in the individual instructor of record for a course the responsibility for evaluating student work in the class and assigning grades. Faculty members, graduate teaching assistants (GTAs), or other instructional staff also may interact with students in the classroom or in the advising process. On certain occasions, students may consider filing a grievance or grade appeal. This decision may arise from an actual or perceived action on the part of a faculty member, GTA, or other instructional staff member assigned to the course. A grievable action is an action that is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the instructor (UWM Policies and Procedures S-28 Document 1243). Many such situations arise as the result of misunderstanding or incomplete information. The majority of situations in which students consider taking a formal action should be resolved informally. If the situation involves a teaching assistant, the student first shall discuss the situation with the TA. If the situation is not resolved to the student’s satisfaction, the student may discuss the matter with the supervising instructor for the course. If the difficulty cannot be resolved informally, the student has thirty (30) working days from the date of the instructor’s action to initiate a formal appeal as indicated below. Therefore, efforts to reach an informal resolution should be initiated as soon as possible.

### **Formal Grievance/Grade Appeal Procedure**

The complete grievance file, including materials submitted by the parties to the grievance, communications of the appeals committee referred to in Step 2 of the process, communications of administrators referred to in Step 3 of the process, and other official documents relating to the grievance, shall be maintained by the Office of the Associate Dean for humanities, natural sciences, or social sciences, as appropriate, for three (3) years after the completion of the proceedings. At that time, the grievance file shall be reduced to statistical records, including no references to the identities of parties. The contents of the file shall be destroyed confidentially.

## **Abuse of process, malicious complaints, or frivolous complaints**

A student must proceed with a complaint in good faith. Abuse of process, malicious complaints, or frivolous complaints may result in referral to the Dean of Students Office for appropriate action (e.g. ref. Chapter UWS 17 Student Non-academic Disciplinary Procedures [17.09(11)]).

Step 1 Within thirty (30) working days from the date of the action prompting the appeal or grievance, the student may file with the chair of the department or his/her designee a written statement of appeal. The statement of appeal shall include, but need not be limited to, the following:

- 1) The student shall cite the campus policy, procedure or practice allegedly violated.
- 2) The student shall explain how such university policy, procedure or practice has been violated.
- 3) The student shall describe the personal adverse effect caused by the alleged violation of university policy, procedure, or practice.
- 4) The student shall indicate the remedy they are seeking.

If the statement does not include the required information, the chair of the department or his/her designee shall provide the student with a copy of this document indicating what is missing and the student shall be given an additional ten (10) working days to submit a revised written statement of appeal. If a revised statement of appeal is not submitted in this time period the department chair or his/her designee may notify all parties that the appeal has been rejected as untimely. Such a rejection shall be final, and is itself not subject to appeal. In response to receipt of a complete appeal, the chair or designee shall provide a copy of the appeal to the instructor. In addition, the chair or designee shall meet jointly or individually with all parties in an effort to resolve the problem and shall prepare a written "Step 1 report" of the results of his/her efforts. The Step 1 report shall specifically address, but may not be limited to, each of the required components of the statement of appeal identified above. Additionally, the chair or designee shall issue a status report on the resolution progress via email to all parties every fifteen (15) working days until the written Step 1 report is completed. Concerns about lack of progress or reporting may be referred to the Office of the Associate Dean for humanities, natural sciences, or social sciences, as appropriate. The Step 1 report shall be given to both the student and the instructor. If a proposed resolution is agreeable to both the student and the instructor, the student and instructor shall be asked to indicate formally that the matter is resolved and the Step 1 report, along with the student's and instructor's formal acceptance of the resolution, will be sent to the Office of the Associate Dean for humanities, natural sciences, or social sciences, as appropriate. If the proposed resolution is not acceptable to either

the student or the instructor, or if no resolution has been proposed, then the process may continue to Step 2.

**Step 2** If the situation is not resolved in the Step 1 process, the student or the instructor may request, within ten (10) working days of receiving a copy of the written Step 1 report, that the chair or designee send the appeal/grievance to an existing departmental appeals committee. If none exists, the chair or designee will appoint a committee to hear the appeal/grievance. The committee will gather and consider all information it deems appropriate, including the original statement of appeal and the Step 1 report, afford the student and the instructor an opportunity to present their cases, and recommend a course of action in its own Step 2 report. The chair of the appeals committee shall issue a status report on the committee's progress via email to all parties every fifteen (15) working days until the Step 2 report is completed. The format of the Step 2 report shall follow the format of the Step 1 report as described above. Concerns about lack of progress or reporting may be referred to the Office of the Associate Dean for humanities, natural sciences, or social sciences, as appropriate. The committee report will be given to both the student and the instructor. If a proposed resolution is agreeable to both the student and the instructor, the student and instructor shall be asked to indicate formally that the matter is resolved and the Step 2 report, along with the student's and instructor's formal acceptance of the resolution, will be sent to the Office of the Associate Dean for humanities, natural sciences, or social sciences, as appropriate. If the proposed resolution is not acceptable to either the student or the instructor, or if no resolution has been proposed, then the process continues to Step 3. Both the student and the instructor shall be informed that the decision arising from Step 3 is final.

**Step 3** If the situation is not resolved in the Step 2 process, the student or the instructor may request, within ten (10) working days of receiving a copy of the written report from the departmental committee, that the appeal/grievance be referred to the Office of the Associate Dean for humanities, natural sciences, or social sciences, as appropriate. The Associate Dean or designee shall review all documents, independently consider all information s/he deems appropriate, afford the student and the instructor an opportunity to present their cases, and render a final decision in a written report that follows the format of the Step 1 and Step 2 reports. The Associate Dean or designee shall issue a status report on her/his investigation via email to all parties every fifteen (15) working days until s/he reaches a decision. Concerns about lack of progress or reporting may be referred to the Office of the Dean of the College of Letters and Science. Following evaluation at this level, the decision of the Associate Dean is final.

While due consideration will be given to summer or other recess periods, failure by the student or the instructor to meet any of the prescribed deadlines terminates the appeal procedure, and the decision at the previous appeal level stands.

## **Definitions and Terms**

### **May**

In this document "may" is used in the permissive sense.

### **Shall**

In this document "shall" is used in the mandatory sense.

### **Student**

A student is any person taking courses offered by UWM, either full-time or part-time, including Summer Session and Extended Education. Any person who is a student or was a student at the time that the alleged event occurred may use this Student Grievance Procedure, within the timelines specified in the procedure.

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L&S Faculty Document No. 579 (Revised), February 8, 2001

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