

**3341-3-3 Appeals policies- Graduate.**

Applicability	All University Units – Graduate Students
Responsible Unit	Office of the Provost
Policy Administrator	Graduate College

**(A) Policy Statement and Purpose**

This policy describes grade appeals policies, academic appeals policies, graduate college grievance policy, actions at department/school/program level, formal appeal procedure, grievance board membership and grievance board hearing procedures.

**(B) Policy****(1) Grade Appeals**

The procedure for grade appeals at the graduate level involves following a sequence of consultations. An appeal may be settled during an early stage, but the complete process includes five steps:

- (a) Student meets with course instructor;
- (b) Student meets with departmental faculty member who serves as grade appeal agent (see university Charter B-II. G.9);
- (c) Student meets with the departmental chair or program director;
- (d) Graduate College grade appeal committee reviews the student's grade appeal;

- (e) Graduate dean designate reviews the due process procedures.

All levels of the appeal process are advisory to the instructor. Only the course instructor can change a student's grade. It is the student's responsibility to follow the steps in the procedure according to the sequence outlined above. Grade and absence grievances may not be appealed beyond the Graduate College level.

The grade appeals procedure must be initiated by the end of the fifth week of the spring semester for grades received during fall semester, and by the end of the fifth week of fall semester for grades received during the spring or summer semester. All actions for grade changes must be completed during the semester in which the grade is appealed.

Graduate College grade appeal committees serve on an ad-hoc basis, with members chosen based on "Grievance Board Membership" guidelines. Grade appeal hearing procedures follow the "Grievance Board Hearing Procedures."

## (2) Academic Appeals Policy

The student has the right to appeal a decision connected to an academic issue not related to a course/grade (e.g., good academic standing, comprehensive and preliminary exams, thesis or dissertation defense, program dismissal). The appeal must be based on a procedural error, misinterpretation of evidence, or new evidence. It is the student's responsibility to initiate the appeal, and follow the procedure outlined below. All levels of review of the appeal are advisory. Academic appeals may not be appealed beyond the Graduate College level. The original committee/body retains the right of final decision. The academic appeals procedure must be initiated within one month of the decision under appeal.

### Procedure

The procedure for filing an appeal connected to academic problems not related to courses/grades (e.g., good academic standing, comprehensive and preliminary exams, thesis or

dissertation defense, program dismissal) at the graduate level involves following a sequence of consultations. An appeal may be settled during an early stage, but the complete process includes the following steps:

- (a) Student submits a letter of appeal to the graduate coordinator. The letter must outline in detail how the decision under appeal was caused due to a procedural error or misinterpretation of evidence, and/or provide new evidence;
- (b) The letter of appeal is forwarded to the graduate studies committee in the student's department, school, or unit for its review;
- (c) The graduate studies committee reviews the appeal and makes a recommendation to the original decision-making body (e.g., thesis or dissertation committee) as to whether or not the decision should be changed. However, the graduate studies committee may not mandate a change;
- (d) The graduate studies committee notifies the student in writing of its recommendation and prepares a brief report, which is forwarded to the department chair, school director, or equivalent administrator and the graduate dean designate;
- (e) In the event the graduate studies committee renders a recommendation not in favor of the student's appeal, or if the original decision-making body rejects the recommendation that its decision should be changed, the student may forward the appeal to the department chair, school director, or equivalent administrator;
- (f) The department chair, school director, or equivalent administrator reviews the appeal and makes a recommendation to the graduate studies committee and/or the original decision-making body, as to whether or not those committees' recommendations should be changed. However, the department chair, school director, or equivalent administrator may not mandate a change;

- (g) The department chair, school director, or equivalent administrator notifies the student in writing of her/his recommendation and prepares a brief report, which is forwarded to the graduate dean designate;
- (h) In the event the department chair, school director, or equivalent administrator renders a recommendation not in favor of the student's appeal, or if the original decision-making body and/or graduate studies committee rejects the chair, director, or equivalent administrator's recommendation that its decision should be changed, the student may forward the appeal to the graduate dean designate who reviews the appeal and the due process procedures at all levels, and forms and convenes a five-member academic appeal committee following the guidelines for forming a grievance board as described in the Graduate Catalog;
- (i) The academic appeal committee reviews the student's appeal and makes a recommendation to the graduate dean designate. However, the academic appeal committee may not mandate a change;
- (j) The graduate dean designate communicates the academic appeal committee's recommendation to the department chair, school director, or equivalent administrator, as well as the graduate coordinator in the student's home unit, and notifies the student in writing of the recommendation.

It is the student's responsibility to follow the steps in the procedure outlined above.

A faculty member, or department chair, school director, or equivalent administrator, may review the case at only one stage of review. For example, if a chair is also a member of the graduate studies committee, she/he must recuse him/herself from the graduate studies committee's review of the appeal. It is the chair, school director, or equivalent administrator's responsibility to address potential conflicts of interest and/or adjust committee membership to avoid duplicate committee membership.

(3) Graduate College Grievance Policy

These grievance procedures specifically apply to training and work assignments and to financial disputes involving graduate assistant contracts or awards. They do not apply to academic honesty, sexual harassment or racial/ethnic harassment. Issues relating to academic honesty, performance, conduct and behavior are covered by the university Student Code. Issues relating to sexual, racial, ethnic and other forms of harassment and discrimination are handled by the Office of Equity and Diversity.

The Graduate Student Senate, the official governance body of graduate students, may be consulted at any stage of the grievance process. A representative from the Graduate Student Senate may accompany any graduate student and help present any appeal processed by the Graduate College Grievance Policy.

All graduate student grievances must be considered carefully and fairly within the university. Resolution should be made at the lowest possible administrative levels. However, in some cases, the resolution of a problem may require a higher, formal and open channel for expressing grievances and for obtaining a fair and prompt hearing. When a student wishes to submit a grievance, he/she must (1) formally submit the grievance to the program/department where the student is registered. If the student feels that resolution of the grievance at this level is not satisfactory, he/she can (2) appeal such resolution to the Dean of the College where the student is registered. If the student does not feel the grievance has been satisfactorily resolved within the College, he/she then has the right to (3) request a formal investigation of the grievance through the Graduate College, and the convening of a formal Grievance Board<sup>1</sup>. We recommend the student consult with Student Legal Services before appealing any grievance resolution at this level. The student has the option to withdraw the grievance at any time.

<sup>1</sup>A Grievance Board procedure has been established to investigate referred cases and to conduct hearings. Of primary concern to Grievance Boards are cases involving training and work assignments, financial disputes involving graduate assistant contracts or awards, and academic problems not related to courses.

Moral and political behavior are not a concern of the Board because these are regulated by the university Student Code and by local, state and federal laws.

All students are granted due process rights in the resolution of academic and related problems at Bowling Green State University. However, it is the student's responsibility to pursue such problems in a timely fashion. To be eligible to file a formal appeal, students must initiate a discussion of the problem at the department/school/program level within four weeks of the time the student becomes aware of the issue. In addition, students must then notify (1) their appropriate College Dean, and (2) the Graduate College Dean that the problem has not been resolved within four weeks of the date they initiated discussion.

The following procedures are to be used when filing grievances:

(a) Actions at Department/School/Program Level

To resolve an issue rapidly and effectively, every attempt should be made to handle grievances at the department, school, or program level. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss problems at these levels with (1) the instructor involved, (2) the course supervisor, (3) the graduate coordinator, or (4) other appropriate individuals in the department/school/program. If the problem is not resolved in discussion with these individuals, then the unit's Chair/Director or Graduate Committee may be able to provide an effective solution.

If a problem is not satisfactorily resolved at this level, the student may then appeal the decision to the Dean of the College governing that department/school/program, and simultaneously notify the Dean of the Graduate College of his/her appeal to the Dean.

If the student does not feel the College Dean has resolved the problem appropriately, he/she can then appeal this decision to the Graduate College Dean. An appeal to the Graduate College Dean will then result in the

implementation of the formal appeal procedure outlined below.

(b) Formal Appeal Procedure

If all attempts to resolve the problem as outlined above at the department/school/program or College level, the grievant may then submit in writing a full description of the problem and his/her desired outcome to (1) the Graduate College Dean, and (2) the Department Chair and (3) the Line Dean. This formal, written appeal should summarize the pertinent facts of the case and describe all attempts made to resolve the problem at the department/school/program and College levels.

The Graduate College Dean's designee will investigate the appeal in an attempt to resolve the problem. The parties involved will be informed of the investigation results and the designee's proposed resolution within ten working days of the initial written appeal<sup>2</sup>.

If the grievant is not satisfied with the results of the investigation and proposed resolution, he/she may request in writing from the Graduate College Dean, within five working days of receiving notice of the designee's decision, that a Grievance Board be convened to hear the case. The Board shall operate on an ad hoc basis with membership as outlined below.

<sup>2</sup>Every effort should be made to stay within stated time lines, understanding that extenuating circumstances may interfere with the process.

(c) Grievance Board Membership

The Grievance Board membership categories outlined below include faculty, staff and graduate students who have had no previous contact or involvement with the referred case.

The committee is comprised of a chair and five voting members.

- (i) The chair must be a regular member of the Graduate Faculty, designated by the Graduate College Dean.
- (ii) The five voting members will consist of:
  - (a) A graduate student in good academic standing from a discipline related to the program in which the grievant is enrolled;
  - (b) A graduate student in good academic standing appointed by the President of the Graduate Student Senate, who is not involved in the grievance, nor a member of the grievant's program or department.
  - (c) A regular member of the Graduate Faculty from a discipline related to the program in which the grievant is enrolled;
  - (d) A regular member of the Graduate Faculty who is not a member of the grievant's program or department;
  - (e) A member of the classified staff who has no involvement with the grievant.
- (d) Grievance Board Hearing Procedures

Once convened, the Grievance Board is required to proceed according to the following:

- (i) All hearings and investigations by the appointed Grievance Board shall be conducted in closed sessions with only members of the Board and invited or approved persons present. The Board and the concerned parties in the case will receive from the Dean of the Graduate College all the pertinent information compiled on the case. A final recommendation from the Board should be made to the Graduate College Dean within ten working days



of the Board's receipt of the appeal.

- (ii) Balloting and voting by the Board will be secret. One faculty member and one student member will be tellers for each vote by the Board.
- (iii) The grievant may have an advisor present, such as a graduate student, a member of the Graduate Student Senate, a member of the faculty, a friend, a relative or an attorney. The respondent (person or department) may also have an advisor present. Witnesses may be called to present evidence on behalf of either the complainant or the respondent.
- (iv) All information on which a decision is to be based must be submitted before the Board in the presence of the grievant and decisions should be based solely upon such information. The grievant has the right to question all testimony and confront all witnesses.
- (v) An audio recording will be made of each Board meeting. A summary of all sessions of the Board will be prepared by secretarial personnel from the Office of the Graduate College. Copies of the summary will be distributed to the appropriate parties concerned and be kept on file in the Office of the Graduate College for two years following the last period of registration of the grievant.
- (vi) The Board will reach a decision in the case and make a specific recommendation of action to the appropriate parties (including but not limited to the Graduate College Dean, Department Chair, Line Dean, etc.). The Graduate College Dean will review this recommendation, make a final decision in the case, and convey that decision in writing to the appropriate parties concerned, including the College where the student is registered, within five working days. The decision and disposition of the case will be filed with the minutes of the hearing.

- (vii) The assignment of any warranted sanctions or corrective actions rests with the Dean of the Graduate College, and should be implemented promptly. The Graduate College Dean may also refer sanctions and recommendations to the Provost, Faculty Senate, Chair, and/or College Dean for further disciplinary action.

Beginning at the department/program/school level and continuing through to the conclusion of the Grievance Board appeal procedure, no student grievant shall be subjected to any intimidation, harassment, or threats or suffer any penalty because that student identified and discussed a problem at any level or subsequently made a formal appeal. Any penalty or reprisal against a student grievant or any other involved persons is prohibited by university policy<sup>3</sup>. If a student believes that he/she has been intimidated, harassed, threatened, or suffered any penalty as a result of actions taken pursuant to the policies and procedures outlined herein, that student should consult with the Student Legal Services office. However, the Office of Equity and Diversity may also serve as a resource.

<sup>3</sup>Retaliation Policy from the Office of Equity and Diversity

Registered Date: March 3, 2015

Amended Dates: December 3, 2015, November 2, 2016