

VPA Grade Appeals Policy and Procedures

The College of Visual and Performing Arts (VPA) follows the Syracuse University Grade Appeals process as outlined in Section 8.4.6 of the Academic Rules in the online Undergraduate Catalog.

This grievance process designates that any grade appeal made by a student move through the following levels of authority:

- Instructor of record
- Faculty member in charge of the course
- Department Chair (in VPA, this could also be the Director of a school)
- Dean of the College
- College Panel
- Senate Committee on Instruction

At each level of review, Section 8.4.6 of the University's *Academic Rules* should be consulted to maintain compliance with those guidelines. Prior to a case reaching the College Hearing Panel, actions which can be taken by administrators in the process (Chair/Director or Dean) are limited to the following options:

1. Denying the appeal
2. Facilitating an informal resolution of the dispute, and providing a written summary of the informal resolution signed by all parties involved, or
3. Recommending that the appeal move on to the next level of authority.

The College Panel, after reviewing the basic facts of the case may either decline to hear the case or decide to hear the case. Upon hearing the case and after due deliberation, the Panel may deny the appeal or authorize the Registrar to change the grade, among other possible remedies.

Selection of the College Hearing Panel Membership

At the beginning of each academic year, the associate dean for academic affairs solicits from each academic unit one tenured faculty member to serve as a sitting member of the college's Grade Appeals Hearing Panel and one alternate member (also tenured). The associate dean forwards the list of potential committee members to the Chair of VPA's Faculty Council for discussion and vote to approve the committee's membership. Faculty Council may alter membership of the committee by replacing one or more proposed members with the alternate in order to create a more diverse committee, but must retain the balance of one member from each academic unit of the College.

Once approved by Faculty Council, the membership of the panel will be communicated to College faculty, staff, and students, and posted on the College website.

The associate dean for academic affairs convenes an organizational meeting of the Hearing Panel, and one member of the Panel is elected to serve as Chair for the academic year, calling meetings as necessary, and assuring that all procedures are followed properly.

For any given case, the Hearing Panel must have a quorum of at least three members, as per University guidelines, and no member of the panel shall hear a case in which s/he has been involved in a previous stage of the appeal.

Charge to the College Hearing Panel

The College Hearing Panel is charged with the responsibility to review and assess the validity of the written appeal and, if determining valid grounds, commence with a fair and thorough hearing of all views related to the case, and then render a final decision regarding the available evidence presented for or against the appeal.

Operation of the College Hearing Panel

- The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs convenes the panel to review the written appeal to determine if it constitutes valid grounds for an appeal as defined in Section 8.4.6.2 and 8.4.6.3. If it does not, the panel may decline to hear the case. If valid grounds are identified, the following process is employed:
- The Panel meets with the aggrieved parties, either separately or together, adhering to the expectation of a fair and thorough hearing of all views. The Panel may request to view course materials (e.g., syllabus, assignment instructions, graded work, grading rubrics, etc.) from either the instructor(s) or the student(s). These materials may be requested in advance of the meeting or to be brought to the hearing itself.
- After hearing all points of view, the aggrieved parties are excused and the Panel deliberates regarding the merits of the case and any appropriate remedies. Once a decision is reached, the Panel summarizes the case and its outcomes such that the Chair of the Hearing Panel will be able to inform the student(s) and the instructor(s) of its decision in writing, and also provide a written report to the Senate Committee on Instruction.
- The Chair of the Panel then works with the VPA Office of Student Services on any necessary paperwork as follow-up to the decision rendered (including authorizing the Registrar to change the grade, if appropriate).

Approved by VPA Faculty Council, November 18, 2016

8.4.6 Grade Appeals

Normal Practice for Course Grade Appeals The following set of general statements represents normal practice at Syracuse University* for a student seeking resolution to a grievance of a course grade.

1. The assignment of grades at Syracuse University is the responsibility of the faculty; once assigned by a member of the faculty, a grade cannot be changed without his or her consent, except by due process as detailed below. In cases where the instructor of record is not a member of the faculty, the faculty member charged with oversight of that instructor is ultimately responsible for the assignment of grades.
2. A course grade is based upon the instructor's professional assessment of the academic quality of the student's performance on a body of work. Such assessments are non-negotiable, and disputes about them do not constitute valid grounds for an appeal. Valid grounds can arise, e.g., when an instructor fails to provide or implement uniform and consistent standards, or bases an assessment on criteria other than academic performance.*
3. Unless there are issues of a personal nature, the appeal process for a grade dispute begins with the instructor of record. Failure to comply with this may be grounds for denial of subsequent appeals. Any appeal beyond the instructor of record must be initiated in writing to the department chair before the last day of classes of the academic year semester immediately following the one in which the aggrieved grade was received by the Registrar. This written appeal should describe the basis for the grievance, the informal steps taken to resolve the dispute, and the remedies sought.
4. If satisfaction is not obtained at this or any subsequent level, the appeal always moves to the next level of authority. The levels in succession are: the instructor of record, faculty member in charge of the course, the department chair of the faculty member, (Center Director for courses offered through SU Abroad Centers), the dean of the department chair, (Dean of the relevant college under which the course is offered for courses offered through SU Abroad Centers).
5. At each level of appeal, a fair and thorough hearing of all views is sought before a decision is made. This may, but need not, require a face-to-face meeting of the parties directly involved in the dispute. A decision may be reached if both student and instructor agree. If such a decision cannot be reached, a panel designed by the college for this purpose shall hear the case. Details of the operation and manner of selection of this panel may vary by school or college**, but shall conform to the following guidelines:
 - a. The panel shall have a quorum of at least three.
 - b. All voting members of the panel shall be tenured faculty.
 - c. No member of the panel shall hear a case who has been involved in a previous stage of the appeal.
 - d. Membership of the panel shall be fixed and made public in a given academic year, though replacements may be made in the event of resignations.
 - e. Membership of the panel shall be approved by the faculty of the school or college, or by a representative group of the faculty, in each academic year.

f. The Senate Committee on Instruction shall approve the manner of selection and charge of a school or college's panel before its first case. The committee shall also approve any subsequent changes in the manner of selection or charge of each college or school's panel. The panel may, at its discretion, meet with the aggrieved parties either separately or together. The decision of this panel, either to deny the student's original appeal or to authorize the Registrar to change the grade, shall be final. The panel shall inform both the student and the instructor of its decision in writing. The panel shall also summarize the case and its outcome in a written report to the Senate Committee on Instruction. Said committee may include summary statistics on grade disputes in its final report to the Senate.

6. The only grounds for any further appeal shall be irregularities in the above procedures.
7. In such cases, either party may appeal the final decision of the faculty panel to the Senate Committee on Instruction. The Senate Committee on Instruction may either deny the appeal or insist that the procedure begin anew at the point the irregularity occurred.
8. All stages of the appeal process shall be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible, consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

* For further guidance, consult the bylaws of the individual school or college.

** These procedures do not apply for students in the College of Law.