

University Policy 3.04.09

Appealing a Grade

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POLICY STATEMENT

Capella University learners may appeal a grade, or competency evaluation in the FlexPath delivery model, that they believe has been assigned as a result of instructor error or capriciousness. Learners may appeal within 30 calendar days following the posting of the course grade or competency evaluation.

RATIONALE

The assessment of a learner's academic performance is one of the primary professional responsibilities of faculty members. It is essential for maintaining the standards of Capella University's academic programs and the integrity of the degrees conferred that grading calculations be accurate and professional judgments of faculty members not be subject to pressures or other interference from any source. This policy and procedures describe the criteria by which a learner may appeal a grade or competency evaluation.

DEFINITIONS

Capricious Grading

Capricious grading is defined as:

- The assignment of a grade or competency evaluation to a particular learner on some basis other than performance in the course.
- The assignment of a grade or competency evaluation to a particular learner by more exacting or demanding standards than those applied to other learners in that course.
- The assignment of a grade or competency evaluation that is a substantial departure from the faculty member's established criteria as stated in the course syllabus.

Faculty

Faculty members include core faculty, adjunct faculty, and other Capella employees that serve in an instructional capacity (e.g., independent contractors).

Instructor Error

An instructor error refers to any mathematical, data entry, or other error made by the instructor resulting in the incorrect reporting of a learner's grade or competency evaluation.

PROCEDURES

I. Initial Resolution Process for All Learners

- A. If a learner believes that a grade has been assigned capriciously or erroneously, the learner must first confer with the faculty member or FlexPath coach. The aim of such a conference is to reach a mutual understanding about the grade, the process by which it was assigned, and to correct errors, if any, in the grade.
- B. Learners should refer to university policy *3.04.07 Grading* for specific grading procedures.
- C. If the problem cannot be resolved, the learner has the right to appeal the grade, as described in section II.

II. Formal Resolution Process for All Learners

- A. If the learner chooses to appeal the grade, he or she must complete and submit the [Grade Appeal Request Form](#) located on Campus no later than 30 calendar days following the posting of the course grade. Failure to receive notification of the grade report does not alter the amount of time the learner has to appeal.
- B. The learner must include a request for review of the grade and provide evidence that the grade is either incorrect or capricious as defined in this policy.
- C. The learner must provide a comprehensive statement that fully describes and documents all evidence that supports his or her claim.
- D. Upon receiving the learner's appeal request, a university designee will notify all involved parties that a formal resolution process has been initiated and that the appeal is being referred to an independent review panel.
 - 1. The panel designee will collect all information to be considered by the panel for the learner's appeal. The panel designee will request the faculty member involved in the appeal to submit a written response to the learner's appeal.
 - 2. The panel designee will convene the panel once all materials regarding the appeal have been received. The panel designee must provide the panel with the following information:
 - a. The faculty member(s) against whom the appeal is directed.
 - b. A brief narrative of the circumstances surrounding the appeal, including the date(s), time(s), and place(s).
 - c. Any efforts to resolve the matter during the initial resolution process.
 - d. The corrective action the learner is seeking.
 - 3. Following referral of the matter, the panel will convene to review the materials and issue a decision as soon as practicable.
 - a. The panel will investigate all evidence supporting and/or refuting the validity of the grade appeal, the learner's complete academic record, and any further issues surrounding the grade appeal.
 - b. The panel will provide adequate opportunity to hear from all involved parties and for each party to state his or her respective case in writing.
 - c. Upon evaluation of the evidence and hearing from all involved parties, the panel will issue a decision and set forth a resolution to be implemented.
 - d. The panel designee will report the panel's decision to all involved parties as soon as practicable. A record of the panel's decision will become part of the learner's official academic record.
 - e. Both parties have the right to appeal the panel's decision, as described in section III.

E. Duration of Process

The duration of the formal resolution process is dependent on the timing and complexities of the individual circumstance. Learners will be notified of the status of their grade appeal as soon as practicable upon submitting their [Grade Appeal Request Form](#).

III. Formal Appeal Process for All Learners

If either party chooses to appeal the panel's decision, he or she must submit a formal, written appeal request to the president's designee. The appeal request must be submitted via mail or email and within 10 calendar days of them being sent notification of the panel's decision.

- A. Upon receiving the appeal request, the president's designee will acknowledge receipt of the request and inform all involved parties that a formal appeal process has been initiated.
- B. The president's designee will receive and review all evidence, records, evaluations, and faculty member and panel decisions.
- C. Following the review, the president's designee will issue a decision and report it to all involved parties as soon as practicable. The decision will do one of the following: a) uphold the findings of the panel, b) reverse the findings of the panel, c) direct the panel to provide additional information, or d) the president's designee will determine his or her own findings. In the event the president's designee requests additional information from the panel, the involved parties will be notified of a revised time frame for the determination of the grievance.
- D. The decision of the president's designee is final. Matters that have been reviewed and have received a final decision under this policy are not eligible for further review under another policy.
- E. A record of the final decision and all related materials will become part of the learner's official academic record and, upon request, will be made available to all Capella boards and any appropriate regulatory bodies.
- F. Duration of Process
- G. The duration of the formal appeal process is dependent on the timing and complexities of the individual circumstance. Learners will be notified of the status of their formal appeal as soon as practicable upon submitting their appeal in writing via mail or email.

IV. FlexPath Competency Evaluations

FlexPath competency evaluations can be appealed in the same way course grades would be appealed. Only competency evaluations appearing on the learner's transcript may be appealed.

POLICY OWNERS

Academic Owner: Deans

Operations Owner: Learner Affairs

RELATED DOCUMENTS

University policy 1.01.05 Policy Exceptions

University policy 3.04.07 Grading

University policy 3.04.08 Incomplete Grades

University policy 4.02.02 Learner Code of Conduct

University policy 4.02.03 Learner Grievance

REVISION HISTORY

Original Policy Effective Date: July 27, 2002

Revision Dates: 10-7-08; 7-29-09 ; 7-28-14; 8-11-16

Administrative edits as result of ongoing review: 12-20-07; 12-16-08; 2-22-10, 8-4-11; 4-17-12;
8-6-12; 12-17-13

Formerly university policy 02.71 Appealing a Grade