

## **University Policy 3.04.09**

## **Appealing a Grade**

**Revised Policy Approval Date: August 28, 2007**

**Revised Policy Effective Date: September 1, 2007**

**Revised Procedure Approval Date: August 11, 2016**

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### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Capella University students may appeal a final grade in the GuidedPath format or any final course competency rating in the FlexPath delivery model that they believe has been assigned as a result of faculty error or capriciousness. Students may appeal within 30 calendar days following the posting of the course grade or course competency rating.

### **RATIONALE**

The assessment of a student'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 student may appeal a course's final grade or final course competency ratings.

### **DEFINITIONS**

#### Capricious Grading

Capricious grading is defined as:

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

#### Course Grade

In the context of this policy, "course grade" may encompass both traditional letter grades assigned in the GuidedPath format and course competency ratings assigned in the FlexPath format that appear on the student's transcript.

#### Faculty

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

### Faculty Error

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

## **PROCEDURES**

- I. Initial Resolution Process for All Students
  - A. If a student believes that a course's final grade has been assigned capriciously or erroneously, the student must first confer with the faculty member. 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.
  - B. Students should refer to university policy *3.04.07 Grading* for specific grading procedures.
  - C. If the problem cannot be resolved, the student has the right to appeal the grade, as described in section II.
- II. Formal Resolution Process for All Students
  - A. If the student chooses to appeal the course grade, they 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 student has to appeal.
  - B. The student 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 student must provide a comprehensive statement that fully describes and documents all evidence that supports their claim.
  - D. Upon receiving the student'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 student's appeal. The panel designee will request the faculty member involved in the appeal to submit a written response to the student'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 student 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 student'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 their 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 student'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. Students 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 Students

If either party chooses to appeal the panel's decision, they 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 their 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 student's official academic record and, upon request, will be made available to all Capella boards and any appropriate regulatory bodies.
- F. Duration of Process  
The duration of the formal appeal process is dependent on the timing and complexities of the individual circumstance. Students will be notified of the status of their formal appeal as soon as practicable upon submitting their appeal in writing via mail or email.

**POLICY OWNERS**

Academic Owner: Provost

Operations Owner: Office of Academic and Community Standards

**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 Student Code of Conduct

University policy 4.02.03 Student 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; 4-1-18; 5-23-19; 4-1-20; 1-28-21; 3-26-21; 7-1-24; 8-19-24; 4-1-25

Formerly university policy 02.71 Appealing a Grade