

**Temple University**  
**School of Communications and Theater**  
**Procedures for Complaints and Appeals of Grades**

The faculty has the responsibility to maintain academic standards and to recommend the award of degrees and grades. Hence, no faculty can accept the imposition of non-academic standards or administrative fiat with respect to these awards. But since individual members of the faculty are human, they may commit human error. It is for this reason that the faculty of the School of Communications and Theater institutes the following procedures. However, for the benefit of all, informal procedures should be followed whenever possible, without prejudicing more formal proceedings should the informal approach fail.

1) Each complainant and each respondent has full rights to a hearing; proper notice; counsel\*; discovery (e.g. all records should be available to both parties; oral testimony normally should be in the presence of all concerned parties, with adequate opportunity for questioning, comment, and rebuttal testimony); a written report of the case and the decision reached; a decision based solely upon the record; and the services of an impartial decision maker (or makers) at each level of appeal.

2) In all cases, the burden of proof will be on the complainant. In most instances, the decision will be based on the preponderance of evidence.

3) The presumption, in a matter involving academic standards such as grading, is that the faculty member has the traditional freedom to conduct classes as he or she sees fit. To prove abuse of this right requires more than unsupported opinion of another person or persons. To overrule a faculty member's judgment is an extremely serious step, to be undertaken only by the faculty as a whole in the rarest of circumstances. On the other hand, such a faculty member always should be willing to reconsider his or her actions and criteria when asked to do so – particularly by one's peers after appropriate proceedings. Obviously, it is unacceptable for any administrator to change a grade (or symbol such as "I" or "W") without the acquiescence of the instructor who originally assigned the grade, (unless, of course, that instructor has died, become incapacitated, or has left the university, and faculty familiar with the subject matter have recommended the change).

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\*While either party is entitled to counsel, it is not necessary. A fellow student, ombudsman, colleague, or other person may be used. Any lawyer's fees are the responsibility of the party who hires the lawyer. Any counsel may be used for advice; they do not have the right to participate more fully.

4) In any student dispute with an instructor, the student must initially make every effort to discuss the matter with the instructor, and reconcile it if at all possible. This is an essential first step; since even if you try to go "over the instructor's head" by appealing first to an administrator, you will be sent back to square one – the instructor – in every case.

- 5) An appeal of a grade should be taken within thirty (30) days of the next subsequent (fall or spring) semester.
- 6) All appeals must be in writing and must specify exactly what is being objected to and what relief is sought.
- 7) If the student is still dissatisfied after meeting with the instructor, an appeal may be made to the chair of the department in which the instructor is a member. It is the chair's responsibility to be certain that the rights of the instructor as well as the rights of the student are protected.
- 8) If the chair is unable to satisfy both parties, he or she may appoint an "advisory" committee. This committee will provide a decision to the chair about the case. The committee also has the responsibility of developing the record upon which any further appeals are made, and should accomplish this by obtaining all pertinent documents, and, if necessary, oral testimony.
- 9) The size and composition of any such committee shall be at the discretion of the chair.
- 10) All documents used by this (and any appeals) body in arriving at its decisions should be available to both the student and the faculty member. The committee has the right to any and all documents in the University's possession that deal with the student that it believes to be pertinent to the case. While the burden of proof should be on the student making the appeal, any committee (or individual hearing officer) may go further to satisfy itself that justice and the interests of both the student and the program are being fully considered.
- 11) If oral testimony is to be received, the student and the instructor should be given advance notice and permitted the opportunity to question and comment. Either party may ask the committee to request other individuals in possession of pertinent facts to testify. The committee may not compel such appearances (or written testimony), but it is hoped and expected that anyone requested to testify will do so. There may be times when a member or members of the committee will be delegated to obtain information from someone who cannot or need not be queried by the full committee. In such an event, the pertinent testimony should be reduced to writing, and this written material should be available to parties involved as well as to the committee.
- 12) Each committee should keep accurate records that detail what it did, what questions were before it, what evidence it considered, and what it concluded. A written report will be provided in timely fashion to the student and the instructor, and all documentation will be preserved. Appellant bodies should provide the specific reasoning behind any decision far enough in advance so that interested parties can take exceptions and suggest corrections to the record.

13) The report of the advisory committee goes to the departmental chair, irrespective of whether the committee has been able to reconcile the parties. The chair shall once again try to reconcile the parties. If this effort fails, the chair shall deliver to the parties a formal decision in writing.

14) Should the student or the instructor wish to pursue the matter further, the next step will be an appeal to the Dean of the School. If the Dean cannot achieve reconciliation, he or she shall establish an ad hoc committee to consider the appeal and report back to the Dean.

15) Even though records of any case should be retained in the student's file until graduation and may be used in any further investigatory or appeals procedures, the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act apply to both the record and the announcement of disciplinary or similar actions and decisions. All formal decisions or determinations by the chair, departmental faculty, or Dean (or committees appointed by one or more of these) shall be placed in the student's official record.

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