

Memorandum

Date: November 10, 2017
To: Andrew Wright, president, UA Little Rock Faculty Assembly and Senate
From: Amanda Nolen, chair, Academic Integrity and Grievance Committee
RE: Recommendations for revision to policies related to grade appeals and academic offenses.

In reviewing the policies and considering any recommendations, we attempted to work within the framework proposed by the Judicial Policy Ad Hoc Committee. Our primary objectives were to update the policies where needed and to clarify the language when possible to promote accessibility to due process for both students and faculty.

Additionally, in order to inform our recommendations, the AIGC chairperson sought input from the SGA president, GSA president, the associate dean of students, the associate vice chancellor for academic affairs, and the registrar. Finally, we distributed the documents to the chairs of both Undergraduate Council and Graduate Council. Below is a summary of our recommendations for revision to each policy. We have identified those recommendations that would result in a change in process separate from those recommendations resulting in simply changing/clarifying language.

Grade Appeals***PROCESS CHANGE - Appealing a Program Requirement Evaluation External to Course Grades:***

Propose to revise current policy to add language throughout to expand the definition of what can be appealed to include grades earned from program requirements that do not reside within a course.

PROCESS CHANGE – Prohibiting Simultaneous Grade Appeal and Academic Offense Appeal:

Propose to add language to grade appeal policy that prohibits a grade appeal from moving forward while there is a pending academic integrity matter involving the student, the instructor, and the course/program requirement.

PROCESS CHANGE – Consequences of Abusing Policy: Propose to add language giving AIGC panel authority to refer a student who is violating the Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Behavior to the Office of the Dean of Students.

PROCESS CHANGE – Appearing via Internet: We propose that the student, instructor, or witnesses may participate in the hearing using synchronous technology if appearing in person is a hardship.

PROCESS CHANGE – Distribution of Summary of the Findings from the Panel: Current practice is that the letter summarizing the decision of the panel is distributed by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. We propose to change the policy to reflect that current practice.

CLARIFICATION - Defining “Instructor”: Throughout the policy we substituted “instructor” for faculty and further defined it to include program coordinators when the appeal involves a program requirement not resulting in a course grade.

CLARIFICATION – Clarify references to AIGC, Panels, and Chairpersons: When the policy is referring to the AIGC panel that hears the appeal and renders a decision, we used “hearing panel”. We also clearly distinguished between the hearing panel chair and the AIGC chair.

CLARIFICATION – Grounds for Grade Appeal: We clearly define the grounds for a grade appeal must reside in “arbitrary grading” defined as “assigning a grade using standards that were substantially different from those announced or described in the course syllabus or program documents.”

CLARIFICATION – Simplification of Language: Whenever possible, we tried to simplify the language of the policy. That sometimes resulted in word substitutions. It also required a re-organization of the front-matter leading up to the Steps to Redress. Through the clarification, we were careful not to unintentionally change the process or modify the rights of the student or instructor, except for those instances already addressed.

Academic Misconduct of a Student

PROCESS CHANGE – Ability to Drop the Course: If a student is found not to be responsible for academic misconduct, it is possible that student may wish to drop the course. We propose in that event, the student receive any tuition reimbursement they may have been eligible for had they been allowed to drop when they were accused of misconduct.

PROCESS CHANGE – Open or Closed Meetings: We propose to eliminate any reference to holding open meetings where additional problems may arise related to student and instructor privacy.

PROCESS CHANGE – Appearing In-person: We propose that the student, instructor, or witnesses may participate in the hearing using synchronous technology if appearing in person is a hardship.

CLARIFICATION – Elimination of References to Guilt: Throughout the policy we revised language that references “guilt,” “innocence,” and “charge” as we considered the terminology inappropriate for an internal process involving students that is not a legal procedure. We revised to use more appropriate language such as “responsible,” “not responsible,” and “alleged violation.”

CLARIFICATION – Timeline: There were inconsistencies within the timeline as presented in the policy regarding when student must meet with the instructor, meet with a representative from the office of the dean of students, and proceeding to AIGC. We maintained the overall 10 day window within which a student can file an appeal but changed the shorter timelines embedded within those 10 days to allow for due process and the realities of faculty workloads.

CLARIFICATION – Clarify references to AIGC, Panels, and Chairpersons: When the policy is referring to the AIGC panel that hears the appeal and renders a decision, we used “hearing panel”. We also clearly distinguished between the hearing panel chair and the AIGC chair.