Grade Appeals

UNIVERSITY POLICY #221

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SECTION 1: General Information

1.1 Grade appeal procedures specified in academic program handbooks supersede this Policy.

1.2 The evaluation of student performance is based on the professional judgments of instructors, and matters of academic judgment cannot be appealed. Only final grades may be appealed. In a grade appeal, the student has the burden of proof in establishing cause for a grade change. The only bases on which a grade may be appealed are:

1.2.1 The grade awarded was arbitrary, capricious, or prejudiced, (for example: the instructor did not apply the same grading criteria to the appealing student as for other students); or

1.2.2 The grade assigned was awarded as the result of an error in calculating, recording, or reporting a final grade.

SECTION 2: Level 1 – Informal Instructor Conference

2.1 Any student wishing to appeal a grade must contact the instructor to present the case within 15 business days of receiving the final grade. This conference may be conducted by email or other electronic means. If the instructor does not respond within 5 days, the student should contact the Program Director or Department Chair for assistance.

2.2 If the conference results in a resolution that is satisfactory to the student and instructor, no further action is required.

SECTION 3: Level 2 – Academic Appeals Committee

3.1 If the dispute cannot be resolved through the Level I instructor conference, the student may file a formal grade appeal by completing the Level 2 Grade Appeal Form located on the webpage of the office of the Provost at https://westliberty.edu/provost-office/resources/. The Level 2 appeal must be initiated within 10 business days of the conclusion of the Level 1 conference.

3.2 The Office of the Provost will schedule a hearing of the Academic Appeals Committee as soon as possible after receipt of the Level 2 Grade Appeal form. Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate student and instructor preferences for the hearing date;

however the hearing shall not be delayed beyond the mid-point of the semester following that during which the course was taken. Either party may elect to participate via electronic means or by written submission only.

3.2.1 Hearing the case will be a committee of three full-time faculty members and two students. The Provost or designee will chair the committee as a non-voting member.

3.2.2 The faculty members will be chosen from the standing Academic Appeals Committee. Each college shall designate one full-time faculty member to serve on the Academic Appeals Committee and one alternate. For any given case, the faculty members chosen will be from outside the college in which the appeal arose.

3.2.3 The students will be chosen from the standing Academic Appeals Committee. Faculty members from each college will nominate students at the beginning of the academic year, and the dean will forward these names to the Provost for consideration. For any given case, the students chosen will be from outside the college in which the appeal arose.

3.2.4 A copy of the appeal form will be routed to the Program Director or Department Chair and the Dean of the College in which the course was offered for informational purposes.

3.2.5 A copy of the appeal form and any documentation submitted by the student will be shared with the members of the committee and the instructor in advance of the hearing.

3.3 At the hearing, the student and instructor will each be given an opportunity to state their case, provide written evidence, provide witness testimony, and answer committee members' questions. The student will make the first presentation.

3.4 Both the student and instructor may be accompanied by an advisor of her or his choosing from the university (student, faculty, or staff). Such advisors may consult with their advisees, but may not speak on their behalf or otherwise participate directly in the proceedings unless given specific permission to do so by the committee chair. Neither party is permitted to bring an attorney into the hearing. The Academic Appeals Committee chair shall ensure minutes of the work of the committee, including a record of the final vote, are recorded.

3.5 The committee may request any individual to give testimony. After each side has had the opportunity to present evidence and make statements, the committee will meet to deliberate. The committee may request additional information from either party or any

other source. They may also ask follow-up questions of any party that participated in the hearing via written statement.

3.6 The final decision of the committee will be made by majority vote. The decision shall be forwarded to the student, instructor, and dean involved within 5 business days of the hearing. If the decision requires a change of grade, the instructor shall take action in accordance with the committee's decision by contacting the registrar's office to change the grade. If the instructor does not act within five business days, the dean shall make the necessary grade adjustment.

3.7 The decision of the committee is final. There is no further appeal process.

3.8 The minutes of the work of the committee shall be maintained in the Provost's Office for at least three years and shall remain confidential. Access shall be limited to the involved student and instructor, and appropriate staff and administrators.