

# Academic Appeals

## **POLICY TITLE: Academic Appeals**

Students attending Fox Valley Technical College may appeal a variety of decisions made by the institution that directly impact their academic standing or progress including, but not limited to:

- Final course grades
- Transfer credit awards
- Graduation requirements being satisfied
- Academic probation and suspension

## **Grading and Evaluation**

The evaluation and grading of academic performance are subject to the professional judgment of each instructor. Considerable professional discretion is required in these judgments. A justifiable margin of difference can exist between the evaluation of the same academic performance made by two or more professional persons.

A faculty member must review an examination or other written assignments with a student, regardless of the grade received, provided the student has complied with reasonable preconditions, such as attending a review session or making an appointment within a specified time. A faculty member is not, however, expected to debate the grading.

## **Appeal Process**

Before any academic appeal is filed, it is required that the student contact the instructor or other staff member directly involved with the decision to clarify the issue(s). In the event that the academic issue(s) cannot be resolved with the faculty member, the following procedure will be followed.

- I. Within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the posting of the student's final course grade and after a formal meeting with the faculty member to discuss concerns, a student may appeal a grade by submitting a written petition to the Division Dean or Executive Dean alleging that the grade received was the result of arbitrary or capricious grading. This means that (1) assignment of a grade on the basis of factors substantially different from those previously announced in the course syllabus, oral instructions, or written instructions, or (2) assignment of a grade to the student by more exacting or demanding criteria than were applied to other students in that course. The judgment of an instructor in assessing the quality of a student's work is not appealable on other grounds.
  - A. The Division Dean or Executive Dean will review the appeal and consult with the necessary individuals (student, instructor, and other parties) to determine if the grade meets the standards above.

- B. If the appeal is found to have merit the Dean or Executive Dean will work with the instructor to resolve the appeal in a manner that results in the student's work being fairly evaluated by the instructor. This does not mean that a student will receive a higher grade. It only ensures that students are graded in accordance with the standards set out for the course and for other students in the course.
  - C. If the appeal is found to have no merit, the student will be notified in writing within 14 days of the appeal.
- II. If a student is not satisfied with the decision of the Dean or Executive Dean, they may appeal that decision by doing the following:
- A. Submit to the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) a written petition outlining the reasons they believe that the decision regarding the initial appeal was in error. This petition should cite new or compelling evidence not considered by the Dean or Executive Dean in the appeal process. Simple disagreement with the appeal decision will not result in favorable treatment of the appeal.
  - B. The Chief Academic Officer (CAO) will convene a three-member panel of disinterested parties (not from the student's program or division) to review the written petition. This committee will consist of one dean or executive dean, one faculty member, and one student.
  - C. The Academic Review Committee will review the written documentation submitted by the student and make a determination based solely on the written petition. The committee will not meet with either the student or the academic dean/executive dean during this process.
  - D. If the Academic Review Committee determines that no new or compelling information has been presented in the written document, then the committee will instruct the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) to prepare a final written determination. No further appeals will be considered.
  - E. If the Academic Review Committee determines that the appeal should be heard by a full Academic Appeals Committee, they will recommend to the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) that a committee be convened for purposes of hearing the final appeal. The CAO will convene the committee at the earliest convenience of the members and the student.
    - i. The Academic Appeals Committee is a standing committee appointed annually by the Chief Academic Officer (CAO). The committee membership includes one dean or associate dean, two faculty (nominated by the Faculty Association), two students (nominated by the SGA executive board), and the academic vice president (or administrative designee) who chairs the committee. Alternates will be identified in each of these groups to ensure the committee members acting on a grievance have no direct relationship to the issue, course or program of study.

1. The Academic Appeals Committee reviews the grievance and conducts a hearing with the student and instructor or other appropriate staff (if necessary). The committee makes the final decision on the matter, preferably by group consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, a vote will be taken. The Chief Academic Officer (CAO) (or designee) will not be a voting member. All discussions will be kept confidential by committee members.
  - a. If the appeal is found to have merit the Academic Appeals Committee will instruct the Dean or Executive Dean will work with the instructor to resolve the appeal in a manner that results in the student's work being fairly evaluated by the instructor. This does not mean that a student will receive a higher grade. It only ensures that students are graded in accordance with the standards set out for the course and for other students in the course.
  - b. If the appeal is found to have no merit, the process will end. The decision of the committee is final and no further appeals will be heard.

Within five (5) business days of the committee's action, the student will be mailed a letter from the office of the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) outlining the committee's decision.