



UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY

Undergraduate students in the School of Education, Southern Illinois University Carbondale shall have the right to appeal for redress of grievances through established channels under the conditions stated below. Access to these channels is restricted to complaints by students alleging that some member of the School of Education community has caused the student to suffer some specific harm related to: 1) the award of a course grade; 2) admission to and/or retention in the Teacher Education Program (TEP); 3) academic advisement; or 4) graduation.

Grievances which have been brought to a hearing under another campus grievance procedure shall not be brought to a hearing under this procedure.¹

GRIEVANCE OF A COURSE GRADE

With respect to students' complaints alleging capricious grading, the following guidelines shall apply: instructors are expected to evaluate student work according to sound academic standards. Equitable requirements should be required of all students in a class, and grades should be assigned without departing substantially from announced procedures. It is the instructor's prerogative to assign grades in accordance with his/her academic/professional judgment, and the student assumes the burden of proof in the appeals process. Grounds for appeal include: (1) the application of non-academic criteria in the grading process, as listed in the University's nondiscrimination and affirmative action statements: race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital status, or handicap; (2) the assignment of a course grade by criteria not directly reflective of performance relative to course requirements; and (3) the assignment of a course grade by standards different from those which were applied by the instructor to other students in the course.

Academic Grievance Procedure

An undergraduate student seeking redress through grievance (appellant) must first attempt to resolve the matter informally by contacting the party against whom redress is sought (respondent). If the dispute is not resolved at this stage, the student should contact the respondent's unit chair/director, who will attempt to resolve the dispute. In the event that the dispute is not resolved informally, a student may ask for and receive a hearing at the unit level. If a final grade has been assigned, the grade must be changed to an "incomplete" until the grievance process has been completed. If the incident occurs during the spring semester and the student will not be in residence for the summer semester, she/he may request an extension of the deadline to the fall semester following by petitioning the unit chair/director in writing. Such a request shall normally be granted as long as the petition is received on or before the 10th day of classes of the summer term following; however, the final decision is that of the unit chair/director.

The request for a hearing must state the following:

1. Name of the grievant.
2. Program in which the grievant is enrolled.
3. Name and title of the person(s) against whom the grievance is being filed.
4. Current address and phone number of the grievant.
5. Statement of the grievance including descriptions of the incident(s) involved, dates(s) of occurrence, what remedy is being sought, as well as any supporting documents.

¹Cases involving academic dishonesty will be handled according to the Student Conduct Code. Matters involving graduate students will be handled according to the Academic Grievances Procedures in the *Graduate Catalog*. Separate grievance procedures exist for cases covered by the University Policy on Sexual Harassment, the Policy Accommodating Religious Observances of Students, the Policy on Release of Student Information and Access to Student Records at Southern Illinois University, the Policy on Immunization of Enrolled Students, the Policy on the Determination of Residency Status, and the University's response to comply with *Americans with Disability Act*. These procedures are published in the Undergraduate Catalog. Undergraduate students employed as student workers are covered by a student worker grievance procedure, which is administered by the Financial Aid Office.

Unit Action on Grievance

Upon receiving a written request for a hearing regarding an academic grievance, the unit chair/director shall send the respondent a copy of the grievance, who will provide the unit chair/director with a written response within fifteen days. The unit chair/director shall then consider the grievance and response, or forward the grievance and response to the unit's grievance committee for consideration. If the matter will be heard by a grievance committee, the unit chair/director shall notify the parties of the identity of the individuals who have been selected to serve on the grievance committee.³ The participation of any committee member may be challenged for cause. If the unit chair/director determines that the challenge is valid, she/he shall name a substitute.

The unit chair/director or committee chair shall request of both parties copies of any documents and a list of witnesses they wish to introduce. These must be submitted within fifteen days of receipt of the request. The unit chair/director or committee chair shall convene a hearing within fifteen days of receipt of the substantiating documents. These documents shall be available to both parties at least five days prior to the hearing.

The hearing shall be conducted by the unit chair/director or by the committee according to the hearing procedures which are outlined in the Appendix. In the absence of compelling circumstances, the unit chair/director shall render a decision within fifteen days, or the grievance committee shall make its recommendation on the grievance to the unit chair/director within fifteen days after the conclusion of the hearing.

²hereinafter 'day' refers to all days when classes are in session excluding holidays and weekends.

³Unit Undergraduate Student Grievance Committee: A unit undergraduate student grievance committee will be advisory to the unit chair/director and will submit its findings and recommendations to the chair/director. The committee shall consist of three members. The unit chair/director may designate an existing department committee to serve in such capacity (subject to the qualifications listed herein), or may appoint an ad-hoc undergraduate student grievance committee. The members of the committee shall be appointed whenever possible from the program in the school in which the grievance arose. Of those members, two shall be appointed from the full-time faculty and one shall be appointed from the undergraduate student body in good academic standing. The undergraduate student grievance committee shall meet and elect its chair from among the faculty membership. Any faculty member involved in the dispute shall not be appointed to the grievance committee.

Upon receipt of the committee's recommendation, the unit chair/director shall decide to accept or reject the committee's recommendation and render a decision on the grievance within fifteen days. The decision and the reasons for it shall be submitted in writing to the parties, to the committee members, if any, and to the Dean of the School of Education at the same time.

The unit chair/director shall advise the parties of their right to appeal to the Dean of the School of Education. Hearings of appeals will not be automatically granted. Dissatisfaction with the decision shall not be sufficient grounds for appeal. The appellant must demonstrate that the decision at the unit level was in error.

GRIEVANCE OF ADVISEMENT OR ADMISSION/RETENTION/GRADUATION DECISIONS

With respect to students' complaints relating to admission to and/or retention in the Teacher Education Program, the Director of Teacher Education, School of Education, will hear the student's complaint. Complaints concerning academic advisement and graduation will be heard by the Chief Academic Advisor, School of Education. The Director of Teacher Education or the Chief Academic Advisor will consider evidence, render a decision, and notify the student of the decision in writing within fifteen days of the meeting with the student. A student who wishes to appeal the decision of the Director of Teacher Education or the Chief Academic Advisor must follow the appeals process within the School of Education listed in this document.

APPEALS OF DECISIONS BY THE UNIT, DIRECTOR OF TEACHER EDUCATION, OR CHIEF ACADEMIC ADVISOR TO THE DEAN, SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Filing An Appeal

If an undergraduate student wishes to appeal a decision of the unit, Director of Teacher Education, or Chief Academic Advisor, she/he must file a written appeal with the Dean of the School of Education within twenty days of receipt of the lower decision. The appeal must state the following:

1. Name of the appellant.
2. Program in which the appellant is enrolled.
3. Name and title of the person(s) against whom the original grievance was filed.
4. Current address and phone number of the appellant.
5. Copies of the original statement of grievance, the response by the person against whom it was filed, supporting documents, as well as a statement of what remedy is being sought.
6. Summary of grievance proceedings held at the unit level and the decision(s) rendered at that time.
7. Statement of why the previous decision may be in error.
8. Request, if desired, for either an administrative or grievance appeal hearing.

Upon receiving a written appeal, the Dean⁴ shall determine whether or not the appeal has merit (sufficient grounds) and should move forward. If so, the Dean will at the same time, determine whether the hearing agent will be administrative or a committee. If it is determined that the appeal does not have merit, the Dean will inform both parties in writing of the reason(s) for denial within fifteen days.

Procedures for Appeal Hearing in the School of Education

The Dean of the School of Education is responsible for making the final decision in the appeal of a grievance decision by the unit chair/director, Director of Teacher Education, or Chief Academic Advisor. If the appeal will be heard by a committee, the Dean will direct the School Advisory Committee to select a hearing committee to hear the case and submit a recommendation to the Dean. This is done according to the following procedures:

- a. The School Advisory Committee selects a hearing committee composed of at least three faculty members, along with one graduate and one undergraduate student. While members of this committee will usually be members of the School Advisory Committee, it may be necessary, in some instances, to select members from outside the committee. The hearing committee shall meet and select a chair from the faculty membership.
- b. All parties have the right to present evidence on their behalf. Any new evidence introduced in the appeals process must be on file with the chair of the School Advisory Committee one week prior to the student's scheduled hearing. All new materials will be distributed to both parties involved in the appeals process at that time.
- c. All parties have the right to bring witnesses. The student may bring an advisor who will not be permitted to address the committee directly on appeals from the chairs. In the following three situations only, the student may have advice and assistance in preparing and presenting the appeal:
 - (1) Appeals concerning admission to the Teacher Education Program,
 - (2) Appeals concerning retention in the Teacher Education Program; or,
 - (3) Appeals concerning recommendation for certification.
- d. The hearing committee meets within fifteen days of the receipt of the student's appeal, and the student is sent notification of the time and place of the hearing by the committee chair no later than five days prior to the hearing.
- e. The hearing committee arrives at a decision on the basis of a simple majority. The recommendation of the committee is relayed in writing by the committee chair to the Dean of the School of Education within fifteen days of the conclusion of the hearing.

⁴The Dean may appoint a designee to assume his/her responsibilities pertaining to all matters relating to a grievance appeal.

- (1) Appeals concerning admission to the Teacher Education Program,
 - (2) Appeals concerning retention in the Teacher Education Program; or,
 - (3) Appeals concerning recommendation for certification.
- f. The hearing committee, as described above, is not expected to meet during the first two weeks nor the last two weeks of a semester, nor will it usually meet during vacation periods or summer. During these times, an administrative hearing officer chosen by the Dean may substitute for the committee, or the Dean may choose to hear the case.
 - g. The Dean of the School of Education makes the final decision within the School of Education and notifies the student, in writing, of the decision within fifteen days of the receipt of the committee's recommendation.

Appeal of the decision by the Dean of the School of Education

If the individual is not satisfied with the decision of the Dean of the School of Education, a written argument stating the reasons for such dissatisfaction may be submitted to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, within fifteen days after the date that delivery of the decision was tendered by the U.S. Postal Service to the individual. Such written argument shall be attached to the Dean's decision and remain therewith throughout the remainder of the process.

Appendix (Undergraduate Student Grievance Policy)

UNIT HEARING PROCEDURES

1. The principal parties to the grievance shall have the right to be accompanied by an advisor of their choice. The advisers may speak on behalf of their clients only with the approval of the unit chair/director, the Dean of the School of Education, or the grievance committee.
2. All hearings shall be open unless either of the parties requests that the hearings be closed. If the hearing is closed, only the parties, their advisers, and either the unit chair/director or the Dean or the grievance committee shall be present during the taking of evidence. Witnesses for either party shall be present only while giving testimony if the hearing is closed.
3. All hearings shall be audio recorded. The recording will be deposited in the office of the unit chair/director at the conclusion of the hearing. These recordings shall be stored for five years after which time they will be destroyed.
4. Each party may call witnesses to present evidence. Each party shall have the right to examine any witness called by the opposing party. If a witness is unable to appear, the committee may allow depositions. If the presence of a witness is required to ensure fairness to all parties and the witness is physically unable to attend, the hearing will not be postponed. Rather, while testimony of such witnesses by audio recording, by telephone conference, by letter, by facsimile, by email, or by video conferencing is considered less viable, it may be allowed.
5. The grievance committee will arrive at a decision based on a simple majority vote. However, the unit chair/director or the Dean may reject the recommendation by the committee. The unit chair/director or Dean will decide all matters, procedural and substantive.
6. Each party may make an opening and a closing statement.
7. Decisions by the unit chair/director or the grievance committee will be based on the preponderance of the evidence.

NOTE: The undergraduate student grievance policy presented in this document was adapted for use in the School of Education, Southern Illinois University Carbondale from the undergraduate grievance policy published by the College of Liberal Arts, Southern Illinois University Carbondale with the permission of Dr. Alan Vaux, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts provided on January 15, 2010.

