

## Policy and Procedure

**Policy Number:** 236R

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**Division/Department:** Academic Affairs

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**Subject:** Academic Grade Appeal

**Authorities:** MnSCU Policy 3.8 states, “Grade appeals must be handled under a separate college/university academic policy.” **Higher Learning Commission Criteria for Accreditation** states, “Instructors have the authority for the assignment of grades. (This requirement allows for collective responsibility, as when a faculty committee has the authority to override a grade on appeal.)”

### Purpose:

The responsibility for evaluating student work and assigning grades lies with the instructor of the course. The purpose of the grade appeal policy is to provide a review process

- 1) For a student to understand the reasons why the grade was assigned
- 2) For the instructor to become aware of and correct possible errors
- 3) To correct cases in which a grade is determined to have been assigned based on arbitrary or capricious action, or other reasons not related to academic performance

For the purpose of this policy, arbitrary or capricious is defined as the assignment of a course grade through means that are erratic, irregular, or inconsistent with grading policies published in the course syllabus and/or inexplicably different from those applied to other students enrolled in the same course.

There shall be one policy for the appeal of a course grade; all students will follow this policy when appealing a course grade. However, students in the Nursing and Health Sciences Programs may appeal other academic concerns (program dismissals, dismissals from clinicals, etc.) using established guidelines outlined in their Program Handbooks.

A student who believes a grade was awarded because of bias in violation of Board Policy 1B.1 should file a complaint with Pine Technical College’s Affirmative Action Official. The complaint will be evaluated and processed under System Procedure 1B1.1. As part of the investigation into the allegation, the designated official may use the Grade Appeal Process.

### Policy:

Faculty members are vested with the authority to establish course requirements and standards of performance. It is the responsibility of faculty to articulate and communicate course requirements and standards of performance to students at the beginning of each course and apply all grading criteria uniformly and in a timely manner. Final grades submitted by faculty to the Registrar’s Office are presumed to be accurate and final.

The Academic Grade Appeal provides the student with an opportunity to appeal a course grade that the student believes has been assigned in an arbitrary or capricious manner or other reasons not related to academic performance. There is a presumption that grades assigned by faculty members are correct; thus, the burden of proof rests with the student who is appealing; the student must initiate the process and be prepared to present supporting documentation. Under this policy, the college will not change the grade assigned by an instructor unless presented with sufficient evidence that the instructor's grading procedure did not reflect sound educational practices or was inconsistent with the common course outline and course syllabus.

No adverse action will be taken against a student who chooses to utilize this process.

Students who believe their course grade reflects unsubstantiated academic evaluation may initiate and pursue a grade change appeal in accordance with provisions of this document. At the same time, all academic rights and privileges of faculty members are to be honored in this process. Students may submit a formal grade appeal only when they believe that the grade was arbitrary, capricious, or based on other reasons not related to academic performance.

### **Procedure**

1. When a student believes that he/she has received an incorrect academic grade, he/she should seek out the involved faculty member(s), state the nature of the grievance, and make a serious attempt to mutually resolve the issue.
2. If the student and the instructor are unable to reach agreement and the student still believes they received an incorrect grade, he/she may submit a formal grade appeal using the Grade Appeal Form available in the Academic Affairs Department. The student shall present a written, signed statement of the nature of the grievance and identify the student's efforts to resolve with faculty. The instructor will document the response to student's request. The written grade appeal will be submitted to the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) within 30 calendar days after the grade was issued by the college. The CAO will meet with the student and confer with the instructor regarding the appeal and will issue a written decision within 15 instructional days of receiving the Grade Appeal Form.
3. If either the student or faculty member disagrees with the CAO decision, they can request a hearing before the Academic Appeals Committee. The request for a hearing must be submitted in writing to the CAO. If the written request for a hearing is not received within 10 instructional days after the CAO decision, this decision shall be final and posted to the student's transcript. If the request for a hearing is timely, the CAO will convene the Academic Appeals Committee, which shall be comprised of one (1) student appointed by the Chief Student Affairs Officer (CSAO), one (1) representative of the college managers group (excluding CSAO) appointed by the college president; and two (2) faculty members appointed by the MSCF president. The CAO will convene the Academic Appeals Committee within 15 instructional days from receipt of the written request for a hearing. The hearing shall be governed by the following rules:

- a. The CAO shall be the presiding officer of the hearing.
- b. Both parties shall have the right to have her/his defense conducted by an advisor of his/her choice, the right to hear and examine adverse witnesses, and the right to testify and present evidence and witnesses in her/his behalf.
- c. Both parties shall have an opportunity of settlement before the committee deliberates.
- d. The committee will deliberate, vote, and render a decision
- e. If the deliberation results in a tie, the CAO shall cast the deciding vote.
- f. Within five (5) instructional days of the hearing, the CAO shall inform the student, instructor, MSCF president, CSAO and Registrar of the decision in writing.
- g. The decision of the Academic Appeals Committee shall be final.

**Responsibilities:**

1. The CAO is responsible for the overall administration of the grade appeals process and will maintain case files for a period of no less than five (5) years.
2. The CSAO will appoint one (1) student to serve on the grade appeal committee.
3. The college president will be responsible for appointing one (1) manager to serve on the Academic Appeals Committee.
4. MSCF president will be responsible for appointing two (2) faculty members to serve on the Academic Appeals Committee.
5. The Registrar will ensure that the student transcript accurately reflects the grade as determined through the grade appeals process.

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Reviewed by Student Senate: NA

Approved:

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Robert L. Musgrove, President

DATE: