

College of Arts and Sciences
PROCEDURES FOR USE IN APPEALING
ALLEGEDLY CAPRICIOUS SEMESTER GRADES
OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

The following procedures are available only for review of alleged capricious grading, and not for review of the judgment of an instructor in assessing the quality of a student's work. Capricious grading, as that term is used herein, is limited to one or more of the following:

1. The assignment of a grade to a particular undergraduate student on some basis other than performance in the course.
2. The assignment of a grade to a particular undergraduate student by more exacting or demanding standards than were applied to other equivalent undergraduate students in that section.
3. The assignment of a grade by a substantial departure from the instructor's standards announced during the first fourth of the term.

THE RIGHT OF FAIR AND EQUAL EVALUATION OF STUDENTS

The assessment of the quality of a student's academic performance is one of the major professional responsibilities of university faculty members and is solely and properly their responsibility. It is essential for the standards of the academic program at Saint Louis University and the integrity of the degrees conferred by this university that the professional judgments of faculty members not be subject to pressures or other interference from any source.

It is necessary, however, that any semester grade be based on evidence of the student's performance in a course, that the student have access to the evidence, that the instructor be willing to explain the basis upon which the grade was determined, and that a grade be determined in accordance with announced guidelines. These guidelines should be announced sometime during the first one-fourth of the term.

APPEAL PROCEDURES

A student who believes a semester grade is capricious may seek clarification in writing within six months after the final grade has been assigned by the instructor, and where appropriate, redress as follows:

1. The student shall confer with the instructor, informing the instructor of questions concerning the grade and seeking to understand fully the grounds and procedures the instructor has used in determining the grade. The aim of such a conference is to reach mutual understanding about the grade, the process by which it was assigned, and to correct errors, if any, in the grade.
2. If after consultation with the instructor the student believes that a grade is capricious, the student will confer with the Chair of the Department in which the course was offered. The

Chair will consult with the instructor and the student separately or together in an attempt to reach a resolution of the matter. If the matter is not resolved at this level, the Chair will convene an intra-departmental grade review committee consisting of the Chair and two faculty members. The student's written appeal request will be considered and the instructor will also respond to the student's petition in writing. The grade review committee will also interview both the instructor and the student; and subsequently, the committee will recommend either that the grade was not assigned capriciously and shall stand or that the grade may have been assigned capriciously and the matter merits further consideration. The recommendation of the departmental grade review committee will be communicated to the student, the instructor, and the Dean by the Departmental Chair.

3. If the matter has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the student and the instructor, either may petition the Dean to convene an *ad hoc* grade review subcommittee to consist of two faculty members of the College of Arts and Sciences from outside of the instructor's department and the Dean or his or her representative.

This subcommittee shall recommend to the Dean either that the grade should stand, or that it should be changed; and shall notify both the student and the instructor if its recommendation. The Dean shall then render a decision and notify all parties of his or her action.¹

PROTECTION OF THE INSTRUCTOR'S RIGHTS

The decision of a grade review subcommittee will neither be used as a cause for any disciplinary action nor dismissal of a tenured faculty member or a non-tenured faculty member before the expiration of a contract period. Nor shall a decision, by itself, be a basis for any other disciplinary action. Any disciplinary actions shall be in accordance with regular university procedures. All evidence considered by a grade review subcommittee shall be made available to any body which may be considering disciplinary action concerning an instructor whose grading has been found by a grade review subcommittee to be capricious. That body shall make an independent determination based upon its own consideration of all evidence, irrespective of the findings of the grade review subcommittee.

July 1, 2000

¹ A written record should be kept at all stages of the appeal process.