

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE
HELEN BADER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WELFARE

GRADUATE STUDENT APPEALS PROCEDURES

April 1, 2002

PURPOSE:

Federal law and UWM policies mandate that programs/departments have specific appeal procedures for graduate students who receive an adverse decision in an academic matter (e.g., dropping a course, grades, scholastic standing, and graduation decisions). The purpose of these procedures is to ensure that students' rights are protected.

The final authority in all appeals for graduate students, regardless of their academic unit, is the Dean of The Graduate School and Research. Appeals which reach the Graduate School are known as "step three" appeals. The procedures are specified in The Graduate School Bulletin. Appeals acted upon within the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare are known as "step one" and "step two" appeals. The procedures which follow concern step one and step two appeals.

APPEALS COMMITTEE CREATED:

An Appeals Committee is created by the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare to provide specifically for carrying out step two of the appeals process for graduate student appeals from either Criminal Justice or Social Work and to serve as the intermediate appeal body for Undergraduate appeals from either Criminal Justice or Social Work.

I. Committee Composition

This committee is composed of three tenured faculty members appointed by the Dean of the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare for overlapping two year terms.

II. Committee Governance

A. Quorum

The presence of all three committee members is required in order to constitute a quorum for all committee business. A simple majority vote is required for deciding issues related to an appeal and for the ultimate decision of the appeal.

B. Chair

The chair shall be elected by the committee from among those serving on the committee. At the end of the academic year, if the chair is not a continuing member, the chair shall designate a continuing member to serve as the convener in the fall and to assure that all pending committee business is handled in a timely fashion.

C. Conflicts of Interest

Individual committee members with a perceived conflict of interest regarding a particular appeal shall not sit on the committee as it conducts business concerning that appeal. The Dean of the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare shall appoint a tenured faculty member to serve as an alternate, ad hoc, to participate in all business concerning that appeal. The Dean shall determine that the alternate has no relationship to the case of parties to the case which would represent a conflict of interest.

III. Jurisdiction

The committee serves to investigate as appropriate and decide upon student appeals regarding adverse decisions in academic matters (e.g., dropping a course, grades, scholastic standing, and graduation decisions). The decision of the School of Social Welfare Appeals Committee is advisory to the Dean of The Graduate School and Research (graduate student appeals) or to the Dean of the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare (undergraduate student appeals).

IV. Access to Appeals Procedures

A. Copies of the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare Graduate Student Appeals Procedures and the Undergraduate Student Appeals Procedures shall be posted in the School reception area and copies shall be available from the School receptionist.

B. When a student expresses to a faculty or staff member a concern which might lead to an appeal, the committee recommends that the faculty or staff member provide a copy of the appropriate appeals document to the student expressing the concern.

C. The Dean shall issue a copy of these procedures to all new faculty and academic staff. Copies of these procedures and any revisions thereof shall also be provided to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Office of Student Life, and The Office of Legal Services.

D. These appeals procedures shall be published in the student handbook and the Social Work field manual.

GRADUATE STUDENT APPEALS PROCEDURE

A graduate student who receives an unsatisfactory decision in an academic matter (e.g., dropping a course, grades, scholastic standing, and graduation decision) and who desires to appeal that decision, must observe the sequence outlined below. The appellant should keep in mind that **requests for an appeal hearing must state in writing the exact nature of the appeal, indicate the solution sought, and include all supporting documentation.** The appellant should also be aware that **the Dean of the Graduate School and Research is the final authority in receiving appeals in all the above academic matters.**

Step 1: The student appeals in writing, with supporting documentation included, to the faculty member or faculty/staff body responsible for making the initial decision (the decision being appealed) within 30 working days of the action which prompted the appeal. If requested by the student, the faculty member or faculty/staff body provides the student with a written statement of the reason for the adverse decision.

Step 2: If the Step 1 decision is unacceptable to the student, the student may, within 10 working days from the date of the Step 1 decision, appeal to the Helen Bader School of Social Welfare Appeals Committee. The student must present to this body, in writing, evidence and supporting documentation. The Appeals Committee will determine whether to conduct a hearing regarding the appeal or whether to issue a written decision without conducting a hearing. Within 5 working days of receiving the written appeal, the Appeals Committee will inform the appellant in writing of its decision regarding a hearing. If a hearing is to take place, this hearing must occur within 20 working days of the notification to the appellant. A discussion of hearing procedures follows this outline of steps in the process.

A written report of the committee's decision on the appeal will be provided to the appellant, to the faculty member or faculty/staff body responsible for the initial decision, and to the Associate Dean (Academic Programs) in The Graduate School. The written reports will be forwarded no later 25 working days from receipt of the appellant's initial request to the committee.

Step 3: If the Step 2 decision is not acceptable to the appellant, the student may, within 10 working days from the date of the issuance of that decision, appeal to the Dean of The Graduate School and Research. All documentation must be forwarded to the Associate Dean (Academic Programs). The Associate Dean reviews the case and forwards the supporting file, with a recommendation, to the Dean of The Graduate School and Research, who makes the final decision.

HEARING PROCEDURE

If a hearing is deemed necessary by the Appeals Committee, the following procedures will apply. Time limits specified above will be followed.

- A. When a hearing is deemed necessary, the Appeals Committee chair shall immediately notify the respondent(s) of the action and provide respondent(s) with a copy of the appeal. The chair shall set a hearing date within the limits specified above, taking into consideration the scheduling requirements of all parties. The chair shall notify all parties by mail of the time and place of the hearing and of the hearing procedures.
- B. The respondent may submit to the chair of the Appeals Committee a written answer to the appeal at least 5 working days prior to the hearing.
- C. The appellant and the respondent(s) shall be present at the hearing. All parties have a right to be present at the hearing. The appellant may be accompanied by one advisor, and the respondent may be accompanied by one advisor. The advisor may be a person of appellant's or respondent(s)' choice, including an attorney. That person is welcome to advise and counsel but may not otherwise participate in the hearing. It is important to remember that the appeal procedures are primarily administrative in nature and are part of the educational process as distinguished from the judicial process.
- D. If one of the parties does not appear at the hearing, the hearing shall proceed and the committee may reach a decision on the basis of the written materials submitted to or obtained by the committee before the hearing and the verbal or written materials presented at the hearing, except that if a party notifies the chair prior to the meeting that appearance at the meeting will be impossible, the chair may postpone the hearing and set a new hearing date, within 15 working days of the original hearing date.
- E. The hearing will be open unless action is taken by the Appeals Committee to close the meeting in accord with Wis. Stat. 19.85. (see Appendix A)
- F. The chair of the Appeals Committee will have full charge of the decorum of the hearing. The appellant may present one witness at a time. The respondent(s) may present one witness at a time. Upon recognition by the chair, committee members may question witnesses. Unless a majority of the committee votes to extend the hearing, no hearing shall last more than two hours.
- G. Appellant and respondent(s) shall be afforded equal time to provide information to substantiate their claims.
- H. Upon the close of the hearing, the committee, if meeting in open session, may entertain a motion to close the session for deliberation under Wis. Stat. 19.85 (1)(a) or Wis. Stat. 19.85 (1)(c), or if meeting in closed session under Wis. Stat. 19.85 (1)(f), shall excuse the parties to deliberate the issues.

I. The decision of the committee on the appeal shall be by simple majority vote. Members of the committee shall apply fair professional and academic standards in reaching a decision.

J. The committee may recommend the redress sought by the appellant, may reject the appeal, or may recommend a different remedy than that sought by the appellant. All decisions of the Appeals Committee are advisory only and are not authoritative or binding.

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