



**PROPOSED UNDERGRADUATE GRADE APPEAL PROCEDURES
UMBC Procedures for Implementing USM Policy # III 1.20**

I. POLICY STATEMENT

In accordance with the University System of Maryland (USM) Policy III 1.20, the following procedures have been implemented to provide undergraduate students taking courses at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) with due process pertinent to the review of a final course grade that is alleged to be unjust, defined as, “the assignment of a course grade to a student on some basis other than performance in the course; the assignment of a course grade to a student by unreasonable application of standards different from the standards that were applied to other students in that course; or the assignment of a course grade by a substantial and unreasonable departure from the instructor's initially articulated standards.”

II. PURPOSE FOR PROCEDURES

The Undergraduate Grade Appeal Procedures are designed to provide undergraduate students taking courses at UMBC with a fair and non-adversarial means to appeal a final course grade that is alleged to be unjust. These procedures are also designed to ensure a timely review of grade appeals. These procedures are not designed to address general student complaints or disagreement with an instructor over teaching philosophy, teaching style, curriculum or any other instructional related matters.

III. APPLICABILITY AND IMPACT STATEMENT

These procedures address all undergraduate students taking courses at UMBC.

IV. CONTACTS

Subject	Contact	Telephone	Email
Procedural Clarification	assistant vice provost, academic standards and policy administration	410-455-3874	undergraduatepetitions@umbc.edu

V. UNIVERSITY POLICY

The Undergraduate Grade Appeal Procedures have been implemented to provide undergraduate students taking courses at UMBC with a means to appeal a final course grade that is alleged to be unjust. A student’s failure to follow and meet the requirements of the following procedures may result in the denial or dismissal of a grade appeal. The student shall exclusively and solely use her/his UMBC email account to communicate, contact, or make submissions throughout the following procedures. Extraordinary delays, beyond the control of the student, in meeting deadlines of these procedures, may be considered at the sole discretion of UMBC. The burden of proof rests with the student.

A) REVIEW AT THE COURSE OR DEPARTMENT LEVEL

- 1) If a student alleges that a final course grade is unjust (see definition in Section VI.) the student's initial step is to submit a request in writing to the instructor of the course (the instructor) responsible for awarding the grade to request a meeting to discuss the claim. The student must initiate contact with the instructor within two weeks from the posting of the final grade. If the instructor determines it is feasible and may be productive, the instructor shall accommodate a reasonable request to discuss and attempt to resolve the grading issue.
- 2) If the claim of unjust grading is not resolved or a meeting with the instructor is not feasible, the student shall submit a grade appeal in writing to the department chairperson within two weeks of the denied request or meeting with the instructor.

The student's written grade appeal must be concise and include:

- The course by name and number and semester in which it was taken;
 - Documented evidence that the final course grade was unjust;
 - Supporting documentation for all claims;
 - Documentation of efforts the student made to resolve the grade appeal with the instructor;
 - A statement of the resolution sought by the student.
- 3) The department chairperson shall review the grade appeal and act upon it within two weeks of receiving the student's written request. The department chairperson has the option to discuss the student's request jointly or individually with the student and the instructor to determine if the grade appeal can be resolved informally.
 - 4) If the grade appeal can be resolved informally, the department chairperson shall provide a statement to that effect to the student and the instructor with a copy to the dean.
 - 5) If the grade appeal cannot be resolved informally, the department chairperson shall notify both the student and the instructor, informing the student of his/her right to file a formal, written grade appeal for college level review within two weeks. The department chairperson shall also notify the dean and provide all documentation.

B) REVIEW AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL

- 1) The dean shall review the formal grade appeal and render a decision within two weeks of receiving a written request from a student.
- 2) The dean may dismiss the grade appeal if the student has not established sufficient grounds to justify that the final grade was unjust, as defined in these procedures, and shall notify, in writing via an UMBC email account, the student and the instructor. A copy of all documentation shall also be filed in the office of the dean.

- 3) The dean's decision to dismiss a grade appeal shall be final except in cases of an alleged procedural violation. If a student alleges that a procedural violation was made by the instructor, the department chairperson or the dean, the student must submit a written request for institutional review to the vice provost and dean of undergraduate academic affairs (the vice provost) within two weeks of receiving the deans decision. The written request to the vice provost must include a copy of the original grade appeal presented to the dean and all relevant documentation of the procedural violation.
- 4) If the decision of the dean is to recommend a change in the final course grade and the instructor is unwilling to change the grade, the grade appeal shall immediately be forwarded by the dean to the vice provost. The dean shall also notify the student that the matter has been forwarded to the vice provost for institutional review.

C) INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

An institutional review shall only be administered by the vice provost in cases of an alleged procedural violation or when the dean has recommended a change in the final course grade and the instructor is unwilling to change the grade.

Review on the Basis of a Procedural Violation:

- 1) In the event of an alleged procedural violation, the vice provost shall review the grade appeal and render a decision within two weeks of receiving the written request.
- 2) The vice provost may dismiss the grade appeal if it is established that there was no procedural violation.
- 3) If the vice provost dismisses the grade appeal, the vice provost shall notify, in writing, the student, the instructor and the dean with a copy to be filed by the assistant vice provost. The vice provost's decision to dismiss a grade appeal in which there was an alleged procedural violation shall be final.
- 4) If the vice provost does not dismiss the grade appeal on the basis of a procedural violation, the vice provost shall immediately call upon the Campus Grade Review Panel (the Panel).

Review on the Basis of a Recommendation to Change a Final Course Grade:

- 1) In the event that a change in the final course grade is recommended by the dean but is not facilitated by the instructor, the vice provost shall immediately call upon the Campus Grade Review Panel.

Campus Grade Review Panel

- 1) If the vice provost calls upon the Panel, the Panel shall meet to review the grade appeal within two weeks of receiving the request by the vice provost. In addition to reviewing the written grade appeal and all documentation provided, the Panel, at its sole discretion, may choose to hear statements from the student and the instructor and others, and/or may consider additional relevant information.
- 2) Within five business days of its final meeting, the chair of the Panel, in consultation with the Panel, shall submit a written report to the vice provost with the findings of its review as well as a decision with resolution.
- 3) If the decision of the Panel is to change the final course grade, and the instructor is unwilling to change the grade, the vice provost shall with the Registrar's Office to remove the unjust grade and replace the grade with the grade resolution determined by the Panel.
- 4) Based upon the decision of the Panel, the vice provost shall immediately notify in writing, the student, the instructor and the dean, with a copy of the notification to be filed by the assistant vice provost, of final resolution of the grade appeal.
- 5) The final decision of the Panel to dismiss a grade appeal or change the final course grade shall be final.

VI. DEFINITIONS

Assistant Vice Provost	The assistant vice provost referred to in these procedures is the assistant vice provost, academic standards and policy administration in the Division of Undergraduate Academic Affairs.
Business Days	For purposes of these procedures, time is based on business days and only include days in which the university is open for operation.
Campus Grade Review Panel (the Panel)	A five-member faculty panel composed of at least three faculty from within the respective discipline/college/school/division (i.e., <u>College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences</u> , <u>College of Engineering and Information Technology</u> , <u>College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences</u> , <u>School of Social Work</u> , <u>The Erickson School</u> , <u>Division of Undergraduate Academic Affairs</u>), from which the appeal of unjust grading is directed (but not including the instructor who issued the grade) and all other faculty members from outside the respective discipline and from the other five colleges/schools/division, one of whom will chair the campus grade review panel and have the right to vote. The purpose of the Panel is to review the grade appeal in its entirety and advise the vice provost of its decision and resolution.

Dean	The dean referred to in these procedures is the senior level administrator of the respective college/division/school (i.e., <u>College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences</u> , <u>College of Engineering and Information Technology</u> , <u>College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences</u> , <u>School of Social Work</u> , <u>The Erickson School</u> , <u>Division of Undergraduate Academic Affairs</u>), whom the department chairperson/director of the instructor involved in the appeal of unjust grading reports to. In some cases, the dean may hold an alternate title such as associate dean but is considered the senior level administrator (the dean) referred to in these procedures. The dean at his/her sole discretion may appoint a designee to manage the respective steps of the dean (with the exception of the final decision/communication to the student from the dean) as outlined in these procedures. In the rare event that the dean or his/her designee is also the instructor whom the student has alleged unjust grading, the vice provost will manage the respective steps of the dean or his/her designee.
Department Chairperson	The department chairperson referred to in these procedures is the individual whom the instructor involved in the appeal of unjust grading reports to (i.e., department chair, program director, department head, director). The department chairperson at his/her sole discretion may appoint a designee to manage the respective steps of the department chairperson (with the exception of the final decision/communication to the student from the department chairperson) as outlined in these procedures. In the rare event that the department chairperson is also the instructor whom the student has alleged unjust grading, the dean will manage the respective steps of the department chairperson as outlined in these procedures.
Provost	The provost is the senior vice president for academic affairs and will manage the respective steps of the vice provost review in the rare event that the vice provost is also the instructor whom the student has alleged unjust grading.
Unjust Grading	For purpose of these procedures, unjust grading (i.e., arbitrary and capricious grading) is defined in accordance with the USM Policy III 1.20 as: 1) the assignment of a course grade to a student on some basis other than performance in the course; 2) the assignment of a course grade to a student by unreasonable application of standards different from the standards that were applied to other students in that course; or 3) the assignment of a course grade by a substantial and unreasonable departure from the instructor's initially articulated standards.
Vice Provost	The vice provost referred to in these procedures is the vice provost and dean in the Division of Undergraduate Academic Affairs. In the rare event that the vice provost is also the instructor whom the student has alleged unjust grading, the provost will manage the respective steps of the vice provost review as outlined in these procedures.

VII. APPROVAL AND PROCEDURES: Not Applicable

VIII. DOCUMENTATION: Not Applicable

IX. RESTRICTIONS AND EXCLUSIONS: None

X. RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES: These Procedures shall supersede UMBC Policy III 1.20.01 in its entirety.

Administrator Use Only

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Responsible Administrator: Vice Provost and Dean, Division of Undergraduate Academic Affairs

Responsible Office: Division of Undergraduate Academic Affairs

Approved by President:

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