STUDENT GRADE APPEALS

1.0. REFERENCE

This policy supersedes Presidential Memorandum 96-02.

2.0 POLICY

A Student Grade Appeals Board ("Board") is hereby established by the University and is charged with responsibility for processing grade appeals submitted by students at California State University, Dominguez Hills in accordance with these appeal procedures.

3.0. PURPOSE

3.1 The applicable evidentiary standard for student grade appeals is preponderance of the evidence, and the established presumption is that grades assigned by faculty members are correct. The burden of proof rests with student appellants. Students may appeal undergraduate or graduate grades which they believe were conferred contrary to procedures established in course syllabi; were prejudicial or capricious; or were the result of instructor, computational, or clerical error.

3.2 Student grade appeal procedures may be revised from time to time with the concurrence of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Academic Senate. Copies of approved revisions shall be forwarded to the Academic Senate, University President, Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs, College Deans, the University Registrar, and Associated Students, Inc.

3.3 Grade appeal procedures may not be used to review University student disciplinary decisions. Nor may grade appeal procedures be used to challenge culminating activities in graduate programs, such as comprehensive examinations or theses.

4.0. RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 The Board shall be comprised as follows: Four (4) academic members and two (2) student members.

4.2 The academic members of the Board must be tenured faculty and shall be elected by the Academic Senate in accordance with established election procedures. No more than one (1) Board member may be elected from each College or comparable unit.

4.3 Student members shall be appointed in accordance with procedures established by the Executive Board of Associated Students Incorporated. Student members must be full-time students and have and maintain at least a 2.5 cumulative GPA.

4.4 The selection of members of the Board shall be concluded before the conclusion of each academic year Spring semester by the Academic Senate and Associated Students, Incorporated.
The new Board shall not be convened until the beginning of the following academic year Fall semester.

4.5 Members of the Board shall serve one-year terms. Members are eligible for reappointment to the Board.

4.6 In the event a vacancy is caused by a member’s resignation, inability to serve, or other cause, the replacement of an academic member shall be by appointment by the Academic Senate Executive Committee. The replacement of a student member shall be by appointment by the Executive Board of Associated Students, Incorporated.

4.7 A quorum of the Board shall consist of no fewer than three (3) members, two of whom must be academic members.

4.8 The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs is authorized to make decisions on grade appeals and appeal-related issues arising during Summer sessions. Grade appeals and appeal-related issues which are not resolved by the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs during Summer sessions shall be referred to the new Board at the beginning of the following academic year Fall semester.

5.0 PROCEDURES

5.1 Initiation of a Grade Appeal

5.1.1 Students initiating a grade appeal shall first seek informal resolution with the instructor of record or Department Chair. Informal resolution requires student appellants to meet with the faculty member or Department Chair no later than the academic semester immediately following the assignment of the original grade. This one-semester informal procedure may be extended if the student appellant requests and receives an extension from the College Dean (or designee) or can demonstrate extenuating circumstances for the submission of a grade appeal beyond one (1) academic semester following the assignment of the original grade.

5.1.2 If informal resolution is unsuccessful, the student may submit a formal grade appeal, in writing, to the Dean of the College (or designee) within 15 working days (normally three (3) calendar weeks) after receiving the decision of the instructor of record or Department Chair. Normally, student appellants must submit a written grade appeal in the form of a letter or memorandum no later than the academic semester immediately following the assignment of the original grade. A copy of the written grade appeal must be filed simultaneously by the student with the Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs in the Office of Academic Affairs Personnel Services. The student’s written statement shall contain at least the following:

- A clear and concise statement of the problem or dispute;
- A specific remedy; and
- Relevant documentation (e.g., course syllabus) and arguments to support the student’s requested remedy.

Student appellants shall also submit their student identification number as well as contact information.

5.1.3 The College Dean (or designee) shall forward copies of the student’s written statement to the instructor of record and Department Chair and request written responses of their respective positions and other relevant comments. After receiving separate responses from the instructor of
record and the Department Chair, the Dean (or designee) shall attempt to resolve the appeal within 15 working days (normally three (3) calendar weeks). If there is no resolution, the Dean (or designee) shall forward the grade appeal file to the Chair of the Board via the Office of Academic Affairs Personnel Services. Along with the recommendation of the Dean (or designee), the case file shall include the student’s written statement, written responses from the instructor of record and the Department Chair, and other relevant documentation, including the course syllabus. The Dean (or designee) shall provide information copies of their recommendation to the parties.

5.2 Initial Determination by Board

5.2.1 Following receipt of the grade appeal file from the College Dean (or designee), the Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs shall review the file, to determine that the appeal has been filed in a timely manner and all necessary information and documentation has been provided. Thereafter, the Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs shall notify the Chair of the Board.

5.2.2 The Chair shall convene the Board in a timely manner. Members of the Board shall review the case file and meet to determine by majority vote whether cause exists for a grade appeal.

5.2.3 If the Board by majority vote concludes no cause exists for a grade appeal, such determination shall conclude the appeal proceedings, and the parties shall be so advised in writing. Such determination by the Board shall be final and binding.

5.2.4 Should a tie vote occur for the initial determination by the Board, the actions of the instructor of record shall be sustained and the grade appeal shall be denied. Such determination by the Board shall be final and binding.

5.2.5 If the Board by majority vote concludes that cause exists for a grade appeal, the Board may sustain the grade appeal, and the parties shall be so advised in writing. Such determination by the Board shall be final and binding. The Board shall then proceed as provided in Section 5.4.3.1 below.

5.2.6 If the Board by majority vote concludes that cause for a grade appeal exists and that a formal hearing is necessary and appropriate, the Board shall proceed as indicated in Section 5.3, et seq. below.

5.3 Formal Hearing

5.3.1 If the Board concludes that a formal hearing is necessary and appropriate, the Chair of the Board shall schedule hearings in a timely manner and notify student appellants and instructors of record of the time and place of the hearing.

5.3.2 The hearing shall be closed, informal in nature, and conducted in a spirit of mediation and conciliation. Both the student and faculty member shall be afforded an opportunity to testify, present witnesses, and introduce evidence relevant to the grade appeal. The Board may establish appropriate and reasonable rules to ensure the orderly conduct of the hearing.

5.3.2.1 Hearings may be opened to the public if both the student appellant and instructor of record agree.
5.3.2.2 Student appellants and instructors of record may invite up to two (2) advisors or assistants to attend the hearing. Neither party may be assisted or represented by an attorney who is a member of the Bar of the State of California.

5.3.2.3 At a closed hearing, attendance shall be limited to:

Members of the Board;
Student appellants and advisor(s), if any;
Instructors of record and advisor(s), if any; and
Witnesses while giving testimony.

5.3.2.4 Closed hearings shall be confidential and proceedings shall be disclosed only to the extent necessary for the Board to make its final decision.

5.3.2.5 The Board may on its own initiative call one or more qualified faculty to testify and receive from them relevant testimony of fact or opinion. A qualified faculty member who gives opinion testimony must be unbiased and have had no prior involvement with the grade dispute.

5.3.2.6 Student appellants have the burden of proof and shall present their case first. Instructors of record shall then present their case.

5.3.2.7 The hearing shall not be recorded electronically or by other means. Cameras are not permitted at the hearing.

5.4 Board Decision

5.4.1 At the conclusion of a hearing, Board members shall meet privately to consider evidence and testimony of witnesses, reach a decision, and prepare a written decision. The Board shall issue a written decision within 15 working days (normally within three (3) calendar weeks), and shall include findings of fact, conclusions, and the Board’s disposition of the grade appeal. The Board shall sustain an appeal only if student appellants meet their burden of proof by a preponderance of the evidence.

5.4.1.1 If a majority of the Board concludes that the grade under appeal should be changed, only the faculty members of the Board shall determine the appropriate grade. A grade may be lowered as well as raised.

5.4.2 The Board’s final decision must be determined by a majority vote of the Board. In the event of a tie vote, the grade appeal shall be denied. A minority position may be written either as a section in the Board’s decision, or as a separate written document.

5.4.3 The Board shall forward copies of the decision to the student appellant, instructor of record, Department Chair, College Dean, and the Associate Vice President for Faculty Affairs.

5.4.3.1 Approved grade changes must be implemented within ten (10) working days.

5.4.4 The Board’s decision shall be final and binding on the parties, and all remedies shall be considered to have been exhausted.

5.4.5 Students or members of the faculty involved in a grade appeal who contend appeal procedures were not properly followed may submit a written statement and explanation to the Provost/Vice
President for Academic Affairs with a copy to the Chair of the Academic Senate. The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs shall render a decision in writing within fifteen (15) working days.

5.5 **Board Report**

5.5.1 The Chair of the Board shall submit an annual written report to the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs and forward a copy to the Chair of the Academic Senate. The report shall be submitted prior to the end of each academic year after Board business has been completed. The Board’s report shall report the number and disposition of grade appeals.