

## **General Academic Appeals Process in the Republic of Panama campus**

Students who allege that academic regulations and procedures have been improperly applied in specific instances may have their grievances addressed through the general academic appeals process. In this process, the student brings a complaint first to the instructor, then to the FSU Panama Vice Rector for Academic Affairs. If the complaint is not resolved at this stage, then the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs forwards the complaint to the Academic Standards Committee, which then must make a recommendation to the FSU Panama Rector.

If no resolution is reached at the Republic of Panama campus, then the student will go to the department chair, and finally to the academic dean appropriate to the course involved, stopping at the level at which the complaint is resolved. If no resolution is reached, the student brings the complaint to the attention of the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement for either resolution or referral to the Student Academic Relations Committee of the Faculty Senate. A graduate student whose complaint is unresolved must see the Dean of The Graduate School prior to meeting with the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement. The Student Academic Relations Committee has the authority to direct, through the Vice President for Academic Affairs, that corrective action be taken when justified.

### **GRADE APPEALS SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA CAMPUS**

The purpose of the grade appeals system is to afford an opportunity for an undergraduate or graduate student to appeal a final course grade under certain circumstances. Faculty judgment of students' academic performance is inherent in the grading process and hence should not be overturned except when the student can show that the grade awarded represents a gross violation of the instructor's own specified evaluation (grading) statement and therefore was awarded in an arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory manner. The evaluation (grading) statement utilized during the grade appeals process is the one contained in the instructor's syllabus at the beginning of the semester. This system does not apply to preliminary or comprehensive exams or to thesis or dissertation defenses; these issues are reviewed by the Student Academic Relations Committee via the Dean of the Faculties.

**Step 1.** Within 30 calendar days following the date that final grades are made available to students, the student must contact the instructor in question to discuss the grade and attempt to resolve any differences. The student should document any attempts to contact the instructor to establish that the appeal was begun within this 30-day period. In the event that the instructor is not available, the student should provide that documentation to the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs in the Republic of Panama.

**Step 2.** If no resolution is reached within this 30-day period, after the student's documented attempt, the student has an additional 15 calendar days to submit a written statement to the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs in the Republic of Panama. This statement must include an account of attempts to resolve the issue, as well as the evidence that forms the basis for the appeal.

Within 20 calendar days thereafter, the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs will arrange for a meeting of a Grade Appeals Screening Committee composed of three students enrolled in the academic unit offering the course to review the appeal. Appropriate students who have no conflict of interest will be chosen to serve on this screening committee by a student organization associated with the program or department, if such an organization exists. If none exists or if members of such an organization are not available, the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs will select appropriate students who have no conflict of interest. Both the student and the instructor may attend the meeting.

The role of the screening committee is solely to determine whether the student has presented sufficient evidence to warrant further review. Within five calendar days after this meeting, the screening committee will render its decision in writing (recommend/do not recommend further review) to the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, the student, and the instructor. A negative decision will end the appeal. A positive decision will trigger the next step in the process.

**Step 3.** Within 20 calendar days of a positive decision from the Grade Appeals Screening Committee, the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs will appoint and arrange for a meeting of a Grade Appeals Board. This board will be composed of three faculty members and two students other than those who served on the screening committee.

The purpose of this board is to determine whether or not to uphold the final grade assigned by the instructor. The board will consider only the evidence provided by the student and the instructor in making the determination. Both the student and the instructor may attend the meeting.

The grade will be upheld unless the evidence shows that the grade was awarded in an arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory manner, as a result of a gross violation of the instructor's own grading standards. If the original grade is not upheld, the board will recommend that an alternative grade be assigned by the Vice Rector for Academic Affairs in the Republic of Panama.

If the student has evidence that this grade appeals process has deviated substantially from these established procedures, resulting in a biased decision, the student may consult with the Vice President for Faculty Development and Advancement regarding referral to the Student Academic Relations Committee.