

Graduate Student Appeals

Overview

The Graduate College at North Dakota State University encourages resolution of problems at the level most closely related to the origin of the specific disputes. Students may seek advice regarding their situation from a neutral party, such as the University Ombudsperson (<https://www.ndsu.edu/ombud/>). Though this may be done at any point, it might be most helpful early in the process.

In order to resolve an issue, the following steps should be taken:

1. the student is to first discuss the problem(s) with the person(s) directly involved;
2. if the student is not satisfied after discussing the problem with the person(s) directly involved or if discussion of the problem(s) seems inappropriate because of the nature of the student's complaint, the student should seek advice from the administrator of the program; and
3. depending on the nature of the problem(s), the program administrator or student's supervisory committee chair may deal with the situation directly, advise the student to discuss the problem(s) with the appropriate academic dean and/or the Dean of the Graduate College, or advise the student of the appropriate grievance procedure to pursue as the procedure varies depending on the specific nature of the problem.

Areas of possible graduate student appeal include equal opportunity, suspension or dismissal from an academic program or the Graduate College, sanctions for academic dishonesty, and degree-acquisition processes that are unique to graduate education. The appropriate procedures/offices for these types of appeals are outlined below. The burden of proof by a preponderance of the evidence is on the graduate student making the appeal.

Equal Opportunity

North Dakota State University's general and specific commitment (https://www.ndsu.edu/equity/statement_from_the_president/) to being an equal opportunity institution is expressed elsewhere in this bulletin. In short, NDSU prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of age, color, gender expression/identity, genetic information, marital status, national origin, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, public assistance status, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, spousal relationship to current employee, status as a U.S. veteran, or participation in lawful activity off the employer's premises during nonworking hours which is not in direct conflict with the essential business-related interests of the employer. Title IX specifically prohibits discrimination based on sex in education programs or activities, including, but not limited to, gender-based discrimination, pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual assault. NDSU also prohibits retaliation based on protected activity, including, but not limited to, reporting alleged discrimination, or providing information during a discrimination investigation.

Inquiries concerning compliance with NDSU Equal Opportunity policy may be directed to the Vice Provost and Title IX Coordinator (201 Old Main, 701-231-7708, ndsu.eoaa@ndsu.edu) or to the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, 10220 N. Executive Hills Blvd., 8th Floor, 07-6010, Kansas City, MO 64153-1367.

Academic Evaluation

The University Senate Grade Appeals Board (<https://catalog.ndsu.edu/academic-policies/grades/#gradechangestext>) has the authority to hear charges of inequitable or biased academic evaluations and to provide redress for any improper evaluations it may find to have taken place. This process is for course grades assigned by the instructors of the courses, including grades for independent study, thesis, and dissertation credits. Policy 337 (<https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/337.pdf>) has the procedural details. Salient points repeated here are that the student must initiate a request for a change of grade with the instructor within 15 instructional days of the first day of the semester immediately following the semester in which the grade was awarded. During an appeal, the burden of proof is on the student.

Academic Dishonesty

Procedures dealing with issues of academic dishonesty in meeting course requirements, such as cheating, plagiarism, or other academic improprieties brought by instructors against students enrolled in their course(s) or other NDSU course(s) or persons not enrolled at NDSU but viewed by the instructor as involved in the academic dishonesty are detailed in both the "Rights & Responsibilities of Community: A Code of Student Behavior" (<https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/601.pdf>) and Section 335 (<https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/335.pdf>) of the NDSU Policy Manual. A substantial range of penalties to the student(s) is available to the instructor(s) and academic dean(s) of the college(s) involved, i.e., the college offering the course(s) and the college of which the student(s) is (are) a member. One option available to the deans is to recommend to the Dean of the Graduate College that the student be suspended or expelled from the university. A student may choose to appeal the assignment of a grade in a course in which academic misconduct has occurred to the Grade Appeals Board. (<https://catalog.ndsu.edu/academic-policies/grades/#gradechangestext>) The decision to impose any **additional penalty or disciplinary sanction** for prohibited academic conduct against a graduate student in meeting the requirements of either an undergraduate or graduate course may be appealed by the graduate student following the procedures outlined below.

Appeal of Activities Intrinsic to the Acquisition of a Graduate Degree

All other appeals are addressed through the Graduate College appeal process. The burden of proof lies with the graduate student. These appeals may address suspension or dismissal from a graduate program or the Graduate College, sanctions beyond the course grade for academic misconduct or dishonesty, and degree-acquisition processes that are unique to graduate education. The processes intrinsic to graduate education include

specification of degree requirements, preliminary and qualifying examinations, disquisition writing and approval, and possible suspension or dismissal from the program.

Appeals of processes intrinsic to graduate students are complicated in that there may be different levels of individuals and committees involved depending on the nature of the specific grievance. An additional complication is that for some complaints, levels prior to the Graduate Dean are advisory in nature and cannot supersede a decision of the Graduate Dean. The steps outlined below will vary in number depending on the nature of the grievance as no relevant level may be skipped. The first step begins with the person/committee most closely related to the grievance. Additional steps are added with each level of reporting above the initial level. The table below indicates which individuals/committees should be included for specific issues. If there is an issue that a student wishes to appeal that is not included in the table and is not covered by another policy and appeal process, the student should consult with the Graduate School regarding the steps to take. This consultation should be documented in writing and the resolution signed by the Graduate Dean.