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Student Academic Appeal Policy and Procedure

Category: Student Affairs (SA)
Number: SA-030
Responsibility: Vice-President, Academic, and Vice-President of Student Experience and Success
Approval: Executive Team - 2024
Amendments:

1. Purpose

To establish conditions under which a student may initiate an appeal of an academic decision concerning the perception of unfair treatment towards the student. If an informal resolution or requested remedy in collaboration with the faculty member is not achieved, students have the option to submit an Appeal.

2. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all students and employees of Ontario College of Business and Technology (hereafter referred to as “OCBT” or “the College”).

3. Definitions

Academic decision: A determination made by OCBT acting in accordance with academic policies and procedures.

Academic appeal: The process by which students may challenge an academic decision they have received.

4. Policy

a. Students are encouraged to have ongoing conversations about academic expectations and concerns with their faculty member, program coordinator, and/or chair.

b. Students with no outstanding tuition fees may appeal any academic decision if it meets the following criteria:
    i. Merit of Work - An academic decision that does not accurately reflect a student’s demonstrated abilities, actions, and/or achievements. Examples include but are not limited to:

- a breach of academic integrity, (e.g., plagiarism, contract cheating, using Generative A.I.), or,
- an assessment that may have been unfairly or inaccurately graded;

ii. Personal bias or unfair treatment - Perceived unfair treatment of a student by a faculty member in comparison to their treatment of other students within the course that negatively impacts a student's performance.

iii. Extenuating circumstances - An unforeseen significant event or circumstance that affected the student's ability to meet the course requirements and was not accommodated. Examples include but are not limited to medical and/or legal issues. Employment commitments will not constitute grounds for academic appeal.

iv. Inconsistency in course management - A departure by faculty from the course outline or Grading Policy that negatively affects the student's academic performance. Examples include, but are not limited to:
- change in course delivery mode,
- error in the application of established grading criteria, or
- not following the learning outcomes.

c. All aspects of the academic appeal process will be kept confidential.

d. The academic appeal process has two levels: Level One is the informal academic resolution process, and Level Two is the formal academic appeal process.

e. Each level of the academic appeal process has an associated timeline, representing the maximum allowable time for the appeal.

f. Every effort will be made to expedite the process to decrease the impact on a student's academic status.

g. Students are responsible for initiating each phase of the appeal process.

h. If a student does not start an appeal within the timelines set in this policy and procedure, OCBT shall consider the matter closed.

i. Faculty members and chairs will reply to inquiries at each phase of the appeal process in accordance with the timelines identified in this policy and procedure.

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5. Procedure

The Academic Appeals procedure is dependent on actions and documentation provided to the College by the student. Appeals of grades may be brought forward during the course or after the final grade has been released.

The objective of this process is to achieve a fair and timely resolution of the issues raised. All parties contribute to this objective by focusing on full disclosure of the facts, agreement on the issues, active listening, and attention to time limits.

Appeals of grades on assignments, tests, placements, or examinations must be made within ten (10) business days of the release of the grade.

Where timelines in the appeal process are not kept by the student, appeals will be deemed to have been resolved unless extenuating circumstances are shown.

Students may not proceed through the appeal procedure until each step is completed. Should students wish to appeal an assigned grade, they are encouraged to start that process during the semester as early as possible.

I. Informal Appeals Process

a. It is expected that students and faculty attempt to reach an informal resolution (prior to submitting an Appeal) at the start of the appeals process, as these resolutions have the highest frequency of success.

b. Within ten (10) business days of grades being made available to students, they can discuss any concerns or issues with their faculty member or Program Coordinator.

c. The student and faculty member will share all available and relevant information to resolve the issue.

d. The faculty member or Program Coordinator will respond to the student within five business days of receiving the inquiry.

e. In cases where an agreement cannot be reached by the student and the faculty member directly, a formal grade appeal should be initiated. To initiate formal Grade Appeals, students must complete the first section of the Grade Appeals Form.

II. Formal Appeals Process

a. If the student disagrees with the results of the informal review, the student may apply in writing to the Program Dean or their designate of the School where the course originates by completing the first section of the Grade Appeals Form within ten (10) business days of the release of the grade.

b. With the submission, the student must include a written outline of the reasons they feel the grade did not reflect fairly on their academic performance.

c. The Program Dean or designate will arrange to meet with the faculty member and student.

d. In advance of this meeting, the faculty member and student will submit to the Program Dean or designate all relevant documents including course outlines, examinations, assignments, reports, papers, as well as other documents identified as relevant to the student's grade.

e. At the meeting, the Program Dean or designate will give the student and faculty member access to all documents submitted, while ensuring the privacy of the academic records of other students.

III. Process Following Formal Meeting

a. Following the meeting, the Program Dean or designate will review the documentation provided, seek clarification or further information during the meeting, and can:
   i. explore solutions presented by either party during the meeting or propose alternate solutions; or
   ii. request assistance, such as re-assessment by another faculty member in appraisal of a document. The Program Dean or designate, faculty member and student will be given access to such appraisals; or
   iii. find that no grounds have been presented that warrants a change in grade.

b. Within five (5) business days of the meeting, the Program Dean will prepare a written decision on the appeal, notifying the student and faculty member of the decision. The decision may be to retain, to raise, or to lower the student's grade or other appropriate action. Substantial and convincing evidence must be shown for the grade to be changed. Where appropriate, the Program Dean is responsible for informing the Director of Admissions and Enrolment Services.

c. The faculty member will take any action outlined in the written decision of the Program Dean or designate. In cases where the faculty member is unable by reason of absence to act, the Program Dean or designate is empowered to take the action and, where appropriate, alter the formal record of the grade.

d. Where the student wishes to appeal the decision of the Program Dean, the appeal must be in writing and must be submitted to the Vice-President, Academic or designate within five (5) business days of the decision by the Program Dean or designate. The student must provide a compelling argument as to why they are challenging the decision of the Program Dean or designate.

e. The Program Dean or designate will forward all relevant documents to the Vice-President, Academic. The Vice-President, Academic will review the process followed and the decision assigned by the Program Dean or designate, and may dismiss, set aside, vary, or uphold the decision.

f. It is at the discretion of the Vice-President, Academic whether to meet with the Program Dean or designate, the student, and the faculty member prior to making the decision.

g. The academic decision of the Vice-President, Academic is final and binding. The student will be notified of the decision by the Vice-President, Academic in writing within five (5) business days of the decision, with copy to the faculty member and the Program Dean or designate.

h. The grade assigned is the grade of record unless decided otherwise through the process outlined here.

6. Related Policy and Procedure

AC-002 Academic Integrity Policy and Procedure
AC-004 Academic Withdrawal Policy and Procedure
AC-021 Grading Policy
AC-035 Transfer Credit Policy and Procedure
AC-039 Student Progression and Promotion Policy and Procedure
AD-023 Information Technology Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure
SA-031 Student Attendance Policy and Procedure
SA-032 Student Code of Conduct Policy and Procedure
SA-033 Student Complaint Policy and Procedure
SA-034 Student Rights and Responsibilities Statement

SA-038 Graduation Policy and Procedure
SA-041 Student Contract

7. References

Ontario Career Colleges Act, 2005, S.O. 2005, c. 28, Sched. L

Ontario Career Colleges Act, 2005, - O. Reg. 415/06: GENERAL

Ontario Career Colleges Act. 2005, - O. Reg. 414/06: TRAINING COMPLETION ASSURANCE FUND AND OTHER FINANCIAL MATTERS

The development of this policy and procedure was informed by the review of similar policies and procedures developed by Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology and Ontario registered career colleges.