Department of Communication Studies
GRADING and GRADE APPEALS
Adopted Sept 6, 2017

1. **Grading Responsibility:** Responsibility for evaluating student work and assigning grades rests with the course instructor, or, in the case of COMM 101 and COMM 286 (i.e.., large delivery courses), the course section instructor. Instructors have an obligation to grade students fairly. The process of grading relies on the instructor's professional judgment.

a) In the syllabus, made available at the beginning of the course, instructors must make clear the requirements for the course and the relative weight each requirement plays in the final course grade.
b) With each assignment, the instructor must make clear the criteria for evaluation of student work.
c) Instructors of all courses should apply the same grading criteria to all students.

2. **Grading Appeal Responsibility**: In cases where students believe they have been unfairly evaluated, responsibility for appealing a grade rests solely with the student and no other representative party (e.g., parent, classmate, sibling, GTA, friend). The student, him or herself, is the only person who may appeal his or her grade in writing and in person.

3. **Grading Consistency:** we take every measure to ensure consistency within course sections. We do not hear appeals based on perceptions of inconsistencies across sections.

4. **Student-Instructor Conferences on Evaluation:**

a) In cases where students believe they have been unfairly evaluated, their first step is to consult with the course instructor. This consultation must take place in a timely fashion, following the course policies, or, if no time limit is articulated, within two weeks of receiving a grade.
b) During this meeting, students have the responsibility of providing specific reasons why they disagree with the instructor evaluation. Instructors have an obligation to explain their evaluation and address student concerns.

5. **Student Appeal to Instructor**

a) If the meeting does not result in a satisfactory solution, students may present a written appeal to the instructor (within one week of the meeting) detailing the reasons and offering support for their continued disagreement.
b) The instructor must consider the appeal and render a decision in writing within one week of receiving the letter.

6. **COMM 101 and COMM 286: Student Appeal to Course Directors**

a) In the case of COMM 101 and COMM 286, students who remain in disagreement with the outcome of the instructor conference and written directive may schedule a meeting with the course director. Course directors will review the situation in its entirety. This will include a comprehensive review of the situation, to include a careful review of the written materials provided by the student as well as those deemed relevant by the course director, a meeting with the student, and a discussion of the situation with the classroom instructor. After this review, the course director will inform the student of their decision and its rationale in a timely fashion.
b) In the case of all other courses, students may appeal directly to the Department Chair (see information below).

7. **Appeal to the Department Chair:**

a) When students believe that a problem with grading persists after appealing their grade using the procedures described above with the course instructor and, if appropriate, the course director (e.g., COMM 101 and COMM 286), they may petition the Department Chair within two weeks.
b) In writing, students should describe the circumstances of the evaluation, offer reasons for dissatisfaction with the instructor decision, and, if appropriate, course director decisions, and make a case for the unfairness of the grade.

c) After submitting the written materials, students may request to schedule a meeting with the Department Chair to discuss the matter orally. Such a meeting should be scheduled within two weeks of submitting the written material.
d) The Chair will review the case and discuss the matter with the instructor and/or course director. The Chair will, in a timely fashion, render a written decision. Along with the decision, the Chair will explain to the student the additional avenues of appeal.

8. **Appeal to the Department Grading Appeals Committee:**

a) If, upon completion of the departmental appeals process, the student believes that the grade assigned to their work was arbitrary, capricious, prejudiced, or if they believe they have been denied due process in appealing their grade, they may file an appeal with the Department Grading Appeals Committee.

b) Prior to doing so, students should schedule a meeting with the chair of the Grading Appeals Committee to further explain the nature of the appeal. In this meeting, the chair of the committee will clarify that the evaluation in question either evidences prejudice toward the student or capriciousness in the grading process, or whether there exists a violation of the student's due process rights up to this point. At the conclusion of this meeting or shortly thereafter, the committee chair will explain to the student the next steps in the appeals process.

a. If it is determined that the next step in the process is to appeal to the Department Grading Appeal Committee, the process is as follows:

1) A written statement of grievance must be filed with the chair of the committee and shared with the committee members. This statement should describe the circumstances of the evaluation, the reasons for disagreement with the outcome of the instructor/course director meeting, and the reasons for disagreement with the Department Chair's decision.

2) The committee will review these written materials and determine whether the evaluation in question evidences bias in the grading process or a violation of the students' due process rights.

3) If so, students will be invited to present their case in a meeting with the grade appeals committee and answer committee members' questions.

4) The committee will then review the matter with both the instructor/course director and the Department Chair.

5) In a timely fashion, the committee will render a written decision.

6) This decision will be accompanied by an explanation of procedures for filing a grade appeal with the college of Arts & Sciences.

9. Appeal to the College of Arts & Sciences

Students who remain dissatisfied with the action of the department's Grading Appeals Committee may contact the Dean's Office in the College of Arts & Sciences and initiate action with the College Grade Appeals Committee. The College of Arts & Sciences Grade Appeals committee: http://cas.unl.edu/docs/Grading_appeals_policy-May_2011.pdf

10. Appeal for Graduate Student work should follow the procedure set forth by the Office of Graduate Studies, detailed in the Graduate Bulletin