



October 10, 2019

To the Members of the Faculty Senate:

The following is the Registrar's Office response to your 10/3/2019 email regarding the Grade Change Policy. Please let me know if you have additional questions or if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Rachel Toews,
Registrar

1) Where are the existence of the appeal process and the necessary procedures documented, and is it available/made known to all students?

There is not an appeals committee in the Registrar's Office as described in your email. The Registrar's Office has been granted authority by the Vice President of Academic Affairs to oversee enrollment dates and review requests for exceptions to those dates. This procedure has been in place for 30+ years at least. All students have the right to request an exception to the drop/add deadlines the same way they have the right to request exceptions to closed classes, etc., with the Department Chairs.

2) Does this process only cover conversions of existing grades to a W, or does it allow other types of changes to grades?

The Registrar's Office will only make enrollment changes during the current term before all grades are finalized for that term. Throughout the semester, the office receives requests for refunds and/or requests to drop with a "W" after the deadline. Requests are reviewed throughout the semester as they are received. If approved for a refund, the course is removed along with its charges and any "F" grade if already assigned (block classes). Depending on the student's situation, the Financial Aid and/or Business Office are included in the review as any change may affect their areas.

At the end of each semester, we also review students who have received all "F" grades. We typically have 3-5 each semester where we remove the "F" grades and administratively cancel the enrollment because it was determined that the student was a "no-show" and never attended based on the date last attended submitted by the faculty member which is required when submitting "F" grades. Since we only cancel no-show enrollments early in the semester for those with 100% "never attended" reports, one incorrect attendance certification will keep the student off the cancellation list. The result of this incorrect reporting is that the student receives all "F" grades which then requires an administrative cancellation at the end of the term once we review prior attendance reports and the last day attended provided at grade submission. If we find incongruent attendance reporting such as 4 out of 5 reporting a student as never attended, we follow up with the one faculty member to verify that the student actually was a no-show before making a change. This incorrect attendance reporting causes 99% of the "end of term" grade changes during the grades processing week.

Other enrollment changes that may occur are the result of documented errors in advising or documented miscommunication between the student and an office, faculty member, or advisor.

Changing from an “F” to “W” during grades processing is rare and usually only occurs when a documented timeline can be established indicating that if action were taken at the time of the documented activity, the student would have been eligible for the “W.” I would like to provide additional information about the grade change in question. The student is a student veteran currently receiving VA educational benefits and has had difficulties trying to finish his degree for several semesters now. His request for a refund was received while the Registrar’s Office was processing the final summer grades. After reviewing his documentation and a “Stopped Attending” report from Carolyn Fridley, the Registrar’s Office, in consultation with the Veterans Office, decided to assist the student veteran and approved a late withdrawal. We are very appreciative of faculty who regularly submit attendance reports because they help the Registrar’s Office develop a time line for a student’s situation—something that was very helpful in this review. The decision for the “W” was based on the Stopped Attending report dated 7/22/2019 which was within the “W” period for the 7 week course. The refund was not an option since the student received aid. This was a unique situation for couple of reasons. First, summer grades were not able to be processed until the first week of the fall semester due to the second 7 week courses. Second, the student in question was already enrolled and attending classes for fall that started August 19. There was a need for a quick decision on the request which was made based on the desire to assist an at-risk veteran student who is close to graduation.

Never has a grade been changed from an “F” to a regular grade (A,B,C,D,I,P,S).

3) Could this process affect a student’s status (i.e. academic probation or suspension) in a way which would impact or conflict with the responsibilities of the Academic Appeals committee?

Depending on the type of change, a student’s academic status may be affected. This happens at about the same frequency as when a faculty member assigns an “I” grade instead of an “F” which may also affect the student’s academic status.

We also receive a number of grade changes from faculty members after a semester is over. Several of these changes affect the student’s academic status. Reading APPM 3.5, it appears that the Academic Appeals Committee should probably hear these requests since they are from a faculty member seeking to have grades altered. Currently, the faculty member submits the grade change, the department chair approves it, and the Registrar’s Office makes the change in the system.

4) Are records and statistics related to this appeal process kept, and if so can these be made available for regular review? (for example the Academic Appeals committee publishes redacted minutes)

There is not an appeals committee so there are not minutes of decisions made. Since the Registrar’s Office is the records office, all documents are scanned and stored in the student’s file to maintain a complete history of the student’s enrollment transactions. These are handled and processed like any enrollment transaction so a separate list is not maintained.



5) Even if the appeal basis is non-academic in nature, why are faculty members involved not, at a minimum, notified of the appeal and its result? (for comparison, the Academic Committee is required to notify the faculty member and their department chair of the result of an appeal)

While it hasn't been the practice in the Registrar's Office to notify faculty members of enrollment changes, we agree that it would be beneficial to them and will look at options on how to implement this in the future.

6) Does this kind of a change to a W delete the student records/materials stored in the Blackboard course, as apparently happens with "normal" withdrawals?

The Registrar's Office has no access to Blackboard and is not involved in any of the programming for the auto-uploads to Bb that synchronizes the enrollment between PX and Bb. CIDT indicated that the student data/grade center data would be retained for the dropped course in case the student was re-enabled in Bb.