

Registrar Toews,

At the September 17th meeting of the Faculty Senate some concerns from a faculty member regarding a grade change were brought to the Senate's attention for discussion. The grade change (in this case from an F to a W for an undergraduate course) was apparently the result of an appeal process that takes place entirely within the Office of the Registrar and did not involve the faculty member assigning the grade in any way (in terms of providing additional information, weighing in on the appeal's merit, or even being notified of the appeal's existence).

In this case the appeal (submitted on 8/19) and grade change (approved on 8/21) were done after the day listed as the end of the term on the Academic Calendar (8/18) and after the "final" grades for the course had been submitted by the faculty member in question and confirmed via e-mail. The faculty member only found out about the change in the course of their advising duties.

When the faculty member inquired further, they were told that this was "a standard procedure for students within the term", and that students who appealed outside the term filed with Academic Affairs. The committee that heard the appeal consisted of yourself, Rachel Musgrove, and Kristie Luke.

We could not find this procedure described or documented in the Student Handbook, Academic Policies & Procedures Manual, or the Course Catalog. The Student Handbook only refers to grade appeals done via the Academic Appeals committee (SH p. 13). The APPM only defines two appeal paths - the Academic Appeals committee for undergraduate appeals (APPM p. 34-35) and the Graduate Council for graduate appeals (APPM p. 46-47) (the position of the Graduate Dean also has academic appeals as an enumerated responsibility on p.19, presumably only for graduate appeals and as part of their inclusion on the Graduate Council). The Course Catalog also defines only these same two appeal paths (2017-2019 Catalog p. 55, 185, 195) and states that withdrawals (including complete withdrawals) are not permitted during a period at the end of a term which is dependent on the term's length (2017-2019 Catalog, p.51).

The apparent lack of documentation on this process and the absence of faculty input and notification raise some significant concerns, so the Senate thought it was best to contact you directly to make sure we had the best information possible and to prevent possible problems in the future. To that end we have some questions regarding this process:

- 1) Where are the existence of the appeal process and the necessary procedures documented, and is it available/made known to all students?
- 2) Does this process only cover conversions of existing grades to a W, or does it allow other types of changes to grades?
- 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?
- 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)

- 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)
- 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 Senate appreciates the time and effort it may take to help us with this information.

Sincerely,