

**THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
PROCEDURES GOVERNING APPEALS BY
GRADUATE STUDENTS ON ACADEMIC MATTERS**

APPELLATE PROCEDURES

Student appeals on academic matters are governed by policies established by the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. Valdosta State University has established appellate procedures consistent with Board policy. This document clarifies those procedures as they apply to graduate students. Nothing in this document may supplant current or future Board of Regents policy.

Appeals made by graduate students must follow the procedures established in the Department and in the College involved. The Graduate School will not hear an appeal by a student unless that student has exhausted the appellate procedure in the relevant Department and College and has been unable to reach a satisfactory resolution of the problem. In general, a student must appeal decisions in the following order:

1. Department
2. College
3. Dean of the Graduate School
4. Vice President for Academic Affairs, and
5. President of the University

Appeals made to the Dean of the Graduate School must be in writing and must include written documentation from each stage of the appellate process. Upon receipt of a written appeal, the Dean of the Graduate School will first determine if the appeal is an appropriate one for the Graduate School to hear. If the appeal is appropriate for the Graduate School to hear, the Dean may choose to discuss the issue with the parties involved in an attempt to reach a satisfactory resolution of the problem, or the Dean may appoint a committee to hear the appeal. If the Dean chooses to discuss the issue with the parties involved, and no satisfactory resolution of the problem is reached, the Dean must appoint an ad hoc Appeal Committee to hear the appeal. The ad hoc Appeal Committee will consist of three members selected from the Graduate Executive Committee and one of whom will be appointed by the Dean to serve as chair. Two members of the committee must come from outside the College involved in the appeal.

The written appeal with all supporting documentation must be provided to each member of the committee at least one week prior to the date of a hearing. The committee chair is responsible for providing all interested parties with a notice of the date, time, and location of the hearing.

The student initiating the appeal and all other parties with a salient interest in the appeal have a right to appear before the committee. The student may bring one additional person to provide advice and counsel.

Upon completion of the hearing, the ad hoc Appeal Committee must submit its recommendations, in writing, to the Dean of the Graduate School within one week after the hearing. The Dean of the Graduate School will make a decision on the appeal and then notify all parties of the disposition of the appeal, in writing, within one week. Copies of all decisions, recommendations, and other materials involved in the appeal will be forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

If no satisfactory resolution of the appeal has been reached at the level of the Graduate School, the appellant has the right to carry the appeal to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Such an appeal must be provided in writing to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs no later than thirty (30) calendar days after the student has received the decision of the ad hoc Appeal Committee.

HEARING PROCEDURES

Students who petition the Graduate School on an academic matter will have the petition considered by the ad hoc Appeal Committee of the Graduate Executive Committee, appointed by the Dean as provided for above. A student who wishes to address the appeals body orally must make the request in the written appeal and the ad hoc Appeal Committee will recommend positively or negatively on the request in writing. The purpose of an oral presentation is to provide an opportunity for an individual who may communicate more effectively orally than in writing to supplement his or her written appeal. The university unit or individual against which the appeal is directed will be afforded the opportunity to attend the hearing if the student's request for an oral hearing is granted. The petition should state the decision desired by the student and the reasons(s) the student believes that decision is justified. The student making the appeal must sign the petition.

When a hearing is to occur on the case, the following rules will apply:

1. The student will be notified in writing of the date, time, and place of the hearing.
2. Prior to the hearing, the student may review the written material in the file which will be provided to the ad hoc Appeal Committee hearing the case. The material must be available to the student at least 48 hours prior to the hearing.
3. The appeal will be heard by members of the ad hoc Appeal Committee whose membership and formulation is described above. Any party to the appeal may place any documentation and/or have any statement placed in the official records of the hearing.
4. Faculty members designated as members of the ad hoc Appeal Committee will be excused from service on a particular case under the following circumstances:
 - If they have a personal or professional relationship with any party to the case which would preclude them from rendering an objective judgment in the case.

- If the case involves a faculty member in the same department or division as a member of the ad hoc Appeal Committee.
 - If the case involved an appeal from a department, college, or school committee in which the faculty member has participated.
5. Hearings shall be closed and attended only by essential parties and persons called by essential parties during those persons' testimony.
 6. The student making the appeal shall appear first in the hearing; other parties, including faculty or other university personnel who are respondents, shall appear after the student. At the committee's discretion, parties other than the student shall be invited to participate by meeting with the subcommittee; if they prefer, they may respond in writing to the ad hoc Appeal Committee's request for information.
 7. The student and any respondent in the hearing may each invite on other person to assist or support him or her during the hearing. The role of any such person shall be limited to advising the party meeting with the ad hoc Appeal Committee and shall not include addressing the committee, registering objections or in any fashion participating in the proceeding. Hearings conducted pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act shall be conducted in accordance with university policy. This policy will be furnished to any student filing under a petition under that act. Any student or respondent intending to bring an attorney to a hearing must notify the Chair of the committee at least one week in advance of the hearing.
 8. If an oral hearing is to be held, the ad hoc Appeal Committee will choose the option that the student and respondent appear (a) separately or (b) together. Parties will not be permitted to cross-examine each other during the hearing. Formal legal rules of evidence do not apply in hearings on academic matters.
 9. When the ad hoc Appeal Committee has received the information it deems necessary to reach a recommendation in a case, it shall determine its recommendation by majority vote of the committee. Only committee members may vote. The committee must submit its recommendation, in writing, to the Dean of the Graduate School within one week after the hearing.
 10. No appeal will be considered at any time other than during the fall and spring academic semesters, defined as the first day of class through the last day of class. All times listed in the procedures refer to working days during the semester in which the appeal is made. Holidays and weekends are not counted as part of the time line. If the appeal is filed late in a semester, all times will carry into the following semester.

March 2003