

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

S.71-41

MEMORANDUM

To.....SENATE.....

From.....J. R. McANINCH.....

.....SENATOR.....

Subject.....GRADE APPEALS - S.71-41.....

Date.....FEBRUARY 11, 1971.....

MOTION:

"That Senate establish a Senate Grade Appeals Committee with terms of reference, method of operation and composition to be as outlined in Paper S.71-41."

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Subject..... GRADE APPEALS.....	Date..... FEBRUARY 11, 1971.....

SENATE GRADE APPEAL COMMITTEE

Moved: "That Senate establish a Senate Grade Appeal Committee, whose terms of reference, method of operation and composition be as follows:

1. Terms of Reference:

To receive and pass judgment upon grade appeal submissions from students who believe that their academic work has been unfairly evaluated.

2. Method of Operation:

1. Grade appeal requests must be submitted in writing to the office of the Academic Vice-President;
2. Only those grade appeal submissions in which the appellant has previously made submissions to the professor involved in the dispute would be considered by the Committee;
3. Upon receipt of an appeal the Committee is to seek evaluation of the academic work of the student whose grading is being challenged from two academics knowledgeable in the field covered by the work. The professor whose evaluation is being called into question is not permitted to be one of the evaluators;
4. Upon receipt of the two academic evaluations the Committee will make a decision. This decision must in all cases be based upon the findings of the two academic evaluations. The Committee is not empowered to make decisions which contradict the academic evaluations it receives;
5. All aspects of the Committee's operations are to be confidential. The identities of the academic evaluators are to be kept confidential - neither the student nor his professor can be informed of who the academic evaluators are;
6. Upon making a decision the Committee will inform the appellant in writing of their decision. If the decision is in favor of the appellant, the Committee is to submit a change of grade directive to the Registrar's Office;
7. Students with queries concerning the decision reached in their case can, if they wish, seek clarification from the Vice-President, Academic.

3. Composition:

The Academic Vice-President
One student appointed by the Student's Council
One Faculty Senator."

At the present time Simon Fraser University lacks a clearly defined and standardized procedure to deal with student grade appeals. In most Departments it is up to the Chairman to cope with such requests. A few Departments, such as English and Philosophy, have Departmental Committees to handle any problems in this area. It is the contention of this paper that the area of grade appeals is an important one and that it should not continue to be dealt with in an essentially ad hoc way throughout the University. It is time to develop procedures available to students in all Departments which will deal with grade appeals in a uniform manner.

By doing this the University will not only be providing students with equal access to academic justice, but will be recognizing the legitimacy of a student grade appeal. A student should not in effect have to plead with academic authorities, such as Department Chairmen, for a re-evaluation of a mark he has received. The granting of a grade re-evaluation should not be viewed as an act of benevolence on the part of academic authorities, but as a right possessed by the students of this University.

This proposal recognizes the delicate nature of the problem under discussion. Clearly academics do not relish the prospect of meddling in the affairs of their colleagues. Altering a grade assigned by a professor implies a questioning of his competence to do his job. The potential ill will which could be created by such an action cannot be underestimated. Interference by a Department Chairman or Committee in a professor's grading practices could well be the source of rancour within that Department.

This is why a Department Chairman would seem to be ill-suited to cope with grade appeals. It is likely that Departmental Chairmen possess an in-built reluctance to involve themselves in grade disputes due to their sensitive nature.

These aspects of the problem point to the desirability of a University Grade Appeal Committee, both in terms of effectiveness in doing the required job and in terms of preventing the sorts of internal problems which could develop if grade appeals were handled at the Departmental level.

A Senate Grade Appeal Committee would provide a University-wide mechanism to ensure that fair grade appeals are provided to those students who desire them. The task of the Committee will not be to assess itself the appeals, but to ensure that the requests are assessed by qualified academics.

The University has a responsibility to provide such a mechanism. By accepting this proposal, Senate will accept a responsibility it has shirked for too long.