

CERJ Advice on the Proposed Grade Change Committee Guidelines
December 3, 2010

CERJ has some observations about the proposed changes to the Grade Change Committee Guidelines.

1. p. 3. A new category "Financial Need" has been added to the list of justifications for retroactive drops and withdrawals that might be given by petitioners. "Financial Need" is not defined, and it seems indistinguishable from the category "Financial Hardship" listed as item 1. The problem is that in some cases petitions based on "Financial Hardship" will be approved, but in no case is a petition based on "Financial Need" to be approved. (Reference to financial need is also made in item 11).)
2. p. 3. "NS" is a notation, rather than a grade. The list of grades is given in DDR A540(A).
3. p. 1. This refers to existing language, 4) **Clerical or Procedural Errors**. "The Grade Change Deputy may approve all petitions that involve clerical and procedural errors. The word 'all' might best be replaced by 'any.'"
4. pp. 1, 4. Again referring to existing language. "'Clerical or Procedural Error' is generally interpreted by the Committee to mean an error made by someone other than the student (e.g. instructor or staff adviser)" (p. 1). "The Committee, like the instructor, has no authority to reassess or re-evaluate student work; only if it can be documented that a clerical or procedural error was made will the Committee have authority to alter the grade" (p. 4). The use of the word 'mean' on p. 1 seems to imply that *any* error made by someone other than the student is a clerical or procedural error, but the statement on p. 4 states that some such errors are not grounds for grade change. CERJ suggests that the language of p. 1 be amended, perhaps as follows: "'Clerical or Procedural Error' is generally interpreted by the Committee to **imply that an error has been made** by someone other than the student."
5. CERJ believes that the charge of the Grade Change Committee is broad enough that it has the power to add the requirements in proposed clause 15) #2. for petitions based on discrimination or arbitrary treatment.

Grade Change Committee Guidelines

<http://academicsenate.ucdavis.edu/GCC/>

PREAMBLE: The Grade Change Committee (hereafter, “the Committee”), reviews all retroactive and grade change requests not unambiguously justified by the Regulations of the Academic Senate and of the Davis Division; the Committee is governed by Davis Division Bylaw 79. The Committee is dedicated to the academic standards, educational mission, and Principles of Community of UC Davis (<http://principles.ucdavis.edu>), and will review all petitions on a case-by-case basis to determine appropriate action. Petitioners to the Committee should understand that even in cases when the Committee may be sympathetic, the Committee is still required to abide by their own published Guidelines (below) and the Regulations of the Academic Senate. Approval authority to make certain determinations on the behalf of the Committee is delegated to the Deputy to the Committee in the Office of the University Registrar (hereafter, “Grade Change Deputy”), as noted below. The Committee reserves the right to determine when a petition warrants an exception to the below Guidelines.

Questions regarding the Committee or the Retroactive/Grade Change process should be directed to the Grade Change Deputy in the Office of the University Registrar, who may be contacted at GradeChanges@ucdavis.edu.

- 1) Any retroactive petition must be submitted within 3 academic quarters in residence. Petitions submitted after this time period must explain and document why the retroactive action being sought was delayed.
- 2) If a petition is denied by the Committee, a student may appeal one time, **within one academic quarter of residence**, with **substantial** and **new** information. A second appeal will ordinarily not be considered by the Committee.
 1. Bona fide appeals of final decisions made by the Committee may be referred to the Student Petitions Subcommittee of the Executive Council of the Academic Senate. However, appeals are limited to confirming that the Committee did not act in an arbitrary or capricious manner in making its determination and that the final decision was based on substantial evidence. The Student Petitions Subcommittee will not substitute its judgment on the substantive merits of the case for the judgment of the Committee.
- 3) After a **degree has been awarded to a student**, his or her record is closed. The Committee will consider requests only when they concern clerical or procedural error. The Committee will not consider retroactive drops or withdrawals after a degree has been awarded. Petitions made outside of the timeline specified in paragraph 1 will not be considered.
- 4) **Clerical or Procedural Errors.** The Grade Change Deputy may approve all petitions that involve clerical or procedural errors. Such petitions must meet all other standards set forth by the Committee and the Academic Senate.
 1. “Clerical or Procedural Error” is generally interpreted by the Committee to mean an error made by someone other than the student (e.g. instructor or staff adviser).

- 5) Petitions to change grade modes retroactively (i.e., to or from P/NP or S/U grading) will not be approved by the Committee except in cases of clerical or procedural error, even if based on academic need.
- 6) All grades except Incomplete or In Progress are final when filed by the instructor in the end-of-term course report (see DD Regulation A540E, http://academicsenate.ucdavis.edu/cerj/manual/dd_regs.htm#A540). The Committee, like the instructor, has no authority to reassess or re-evaluate student work; only if it can be documented that a clerical or procedural error was made will the Committee have authority to alter the grade.
 1. All requests for a change of grade involving Incomplete must be accompanied by a copy of the Incomplete form filed with the original grade report, or documentation that the Incomplete grade agreement was made during the term. An instructor may not assign an Incomplete grade after a grade has been submitted, except in cases in which the Incomplete grade was not assigned due to clerical or procedural error.
- 7) If a student petitions to drop or withdraw retroactively because of a **disability**, the Committee will consider the disability aspect of the petition only if the student has first contacted the Student Disability Center (“SDC,” <http://sdc.ucdavis.edu>) and the SDC has determined that the student has a qualifying disability and is eligible to receive reasonable accommodations. The Committee will consider only the time period (generally, no more than one quarter) before the SDC disability determination. Once SDC has determined that a student is eligible to receive reasonable accommodation, the Committee assumes that such accommodations have been sought by the student and provided through SDC. **Retroactive action requested by the student of the Committee is not considered reasonable accommodation.** However, the Committee will work with SDC and a student to implement any reasonable accommodations that are necessary to allow the student equitable opportunity to participate in the petition process.
- 8) The Grade Change Deputy may approve the following petitions to add courses retroactively, without referring the petition to the Committee:
 1. If the student was on the waitlist for the course and this can be documented; if the student was issued a Permission-to-Add (“PTA”) number for the course; if it can be reasonably verified that the student intended to add the course to his or her schedule during the quarter. Such petitions must meet all other standards set forth by the Committee and the Academic Senate.
 2. For the following courses, even if the conditions above are not met: PE Activity courses (PHE 1 and 6); music rehearsal courses; internship units; and research units. Such petitions must meet all other standards set forth by the Committee and the Academic Senate.
- 9) Petitions to drop or withdraw retroactively are the most difficult cases for the Committee to evaluate. In general, the Committee will be very reluctant to grant any retroactive action for more than one quarter. All petitions to drop or withdraw retroactively must show evidence that a hardship occurred at a crucial time in the academic calendar (e.g., the week of final examinations), extended over a significant period, or offer sufficient justification as to why action was not taken to drop petitioned course during the quarter.

The majority of requests for retroactive drops and withdrawals will offer as justification one of the following reasons:

1. **Financial Hardship.** Ordinarily the Committee will grant such a petition only if there has been a sudden change in the student's financial situation during the quarter. The student must provide documentation of the financial hardship, and/or documentation that his or her employer **required** an increase in work hours.
2. **Health problems**, including mental illness. These must be well documented. If a student believes that he or she may have a disability and is need of auxiliary aids or services in order to have an equal opportunity to participate in the Committee's petition process, the student must contact the Student Disability Center in order to determine eligibility for reasonable accommodation. See paragraph 7, above.
3. **Family Hardship.** The death or severe illness of an immediate family member may be considered grounds for retroactive drop or withdrawal.
4. **Problems with drugs, alcohol, or violent behavior.** Generally, these are not considered sufficient justification for a retroactive drop or withdrawal.
5. **Sexual Trauma.** Events such as rape or abortion may justify a retroactive drop or withdrawal.
6. **Personal Problems.** Breaking up with a romantic partner will not generally be considered sufficient justification for a retroactive drop or withdrawal. Difficulties with landlords or roommates will not generally be considered sufficient justification for a retroactive drop or withdrawal. The Committee will consider legal entanglements or other time consuming procedures that may arise from such problems, but these must be well documented.
7. **Academic Need.** Retroactive drops or withdrawals for reasons of academic need will not be approved.
8. **Financial Need.** Retroactive drops or withdrawals for reasons of financial need will not be approved.

- 10) Requests to retroactively drop one or two courses, but not the entire quarter, will ordinarily be regarded as "selective" and will not be granted. The Committee will consider the possibility that one particular course was adversely affected more than other courses by situations as described in paragraph 9, but the Committee will require strong evidence.

1. **Incomplete Grades.** A course in which a student has received an Incomplete grade notation will not normally be dropped, except in situations outlined in paragraph 9. In accepting the Incomplete grade, the student obligates herself or himself to complete the work.
2. **NS grades.** The Enrolled – No Work Submitted ("NS") grade cannot be dropped unless a documented clerical or procedural error has occurred. The NS grade will not be dropped for the reason of refunding a student's fees for a past term.

- 11) Retroactive action will not be taken by the Committee for reasons of academic or financial need. The Committee will not make decisions relating to fee refunds, admission, readmission, or dismissal/reinstatement; statements regarding these matters should not be made in petitions to the Committee.

- 12) If a petition to add a course retroactively is approved by the Committee for a course in the regular quarter or during summer session, the student will be required to pay all necessary fees.
- 13) For retroactive petitions that concern the Education Abroad Program (EAP), a recommendation from the Committee on International Studies and Exchanges may be sought. In most situations the Grade Change Committee will support those recommendations. Because of the time involved for routing EAP petitions, said petitions are first on the agenda.
- 14) The Committee will review all retroactive petitions, also including grade changes for UC Davis Extension students enrolled in UC Davis classes. The UC Davis Extension student should provide a copy of her or his Extension transcript along with the petition.
- 15) **Grade Disputes, Discrimination, and Arbitrary Treatment:**
 1. **Challenging an instructor's grade.** If the **Committee** finds that a clerical or procedural error has resulted in a student receiving an incorrect grade, it may authorize a change even if the faculty member who awarded the grade is opposed, if an appropriate grade can be determined. Generally, the **Committee** will require the student to have discussed the matter with the faculty member and the department chairperson. The Committee, like the instructor, has no authority to reassess or re-evaluate student work; only if it can be documented that a clerical or procedural error was made will the Committee have authority to alter the grade. The student will be expected to bear the burden of proving that a clerical or procedural error occurred and caused the incorrect grade to be assigned.
 2. **Discrimination or Arbitrary Treatment.** If a student petitions for a retroactive change due to alleged **discrimination** or **arbitrary treatment** (as defined by Policy and Procedural Manual chapter 280, section 5 <http://manuals.ucdavis.edu/ppm/280/280-05.htm>), the Committee will consider this aspect of the petition only after the student has first contacted the Office of Student Judicial Affairs ("SJA," <http://sja.ucdavis.edu>) and a finding has been made by SJA. If the Committee determines that discrimination or arbitrary treatment was the cause of or motivation behind the assignment of an incorrect grade, it may authorize a change if an appropriate grade can be determined. The Committee may also determine if discrimination or arbitrary treatment rises to the level of a retroactive drop of the affected course. If in reviewing a petition the Committee determines that discrimination or arbitrary treatment may have occurred, the Committee will refer said petition to SJA for review.
- 16) If a student cites an advising error by a university staff or faculty adviser in his or her petition to the Committee, the student should provide documentation of the advising error with the petition. The Committee cannot make a determination regarding advising errors without appropriate documentation. Even in cases of documented advising errors, the Committee may deem it more appropriate that an exception be made by the adviser than for retroactive action to be taken by the Committee.
- 17) The Committee reserves the right to deny a petition, even if good cause for granting such a petition exists, if it determines that the petition represents a likely abuse of the

retroactive petition process or attempt to circumvent other university rules and procedures.

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