This policy applies to courses and students in the undergraduate, non-health professional programs in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

OVERVIEW

The undergraduate non-health professional programs and the undergraduate nursing education programs in health sciences utilize a wide range of methods to assess, evaluate or grade student work. From time to time a significant disagreement arises over the outcome and the intent of this policy is to provide a final resolution when informal discussion is insufficient to achieve a sense of fairness. Universities are places where scholarly discussion is welcome and differences of opinion are both normal and welcome. When a disagreement relates to a grade for the work of a student, this policy is intended to apply a process that can be seen as fair and impartial.

In the following procedures all steps up to and including paragraph 6 of the PROCEDURE FOR A RE-READ/RE-ASSESSMENT are as stated in the Senate policy and the policies of the Faculties of Science and Humanities with replacement of text appropriate for health science administrative structures. Additional detail may be found at http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/Form-A-Re-Read.html

SENATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Understanding the types of appeals as outlined in Senate’s Student Appeal Procedures

The Senate document on Student Appeal Procedures refers to three types of student appeals as outlined below: namely, Re-read/Re-assessment, Academic Process, and Non-academic. This policy and procedural document for the Faculty of Health Sciences addresses the Re-read/Re-assessment Appeal only. Further information regarding the Academic and Non-academic Appeals can be found in Senate’s Student Appeal Procedures available at http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/.

TYPES OF APPEALS

Re-Read/Re-assessment: A student questions their grade or the assessment of their performance (on an examination paper, project, course assignment, essay, etc.) and alleges error in the academic assessment of their work on the part of an instructor or a committee. In order to qualify for a re-read, the piece of work must be worth 10% or more of the final course grade. This process may result in the grade on the piece of work being increased, being decreased, or remaining unchanged. The results of a formal re-read are final and cannot be appealed.

Academic Process: A student questions their grade or the assessment of their performance on a piece of work in a course, or their academic standing or status in a program, and alleges error or injustice on grounds other than the academic assessment of their work, such as:
1. a) the method of evaluation was not fair and reasonable in the circumstances;
2. b) the instructor was biased against the student;
3. c) the instructor deviated substantially from the course outline in contravention of applicable University policies;
4. d) the application of University regulations governing program or degree requirements was not fair, just, or reasonable; or
5. e) a finding of academic dishonesty, or the penalty assigned, was not fair, just or reasonable.

Non-Academic: A student questions as unfair, unjust or unreasonable, a decision or action of a University authority or official, which has negative material consequences for their University life, and which is unrelated to courses, or to program or degree requirements.

PROCEDURE FOR A RE-READ/RE-ASSESSMENT:

Preliminary Inquiry

1. Students who wish to raise questions or register complaints about matters of academic assessment are encouraged and strongly advised to communicate informally with their instructors before seeking a review under formal procedures. Experience shows that the great majority of questions or complaints of this kind can be resolved satisfactorily through informal communication by going directly to the appropriate instructor. Students shall seek remedies for their concerns as promptly as possible. An undue delay in the reporting of a complaint, especially for assignments based on oral reports or musical performances, may make it impossible for the complaint to be dealt with. The application for a formal re-reading must be submitted by July 31 immediately following the Fall/Winter Session or by November 5 immediately following the Spring/Summer Session in which the assessment occurred.

2. Within two weeks of receiving the student's complaint, the instructor shall consider the inquiry, make a determination of its merits and respond to the student. With the consent of the student, the Chair may attempt to mediate the dispute in a final effort to resolve it before the student resorts to a formal re-read. In their efforts to resolve the dispute, under no circumstances should the instructor or student recommend an informal re-reading or re-assessment procedure involving another instructor as a third party. Faculty, for their part, should not accede to student requests that they re-read informally and re-assess assignments graded by another instructor (excluding T.A.s working under their direct supervision).

3. If the instructor and student reach an impasse and cannot resolve the dispute, it is the responsibility of the student to decide whether to take the complaint further by reporting it to the Assistant Dean, Department Chair or Program Director * for possible resolution.
4. If the student brings a complaint to an Assistant Dean, Department Chair or Program Director and they are unable to resolve the matter, the student will be advised of the Senate's Student Appeal Procedures and this Faculty Policy and Procedures document.
5. A student may apply for a formal re-reading of their essay, examinations, etc. provided the piece of work is worth 10% or more of the final course grade. In this event, Form A (available at the Office of the University Secretariat) shall be submitted to the Associate Dean (Undergraduate Education) or the Associate Dean (Nursing) in the Faculty of Health Science, for health science and nursing courses. The Form A application for a formal re-reading must be accompanied by the receipt for the re-read fee ($50.00 per item to be re-read) which will be refunded if the re-read results in an increase in the student’s grade on the piece of work.

6. Once the Senate's Student Appeal Procedures have been invoked, within one week of receiving Form A, the Associate Dean (undergraduate education) will write to the Assistant Dean, Department Chair or Program Director *, directing them, within that same week, to select a qualified re-reader--someone other than the instructor--and to arrange for the re-reading, taking steps to ensure the anonymity of the student and the impartiality of the reader. In the School of Nursing, the Associate Dean (Nursing) will write to the Assistant Dean (Undergraduate Nursing Education Program). To this end, the Assistant Dean, Department Chair or Program Director * will provide the re-reader with a clean copy of the work in dispute--a copy from which the grade and instructor's comments are, as far as possible, removed--a copy of the assignment, a copy of the course outline, the instructor’s marking scheme (if available), a copy of the instructor’s grade distribution for the piece of work, and a set of instructions for the re-reader directing them to submit to the Assistant Dean, Department Chair or Program Director* a report containing a detailed assessment of the work in dispute and a recommended grade. The Assistant Dean, Department Chair or Program Director* shall secure the results of the re-read and report those results to the appropriate Associate Dean within three weeks of submission to the re-reader.

7. Upon receiving the report from the Assistant Dean, Department Chair or Program Director*, the Associate Dean (undergraduate education) or the Associate Dean (Nursing) in health sciences will decide upon a grade for the work in dispute on the basis of the compiled documentation. Normally, the re-reader’s grade is taken to be the correct grade for the piece of work. If the original grade and the re-reader’s grade differ by two or more grade points, the Associate Dean may ask for a second re-read of the work. When all assessments have been received, the Associate Dean will make a reasonable determination of the new grade based on the three independent assessments (one original and two new).

8. Normally, within three weeks of receiving the re-reader’s report, the Associate Dean will write to the instructor, student, Assistant Dean, Department Chair or Program Director informing them of the outcome of the reread. The re-read fee will be refunded if the student’s final grade in the course is raised by at least one point on the 12-point scale as a result of the re-read.

* In Health Sciences, the academic administrators are the Assistant Dean (Undergraduate Nursing Education), Assistant Dean of BHSc (Honours), the Chair of Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences for the Biomedical Discovery and Commercialization degree program or the Program Director of the BHSc (Honours) in Health, Engineering Science and Entrepreneurship degree program. In cases where the instructor and Assistant Dean, Department Chair or Program Director are one and the same, the Associate Dean should work with another senior faculty member in Faculty.

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