

Department of Communication Studies Course-Related Appeals Policy

Objective

This policy is enacted to provide clear guidelines for students who wish to appeal to the Department of Communication Studies (hereinafter “the department”) regarding their course work and assessments. The document, prepared in accordance with the policies of the Academic Registrar’s Office at Hong Kong Baptist University, strives to ensure that appeal processes are transparent, consistent and fair.

Grounds for appeal

1. A student cannot proceed to a formal appeal until an informal process between the student and the instructor has occurred. If a resolution has not been reached, the student can proceed to file an appeal according to the outlined procedure.
2. A student may proceed to a formal appeal only if grounds can be established under one or more of the following:
 - A procedural irregularity has occurred;
 - Documentation or evidence supplied by the student shows that the original decision is not accurate according to the course syllabus or not reasonable;
 - There is new information that could not reasonably have been provided at the time of the original decision, and that would probably have affected the decision or any penalty imposed;
 - The decision was manifestly wrong; and/or
 - The penalty imposed was manifestly excessive, inappropriate or not available in the circumstances;
 - Documented evidence of prejudice or bias on the part of one or more of the course instructors.

Scope covered

This appeal process applies only to course grades and could not be used by students to appeal grades of individual assignments. In cases where the appeal is related to one or more of the following reasons, the department will not proceed with the application.

- Decisions by a course instructor in relation to the academic performance of a student in any component of assessment, which is based solely on academic judgement, cannot be appealed.
- A student may only submit an appeal on his or her own behalf, not on behalf of a group or any other student. Group appeals will not be accepted.

Parameters

All appeals against course-related grading decisions will be subject to the following procedures.

Stage 1 – Informal resolution

- A student must first attempt to resolve concerns regarding academic decisions through an informal appeal process by contacting the course instructor within **3 weeks** of receiving the course grade. A student should make a reasonable effort to resolve the issue with the course instructor.

- If no resolution is reached through the informal appeal procedure, the student may request a formal review through the department by contacting the relevant program director within **5 business days** from the date he/she is informed that a resolution cannot be reached by the course instructor. In situations when a student is not assigned to a program concentration, the request for a formal review should be addressed to the associate head. The program director/associate head will meet with both parties. The program director/associate head does not play a decision-making role; rather, he/she facilitates a resolution when possible.
- If a resolution cannot be reached, the student may file the appeal to the department.

Stage 2 – Department appeal panel

- The student must lodge a notice of an appeal, in writing or via email, to the department no later than **7 business days** from the date he/she is informed that a resolution cannot be reached by the program director/associate head.
- Based on an initial review, the department head may return the appeal to the student for further information or clarification. If the appeal is returned, the student must submit the requested information or clarification within **10 business days** from the date of return for the appeal to be proceeded.
- In cases where the student has provided sufficient information, an appeal panel will be appointed by the department head.
- The appeal panel will investigate all the circumstances of the appeal and notify the department of the outcome in writing within **6 weeks** from the day the student files the appeal. The student will then be notified about the outcome in writing.
- In cases where the student remains dissatisfied with the reassessment by the department's appeal panel, he/she may progress the appeal to the university level. The student should refer to the university guidelines for further information.

Stage 3 – Academic Registrar appeal

- If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the department, he/she may appeal in writing to the Academic Registrar within **2 weeks** after receiving the decision from the department, giving full reasons in support of the appeal. A fee will be charged for the appeal.
- The Academic Registrar shall review the case and determine if there are grounds for re-consideration:
 - If the Academic Registrar considers that there are insufficient grounds for the appeal, the appeal will be refused and the decision is final.
 - If the appeal is accepted, the Academic Registrar shall reconsider the case in consultation with the course instructor and the department head/program director to make a final decision.
 - If deemed appropriate, the Academic Registrar may convene an appeal panel to review the case to make a final decision.

Procedure for filing an appeal to the department

A student may file a formal appeal to the department if the grounds of his or her appeal fulfilled the above-stated criteria. It should be noted that the appeal process can also result in a lower grade if the appeal panel finds grounds. The student should submit a written appeal to the program director/associate head through email. The written appeal should include:

- A full description of the academic decision and the basis for the student's appeal for reconsideration;

- A statement of the outcome the student is seeking;
- Any supporting documents, such as:
 - Course syllabus, course materials and graded assignments;
- Information on when and with which course instructor the student attempted an informal resolution