This operating instruction describes a student’s right to appeal academic performance decisions and provides the procedures for formal academic performance appeals. For the purposes of this instruction, a “student” refers to an individual enrolled in a credit-bearing course offered by the Graduate School of Engineering and Management.

### SUMMARY OF REVISIONS

This revision incorporates changes to the Student Complaint Resolution process.

1. **Reference:** AUI 36-2611, *Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Grievances*, 10 Jul 13

2. **Policy.** AFIT and the Graduate School of Engineering and Management affirm the right of each student to resolve grievances with the Institution. Students are guaranteed the right of fair hearing and appeal in all matters of judgment of academic performance. The Graduate School hereby establishes specific appeal procedures to ensure timely and appropriate consideration of each appeal as well as procedures to address general complaints posed by students.

3. **General Appeals/Complaint Process.**

   3.1. Informal Resolution: Student grievances generally originate at the department level, and the resolution of the grievance is sought at the department level. The first step in dealing with most complaints is generally to discuss the issue with the faculty or staff member who is most
involved with the issue. If that discussion is not satisfactory, a student should try to discuss the matter with that person’s immediate supervisor (e.g., head of an academic department).

3.2. Formal Resolution: The student has the right to a formal appeal upon a written request in those instances where an informal process is not applicable or where the result of that process is unsatisfactory.

4. Grade and Academic Performance Appeals. Each student shall be responsible for meeting the academic standards established for the course of study in which she or he is enrolled, and these standards shall be the only basis for evaluating the student’s academic performance. Faculty are responsible for providing clear guidance on academic standards and this guidance must be readily available to students in documents such as course syllabi and handbooks. A student who is dissatisfied with an instructor's evaluation/grade for any aspect of the student's academic performance must first attempt to negotiate a change in the grade/evaluation with the instructor teaching the course. In cases where the student cannot informally resolve an academic performance complaint with the department, she/he has the right to a formal appeal. Attachment 1 provides the steps required in a formal appeal process.

5. General Student Complaint Resolution. Students have a number of avenues to lodge complaints not associated with academic performance and have the ability to seek higher level resolution to a complaint when the process outlined in paragraph 3 is deemed inadequate. Students have multiple means available to them to submit formal complaints to the Dean of Students on all matters:

a. Face-to-face discussion, telephone call or e-mail
b. Student complaint database (not anonymous): Located at AFIT Intranet – Grad School – Student Complaints
c. Anonymous student feedback form: Located at AFIT Intranet – 2 Letters (EN) – Anonymous Student Feedback Form

For non-anonymous complaints, the Dean of Students will work directly with the complainant and relevant stakeholders to bring the issue(s) to resolution. Anonymous complaints will be addressed with relevant stakeholders. The Dean of Students will brief a summary of complaints and resolutions to the Graduate School senior staff on an annual basis with emphasis on trends, lessons learned and improvements to teaching and learning.
6. **Records.** The Academic Affairs Office must retain documentation about the outcomes of formal academic performance appeals for five years to demonstrate evidence of compliance to external reviewers. The Dean of Students should retain documentation about formal complaint resolution for five years to demonstrate evidence of compliance to external reviewers.

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Dean
Graduate School of Engineering & Management
Air Force Institute of Technology
ATTACHMENT 1

FORMAL APPEAL OF ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

1. The formal grade appeals process consists of the steps described below. Each additional step in the process is contingent upon resolution at the lowest possible level.

2. **Department Level.** The student submits a written and signed letter to the department head within five (5) working days of the release of grades in a quarter. The letter states what action the student is appealing, provides the course details, attaches pertinent materials, and provides an explanation of the appeal. A sample letter is in Attachment 2. If the appeal concerns the department head, the student should appeal directly to the Dean of the Graduate School. The department head shall review the appeal and render a decision to the student in writing within five (5) working days of receipt of the appeal letter.

3. **Dean Level.** Should the decision in step 2 be unsatisfactory to the student, the student has the right to make a written appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School. The appeal to the Dean must be submitted within five (5) working days after receipt of the department head’s decision. The request must include the materials the student submitted in step 2 and the reply from the department. The Dean may confer with the student and will refer the matter to the Academic Review Committee which will hold an official hearing on the appeal. The hearing will be held within ten (10) working days of receipt of the written appeal letter as long as the Graduate School is in session or within ten (10) working days of the Graduate School beginning a session. The department representative on the Academic Review Committee shall be recused from the proceedings. The student and a representative of the department may each attend the hearing to provide information or respond to the appeal. The Chair of the Academic Review Committee shall render the Committee’s recommendation in writing and the Dean of the Graduate School will send the student a letter indicating the approved decision.

4. **Provost Level.** Should the student desire to make further appeal, a written request should be sent to the Provost (Chief Academic Officer) within five (5) working days after receipt of the Dean’s decision. The request must include all pertinent materials from steps 2 and 3. The Provost will review all appeal materials and render a decision normally within ten (10) working days of receipt of the appeal. The final decision in academic appeals matters rests with the Provost.
ATTACHMENT 2

SAMPLE LETTER FOR FORMAL ACADEMIC APPEAL

Instructions: Complete this form letter then sign and date it prior to submitting it to the receiving official. A copy of this letter in Microsoft Word format is provided on the Registrar’s intranet site for your convenience.

MEMORANDUM FOR AFIT/EN__

AFIT/ENW

DATE

FROM:

SUBJECT: Grade Appeal

1. Course Information:

   a. Course Identifier:
   b. Course Name:
   c. Term:
   d. Instructor:

2. Basis for Appeal: Check all that apply and provide evidence and documentation for each basis checked.

   ____ The instructor refuses to (or cannot) assign a grade
   ____ The instructor is not available to review possible computational error.
   ____ The grade assigned is:
       ____ A result of an instructor or clerical error
       ____ Inequitable or capricious
       ____ Unreflective of course performance
       ____ Inconsistent with other grade assignments in the course

3. Narrative: Please provide a brief chronological description of the events and actions leading to the assignment of your grade. Please be sure to include the names of any individuals who may have relevant information.

4. Explanation of Appeal: For each box checked under “Basis for Appeal,” please provide a brief explanation showing how the events and actions cited in your narrative compel a change in your grade. Explain each basis separately, even if this requires citing the same events more than once. Please be clear on expectation of appeal, for example, “The instructor assigned a grade of B- and it should be a B+.”

5. Documentary Evidence: Please append any documents that support your appeal (e.g., copies of your work, copies of correspondence with your instructor or other individuals involved with your appeal). In the space below, please list the documents you have appended.

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Student Signature and Signature Block