ACADEMIC APPEALS POLICY
DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The following departmental policy reflects the SGS policy and guidelines for academic appeals and in many places the text is identical to that found in the SGS “Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee Guidelines for Chairs”

The SGS “Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee Guidelines for Chairs” states that “Graduate students may dispute substantive or procedural academic matters, including grades, evaluation of comprehensive examinations and other program requirements, decisions about the student’s continuation in any program, or concerning any other decision with respect to the application of academic regulations and requirements to a student.” When students have such concerns there are a number of steps to be followed in accordance with the policies and procedures of the School of Graduate Studies. Detailed information is available at http://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/gradadmin/appeals/GDAAC%20Guidelines%20(Nov07).pdf

STEPS IN THE APPEAL PROCESS

Informal Resolution of Concerns
The first step in resolving a student concern is to communicate with the instructor or other person whose ruling is in question. Should the matter not be resolved with the instructor, and should the student wish to pursue the matter, the student must discuss the matter with the AP&HD Associate Chair. The student may request that the Associate Chair meet with the student and instructor (either together or separately) in order to mediate the concern and facilitate a satisfactory resolution. In this context, it is possible that, with the consent of the parties involved, informal steps will be taken (e.g., asking a third party to read a student’s paper and provide feedback) to resolve the concern. Note that at any stage prior to filing an appeal with the Graduate Academic Appeals Board (see below), a student may consult the relevant SGS Vice-Dean, Students for advice and/or informal mediation. The Vice-Dean will serve as informal mediator, attempting to resolve the dispute or clarify issues. Timelines are not affected by mediation. However, the AP&HD Academic Appeals Committee and department Chair will not unreasonably deny a student the opportunity to appeal in circumstances where the timelines have been exceeded due to informal efforts to mediate or otherwise address the matter.

Department-level Appeal
Should the above efforts fail to resolve the matter, the student may make a formal appeal in writing to the AP&HD Academic Appeals Committee. The student must complete a Notice of Appeal to the AP&HD Academic Appeals Committee; a copy of this Notice is available from the AP&HD Programs and Admissions Coordinator and/or the Associate Chair. This form must be completed and delivered to the AP&HD Chair or the Chair of AP&HD Academic Appeals Committee within the specified timeline of 8 weeks from the date of the decision under appeal. The Chair of the Appeals Committee will determine, at his or her sole discretion, whether the appeal will proceed by way of an oral hearing and/or written submissions. In either case, at the conclusion of the hearing and/or review
of the written submissions, the AP&HD Academic Appeals Committee will make a recommendation to the AP&HD Chair regarding the merits of the appeal. The AP&HD Chair will then render the department-level appeal decision. Guidelines for chairs are made available to all parties in an appeal.

In the case of an appeal based on grading of a piece of student work, the AP&HD Academic Appeals Committee Chair will normally request that the course instructor submit a report on how the grade was awarded along with the course outline. The student will submit a copy of the work in question. The Appeals Committee may request that one or two faculty members (either on or outside the Appeals Committee) who are knowledgeable in the subject area read and grade the student’s work. On the basis of this review of the student work in question the Appeals Committee will make a recommendation regarding the disposition of the appeal to the Department Chair, as set out above. The recommendation will be arrived at via a simple majority vote.

**Appeal to the Graduate Academic Appeals Board (GAAB) of the School of Graduate Studies**

The student may appeal from the decision of the chair of the department by filing a Notice of Appeal to the SGS Graduate Academic Appeals Board (GAAB) within 8 weeks of the decision of the Chair.

**Appeal of the Graduate Academic Appeals Board Decision**

A decision of the Graduate Academic Appeals Board (GAAB) may subsequently be appealed by a student to the Governing Council’s Academic Appeals Committee, in accordance with its guidelines and procedures. An appeal to this Committee shall be commenced by filing a notice of appeal with its Secretary no later than ninety days after the date of the GAAB decision under appeal.

**COMPOSITION OF THE AP&HD ACADEMIC APPEALS COMMITTEE**

The AP&HD Academic Appeals Committee is comprised of five members: four faculty members of the AP&HD Executive Committee and a graduate student in the department. Neither the AP&HD Chair nor the Associate Chair is a member of the AP&HD Academic Appeals Committee. In addition, for each member on the committee, at least one alternate member will be appointed. Faculty Appeals committee members will be selected from among Executive Committee members at the beginning the academic year (July 1) and alternates will be appointed by the Department Chair. The student member and alternate will be chosen through a process established by the AP&HD Students Association and will serve from July 1 through June 30. Quorum consists of three committee members, including the Appeals Committee Chair.
Preamble

The Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee is a committee established under the authority of the Graduate Chair or Graduate Director of a Graduate Department, Centre or Institute. This Committee constitutes part of the overall academic appeals procedures available to graduate students within the University of Toronto. (See SGS Calendar for an overview and timeline of the overall graduate appeals process.) Therefore, it is required that all graduate chairs establish such a committee at the commencement of every academic year. Nonetheless, the Committee is advisory to the Chair who is not bound by the Committee’s recommendation. Within the overall academic appeals procedure, the Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee has a high level of discipline-specific academic expertise to judge the academic matters in an appeal. This Committee therefore plays a crucial role in the overall appeals procedure. This Committee may consider only academic matters. Decisions related to admission to an academic program, including admission to the doctoral program for current master’s students, are not subject to appeal. Issues relating to non-academic matters (for example, fees) are not to be considered by the Committee.

These guidelines will be made available to the Committee membership, and to all appellants. It is within the authority of the Chair to alter any of the procedures outlined herein, if circumstances warrant. However, members of the Committee and the appellant should be notified in writing as soon as possible of any changes in procedures and reasons for the changes. In cases where an appeal moves to the next stage after the Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee, if procedures were altered, the Chair is responsible for ensuring that this information is available at the next appeal stage. These guidelines are subject to the approval of the School of Graduate Studies Council.

Informal Mediation:

At any stage prior to filing an appeal with the Graduate Academic Appeals Board, a student may consult the relevant SGS Vice-Dean, Students for advice and/or informal mediation. The Vice-Dean will serve as informal mediator, attempting to resolve the dispute or clarify issues. Timelines are not affected by mediation.
Definitions

Throughout this document, the following definitions apply:

- the Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee is referred to as “the Committee” or the “GDAAC”
- the Chair of the GDAAC is referred to as “the Chair of the Committee”
- the Graduate Chair or Graduate Director of a Graduate Department, Centre or Institute is referred to as “the Chair”
- the Graduate Coordinator of a Graduate Department, Centre or Institute is referred to as “the Graduate Coordinator”
- “student” shall include a person who is no longer enrolled as a student in the School of Graduate Studies, but who was so enrolled at the time of the decision that is being appealed to the GDAAC in the relevant department
- the Associate Chair or Associate Director of a Graduate Department, Centre or Institute is referred to as “the Associate Chair”
- the Graduate Department, Centre or Institute is referred as “the Department”
- School of Graduate Studies is referred to as “SGS”
- Graduate Academic Appeals Board is referred to as “GAAB”

Appeals Process at the Department Level

1. Graduate students may dispute substantive or procedural academic matters, including grades, evaluation of comprehensive examinations and other program requirements, decisions about the student’s continuation in any program, or concerning any other decision with respect to the application of academic regulations and requirements to a student. Students must first attempt to resolve the matter with the instructor or other person whose ruling is in question.

2. Should the matter not be resolved and should the student wish to pursue it, the student must discuss the matter with the Graduate Coordinator or Associate Chair of the Department.

Method for Consideration of an Appeal

3. An appeal may be conducted as an oral hearing or by written submission only, at the discretion of the Chair of the Committee.

Jurisdiction of the Committee

4. EXCEPTION: Appeals related to failure of a final Ph.D. oral examination or related to termination of registration in a program should be made directly to the SGS Graduate Academic Appeals Board – Step 3(b) (see SGS Calendar entry on Academic Appeals). In some cases, the Chair of GAAB may refer the appeal to the Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee for prior consideration. The GDAAC will not have the right to overturn a failed Ph.D. oral examination result or a termination of registration, but may recommend that such a decision be considered further by GAAB.
5. All academic appeals, other than those identified as an exception in Clause #4 above, must be initiated within the student’s home graduate unit, unless the appeal relates to courses outside the home unit. Appeals related to courses taken outside the student’s home department shall be conducted in the department in which the course was offered. The student’s home department chair will be notified.

6. The Committee does not render decisions but rather makes recommendations to the Chair of the Department. A GDAAC report may include, but is not limited to, a recommendation that the decision appealed from be vacated, reversed, amended, or upheld; and in the case of an appeal of a grade, GDAAC may recommend that the student be re-evaluated in such manner and on such terms and conditions as the Committee considers appropriate. The Committee may recommend to the Chair of the Department that fees of a student be rebated or cancelled in whole or in part, but shall not otherwise recommend or award any monetary or other compensation. In turn, the Chair may recommend to SGS that adjustments be made to a student’s fees. However, only SGS may make such a decision, with the recommendation of the SGS Vice-Dean. Costs of the appeal are never awarded to any party.

Establishment of the Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee

7. Establishing the Committee: A graduate academic appeals committee should be established in each graduate unit by the graduate chair at the beginning of each academic year. An academic appeals committee may be constituted for more than one year.

8. Alternate Members: In addition to the committee membership (as described in #11 below), the Chair is required to identify at least one alternate member for each individual on the committee. These alternate members may be called upon by the Chair in an individual appeal to replace a regular GDAAC member where a conflict of interest has been identified, or where a regular member is unable to serve.

9. Joint GDAAC: In the case of smaller departments, a Joint Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee may be formed with membership to be selected by the graduate chairs from amongst the faculty and student membership of the departments involved. This provision applies to the membership and alternate membership criteria and procedures below. Additional criteria related to the Joint GDAAC are noted within clause #11 in square brackets below.

10. Conflict of Interest in Small Departments: In the case of small graduate departments, or where there is conflict of interest, some or all appeals committee members may be seconded by the Chair of the Department from one or more cognate departments. See also clauses #20 and 25 below.

Membership

11. Members and Quorum: The Committee shall have a total membership of five: four graduate faculty members and one graduate student; in addition there will be alternate members, as set out below. One of the faculty members will serve as Chair of the Committee.
The Chair of the Department may assign a Secretary to the GDAAC, as required. Quorum for the Committee is three members, including the Chair. [For the purposes of an individual appeal, the Joint GDAAC would report to the Chair of the Department in which the appeal is being launched.]

(a) **Members:** There shall be four graduate faculty members and one graduate student member from the department. Neither the Chair nor the Graduate Coordinator of the Department normally should be a member of the GDAAC.

(b) **Chair of the Committee:** The Chair of the Department will appoint a Chair of the Committee from amongst the faculty membership of GDAAC. [In the case of a Joint Committee, the chairs of the participating departments will jointly appoint a Joint Committee Chair.]

(c) **Student Member:** The graduate students in the Department normally shall choose the student member.

(d) **Alternate Members:** Alternate Committee members and an alternate Chair of the Committee shall be appointed by the Chair of the Department each academic year. The graduate students in the Department also normally should choose alternate student members. Normally, alternate members from cognate departments will be chosen from the Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee of the cognate department. Once an alternate member is involved in an appeal, that alternate member shall continue to hear that same appeal until it is resolved.

(e) **Secretary:** The Chair of the Department may assign a Secretary to the GDAAC, as required.

12. In some cases there may be insufficient graduate faculty or student members or alternate members, who are available to hear and determine an appeal. In such cases, the Chair of the Department may appoint *ad hoc* a person from the same constituency as the member who is unavailable, to be a member of the Committee for the purposes of determining that appeal.

**Timeline for Student to File Appeal**

13. The student must file an appeal to the Committee within eight weeks after date of the decision being appealed. (See SGS Calendar for overview and timeline of overall graduate appeals process.)

**Filing of Appeal**

14. The student files an appeal by submitting a Notice of Appeal to the Chair of the Graduate Department Academic Appeals Committee in the relevant department or to the Chair of the Department (see form in Appendix A). The Notice must be filed no later than eight weeks of the date of the decision being appealed.
15. The Notice of Appeal must include the following:

(a) a clear statement of the decision the student is appealing;

(b) the name of the person or persons who made the decision, if known to the student;

(c) the date the decision was communicated officially to the student;

(d) a clear statement of the resolution the student is seeking on appeal;

(e) a statement of the reason or reasons that the student feels that the decision was incorrect and that the student’s proposed resolution is appropriate, including any arguments the student wishes to advance in support of the appeal;

(f) copies of any documentary evidence the student has in her/his possession, and wishes the Committee to consider. Other documents may be used in the appeal only with the leave of the Committee.

Committee Procedures

16. Convening: The Chair of the Committee shall proceed to convene the Committee as quickly as possible, keeping all parties informed.

17. Notice of Appeal: After receiving a Notice of Appeal, the Chair of the Committee will provide the person or persons who made the decision being appealed with a copy of the Notice of Appeal and invite a written response.

18. Guidelines: All parties to an appeal should receive a copy of these Guidelines.

19. Confidentiality: Committee proceedings normally should be carried out in confidence.

20. Conflict of Interest Involving GDAAC Members: Any conflict of interest or perceived conflict of interest should be declared and/or identified and committee members replaced by the Chair of the Department, as necessary. The appellant must also be provided with an opportunity to identify conflicts of interest and request that an alternate member be selected. The appellant retains the right to proceed without a student member of the committee. In such a case, the student member will be replaced with an additional faculty member. The appellant shall be informed in advance of the membership of the Committee that will hear the appeal. See also clauses #10 above and #25 below.

21. Powers of the Chair of the Committee:

(a) The Chair of the Committee may determine all procedural matters that may arise concerning the appeal, including whether there will be an oral hearing and/or a review of written materials and the admissibility of evidence. All parties will be duly informed.
(b) The Chair of the Committee may determine that certain persons may receive notice of the proceedings in an appeal, and give directions as to copies of documents that shall be supplied to those persons, and as to the manner and degree of participation of such persons in the appeal.

22. **Legal Representation:** Normally the University will not engage legal representation at the level of a department appeal. However, any party to an appeal may, at her/his own expense, be represented by counsel or other agent at any stage of the appeal process. The Chair must secure the permission of the SGS Dean in order to obtain legal representation for the University.

**Committee Recommendations/Decision of the Chair:**

23. **GDAAC Recommendation:** Recommendations of the GDAAC shall be agreed upon by a simple majority of members. The Chair of the Committee shall cast a vote. A detailed, written report with recommendations of the Committee must be presented immediately by the Chair of the Committee to the Chair of the Department and to all parties involved in the appeal. The report will outline the evidence considered and the recommendations reached, with reasons. A copy of this document should be given to the SGS Vice-Dean, Students by the Chair of the Department, and shall remain on file in the department.

24. **Chair's Decision:** The Chair of the Department may accept, amend, or reject any or all of the recommendations of the GDAAC. Normally, within eight weeks of receiving the Notice of Appeal, the Chair shall notify the appellant in writing of her/his decision with a copy to the Chair of the Committee, and a copy to the SGS Vice-Dean. If the Chair rejects or amends one or more of the recommendations of the GDAAC, reasons shall be provided. This is considered the final stage of the department appeal.

25. **Conflict of Interest involving the Chair:** If the appeal is against an academic decision made by the Chair of the Department in her/his teaching/research supervision role then, in advance of the department-level appeal process, the Chair will secure a replacement to whom GDAAC will report. This replacement may be either an impartial senior faculty member in the Department or a senior faculty member from a cognate department. All parties to the appeal must be informed in writing of the replacement prior to the commencement of the GDAAC proceedings. See also clauses #10 and #20 above.

**Further Notice of Appeal**

26. **Graduate Academic Appeals Board:** If a student wishes to pursue the matter further, she/he may file a Notice of Appeal from the Chair’s decision of the Department appeal to the SGS Graduate Academic Appeals Board. The student must file the Notice within eight weeks of the date of the decision of the Chair of the Department.

*Revised November 2007*

h:/ppl/Appeals general regulations/effective July 1, 2003/GDAAC.mar03.final.doc