PROCEDURES — STUDENT PERFORMANCE REVIEWS
FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The NIU Department of Teaching and Learning (TLRN) of the College of Education employs the following procedures for reviewing the progress and performance of students enrolled in teacher education programs.

A Student Performance Review (SPR) can be initiated by any of the following actions:

A. A course instructor completes and files a Teacher Education Deficiency Form because a student’s performance or behavior raises concern about the student’s progress and/or suitability for teacher education due to deficiencies in academic performance, professional behavior, or attitude. The student will be notified and given the opportunity to sign the form indicating receipt. The instructor will submit it to the Student Recruitment and Retention Committee.

B. A student’s performance is rated as “unsatisfactory” or “poor” on an Early Clinical Experience Evaluation Form. The student will be notified and given the opportunity to sign the form indicating receipt. The instructor will submit it to the Student Recruitment and Retention Committee. The original Evaluation Form is placed in the student’s academic file.

C. University supervisors complete a Clinical Observation/Visitation Form each time they observe a student in a clinical setting. If a university supervisor indicates on that form that a student’s behavior or performance is perceived to be inadequate or unprofessional, or raises concerns on the part of the cooperating teacher and/or school district personnel, that supervisor must also complete a Teacher Education Deficiency Form. The supervisor will submit it to the Student Recruitment and Retention Committee.

The TLRN faculty has established a professional procedure with regard to SPRs, and the timely submission of deficiency forms is important to this process. A committee composed of faculty members hears each case and makes an individualized determination regarding the student’s status in the teacher education program. A student will not be allowed to continue student teaching or a final clinical experience without a decision allowing for that placement from the SPR committee.

The student has an opportunity to present any appropriate information to the committee orally or in writing. If the student chooses to prepare a written statement, it must be submitted a minimum of five university business days prior to the date of the SPR in order to allow copies to be circulated among committee members. Written material not submitted five university business days prior to the SPR meeting will not be presented at the meeting. All written materials from the initiating faculty/staff member(s) must be submitted before the letter to the student notifying him/her of the SPR meeting is sent. If the student chooses to appear before the committee, one person of his or her
choosing may accompany him or her. This person does not present information directly to the committee, but may consult with the student during the meeting. If the individual accompanying the student is an attorney, the committee must be notified a minimum of five university business days prior to the SPR in order to provide time to arrange for the presence of university counsel. A decision on action to be taken will be forwarded in writing to the student; the course instructor or university clinical supervisor who initiated the SPR; members of the SPR committee; chairperson of the Student Recruitment and Retention Committee; the advising office (report shall be placed in the student’s file); clinical experience office (when the SPR concerns a clinical experience); TLRN Department chairperson; and the Director of Advising and Student Services.

The outcomes of a SPR may include, but are not limited to, the following:

A. The student may be informed that the written concern(s) do not warrant further action; the student will be allowed to proceed in the program.

B. The student may be placed on “professional probation” with specific requirements for remediation. The nature and scope of necessary progress reports will be determined by the SPR committee. The student is responsible for ensuring that the progress reports specified are submitted to the chair of the SPR committee by the designated time.

C. The student may be dropped from the initial certification program.

If the student believes that the decision of the committee violated the procedures as presented here, he or she has the right to appeal the professional committee’s decision. The appeal should be filed in writing within 30 days of the decision to the Director of Advising and Student Services. The group of faculty that conducts the appeal is officially called the “College of Education Teacher Education Student Progress Review Committee.” This committee is composed of a representative of each of the departments within the College of Education, appointed by the respective departmental chairpersons. This committee is chaired by the Director of Advising and Student Services who functions in a non-voting role except in cases of tie votes. This committee reviews cases and may overturn a professional SPR committee’s decision only when the department decision did not follow the SPR process as stated in this handbook.

The student has the right to appeal the decision of the College of Education Teacher Education Student Progress Review Committee. The appeal should be filed in writing to the Dean of the College of Education within 30 days of the decision. The Dean is not obligated to consider this appeal. In all procedures, the student has the right to be represented by counsel.

Additional copies of this document and all related forms are available in the Office of Clinical Experiences (152 Gabel Hall) or the Advisement Office (138 Gabel Hall).
Procedures for Appealing Allegedly Capricious Semester Grades of Undergraduate Students
July 2, 2002

Introduction

The following procedures are available only for review of allegedly capricious grading, and not for review of the judgment of an instructor in assessing the quality of a student’s work. Capricious grading, as that term is used herein, is limited to one or more of the following:

a. the assignment of a grade to a particular undergraduate student on some basis other than performance in the course;

b. the assignment of a grade to a particular undergraduate student by more exacting or demanding standards than were applied to other undergraduate students in that section;

c. the assignment of a grade by a substantial departure from the instructor’s criteria distributed in writing during the first fourth of a course.

The assessment of the quality of a student’s academic performance is one of the major professional responsibilities of university faculty members and is solely and properly their responsibility. It is essential for the standards of the academic programs at Northern Illinois University and the integrity of the degrees conferred by this university that the professional judgments of faculty members not be subject to pressures or other interference from any source.

The Right of Fair and Equal Evaluation of Students

A course grade must be based on evidence of the student’s performance, the student must have access to the evidence, the instructor must explain and interpret the evidence to the student, and a single evaluative standard must be applied to all undergraduate students in a course section. It is also expected that grades be determined in accordance with written guidelines that should be distributed in each class within the first fourth of the course.

At any time, a student may seek the counsel of the university ombudsman regarding procedure in appealing allegedly capricious grades or the merits of a particular case.
Appeal Procedures

A student who believes a final course grade is capricious may seek clarification and, where appropriate, redress as follows:

One: The student shall confer with the instructor, informing the instructor of questions concerning the grade, and seeking to understand fully the grounds and procedures the instructor has used in determining the grade. The aim of such a conference is to reach mutual understanding about the grade and the process by which it was assigned, and to correct errors, if any, in the grade.

If, for any reason, the instructor cannot be contacted by or fails to respond to the student, the department chair shall designate a faculty member to act for the instructor.

Two: If after consultation with the instructor or the designee, the student believes that a grade is capricious, the student shall confer with the chair of the department in which the course is offered, who shall consult and advise with both the instructor and student, separately or together, in an effort to reach an understanding and resolution of the matter.

Three: If Steps One and Two do not resolve the problem, the student may submit a petition in writing to the Grade Review Board in the academic department in which the course in question was offered. This petition must be submitted through the department chair not later than the end of the fourth week of the semester following the semester or summer term for which the grade was assigned, as announced in the schedule of classes. (Petitions regarding spring grades must be submitted no later than the end of the fourth week of the fall semester but may be permitted during summer session.) If a temporary grade was assigned initially, the petition to appeal a grade must be submitted no later than four weeks following the Registrar notification to the student that the final grade has been assigned.

The petition shall request a meeting with the Grade Review Board and shall present evidence allegedly proving that the grade is capricious as defined above, and it shall present the student’s conclusions and the arguments which substantiate those conclusions. The Grade Review Board shall refer the petition to the instructor and secure from him or her a response in writing, setting forth the instructor’s position on the matter. The Grade Review Board shall provide the student with a copy of the instructor’s response.

The Grade Review Board shall make every reasonable effort to conduct an inquiry within two weeks of receipt of the petition to ascertain and consider relevant facts. The inquiry will be based on a consideration of the student’s petition, the instructor’s response, and any interviews by the chair of the Grade Review Board with the student or the instructor. The Grade Review Board shall convene a meeting with the student should the latter ask for one, and may initiate a meeting with the student, with the instructor, or with both.
If, for any reason, the instructor cannot be contacted by or fails to respond to the student, the department chair shall designate a faculty member to act for the instructor.

The Grade Review Board shall make one of these decisions:

a. That the grade was not assigned capriciously and shall stand as assigned.

b. That the grade may have been assigned capriciously and merits further consideration.

If conclusion "b" is reached, the Grade Review Board may then arrange for the instructor or a group of two departmental colleagues (these may be the faculty members of the Grade Review Board) to re-examine all the evidence of the student's work. (If there is not enough evidence, an additional examination may be conducted or additional work assigned to help determine the student's level of mastery and achievement in the subject matter.)

The Grade Review Board shall, as a result of its consideration, recommend a grade the same as or different from the grade alleged to be capricious.

The Grade Review Board shall immediately notify the department chair and dean of the college in which the academic department is housed of its decision.

**Four:** The dean shall notify the student and the instructor of the Grade Review Board's decision and review the case. If the decision of the Grade Review Board is that the grade should be changed, the dean shall consult with the instructor if requested by the instructor; if the decision of the Grade Review Board is that the grade should stand, the dean shall consult with the student if requested by the student. The dean may consult both the instructor and the student, either individually or collectively. On the basis of the review, and the meeting with the instructor and/or student, the dean (a) may concur with the decision of the Grade Review Board and, as appropriate, direct the instructor to make the grade change or notify the instructor that the original grade stands; either of these decisions shall be final, or (b) may request the Grade Review Board to reconsider its decision. After a reconsideration by the Grade Review Board, its recommendation regarding the student's course grade is final. Should the reconsideration of the Grade Review Board involve a change in grade, the dean shall direct the instructor to make the grade change. In the event the instructor declines to make the grade change, the dean shall authorize the Registrar to make the grade change and such a decision shall be final.

**Note:** At the conclusion of each step, the student, the instructor, and the department chair shall be notified promptly and no later than one week after each decision has been reached.
Composition of Departmental Grade Review Board

Each academic department shall establish early in each academic year a Grade Appeals Panel to be available to consider appeals from students alleging that they have received capricious course grades.

The Panel shall consist of four tenured faculty members, excluding the department chair, and four undergraduate students from the department. In a department with fewer than four tenured faculty members, the dean may appoint other tenured faculty members from the college to the Panel. The four student members of the Panel shall be selected by the appropriate departmental student advisory board. (If there is no department student advisory board, the students shall be selected by the college student advisory board.) Prior to the initial meeting of the Grade Review Board, the student and the instructor involved in the grade appeal each has the right to exclude one member from the Panel from which the Grade Review Board will be selected.

The Grade Review Board for hearing an undergraduate student’s appeal shall consist of two faculty and one undergraduate student. The members will be selected by lot from those faculty and student Panel members remaining after any members of the Panel have been excluded at the request of either the student or the instructor involved in the appeal. Neither the student nor the instructor involved in an appeal may be a member of the Grade Review Board reviewing that specific appeal.

NOTE: If the course under consideration is administered by a unit other than an academic department e.g., a college or an interdisciplinary center), the “department chair” in this document is understood to mean the administrative head of that unit, and the Grade Appeals Panel and Grade Review Board will be composed of faculty and students affiliated with that unit.

Protection of the Instructor’s Rights

No decision of a Grade Review Board shall, by itself, be used as a cause for dismissal of a tenured faculty member or for dismissal of a non-tenured faculty member before the expiration of a contract period. Nor shall a decision, by itself, be a basis for any other disciplinary action. Any disciplinary actions shall be in accordance with regular university procedures. All evidence considered by a Grade Review Board shall be made available to any body that may be considering disciplinary action concerning an instructor whose grading has been found by a Grade Review Board to be capricious. That body shall make an independent determination based upon its own consideration of all evidence, irrespective of the findings of the Grade Review Board.
PROCEDURES – CONDUCTING STUDENT PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

In conducting a Student Performance Review, the chairperson of the SPR committee should follow these general procedures:

- Introductions of everyone present
- Chairperson explains the purpose of the meeting, the possible outcomes, and the procedures to be followed, including procedures for recording the meeting (e.g., audiotape)
- The course instructor or university clinical supervisor who initiated the SPR summarizes the situation from his or her vantage point
- The student summarizes the situation from his or her vantage point, adding to what the instructor or supervisor has reported, noting areas of disagreement, etc.
- Committee members ask questions of the instructor or supervisor and the student in order to fully understand the situation and implications of various possible outcomes.
- The student and the instructor or supervisor are asked to leave the room.
- Committee members discuss the situation and come to consensus about the course of action, requisite follow-up, remediation plans, etc. When consensus cannot be reached, a vote is taken.
- The student and instructor or supervisor are brought back into the room, as appropriate and desired. The chairperson explains the proposed course of action, answers questions, summarizes follow-up plans, and so on.
- The chairperson explains that the outcomes will be formally written up and circulated to everyone present and to the advising office, clinical office, and dean’s office.
COMPOSITION — STUDENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

There will be at least six members of a Student Performance Review Committee. The members of the committee will vary based on the student's program area. Committee members shall include:

- The chair of the committee will be a member of the Department of Teaching and Learning Student Recruitment and Retention Committee (non-voting member)
- Student’s Advisor (non-voting member)
- The Department Chair’s Designee (non-voting member)
- Three additional faculty members, to be determined by the student’s program:
  - If the student’s program area is elementary education, the three members shall include:
    - A faculty member who teaches in the elementary education program
    - A faculty member from LTCY
    - One faculty member from TLRN (all voting)
  - If the student's program area is early childhood education, the three members shall include:
    - A faculty member who teaches in the early childhood education program
    - A faculty member from LTCY
    - One faculty member from TLRN (all voting)
  - If the student's program area is special education, the three members shall include:
    - A faculty member who teaches in the special education program
    - A faculty member from Special Education
    - A faculty member from TLRN (all voting)

In addition to these six members, the course instructor or university clinical supervisor who initiated the SPR will be in attendance.
NOTIFICATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW

[date]

Dear [student],

A Student Performance Review (SPR) at the departmental level has been set up for [day, month, year] at [time], in Gabel Hall, [room __]. The purpose of the SPR is to review your status in the teacher education program in [area of specialization]. The meeting will focus primarily on your performance in [course, clinical experience, etc.]. You will have an opportunity at the meeting to present information, as well as your [course instructor or university clinical supervisor]. Please note that a record will be made of the SPR proceedings. The SPR Committee of the Department of Teaching and Learning will consider all information presented to decide whether the concerns warrant further action, whether you will be placed on professional probation, and whether you will be permitted to continue in the program.

You are required to contact your advisor prior to the Student Performance Review. He or she will be a non-voting member of the SPR committee who can also provide information about your performance in the program to date. You are encouraged to attend the meeting in person, but you have the option of submitting a written statement regarding your performance. If you choose to send a written statement, it must be received in the TLRN department office (Gabel Hall 147) no later than noon on [a week prior to the SPR date], so that it may be duplicated and circulated among the committee members.

If you elect to attend the meeting in person, one person of your choosing may accompany you. That individual may consult with you during the meeting but may not address the committee directly. If you will be bringing an attorney, you must notify me a minimum of five university business days before the SPR, because University Counsel will be required as well. Please note that written documentation that has not previously been distributed to you and all committee members and referring faculty/staff member five university business days prior to the meeting may not be presented to the committee on the day of the meeting.

As part of the procedure, committee members may ask questions about the information that you or the [course instructor or university clinical supervisor] present. One question that will be asked is what you would do differently to insure a successful outcome if allowed another opportunity to enroll in [the course or clinical in question]. You must come to the meeting prepared with a response to that question.

Enclosed for your information are copies of the departmental “Procedures for Student Performance Reviews” and a copy of the [Teacher Education Deficiency
Form, Early Clinical Experience Evaluation Form, or Clinical Observation/Visitation Form] that your [instructor or clinical supervisor] completed regarding this matter. If you have not already done so, you will sign a copy of the form at the SPR, indicating that you have received and read the document but not necessarily indicating that you agree with everything in it.

If you have any questions concerning the SPR meeting or any of the procedures, please do not hesitate to call me at [815-753-XXXX].

Sincerely,

[Name of Committee Chair], Chairperson
Student Recruitment and Retention Committee
Department of Teaching and Learning

cc: Dr. Nina Dorsch, TLRN Department Chairperson
    Margee Myles, Director of Advising and Student Services
STUDENT PERFORMANCE REVIEW OUTCOME REPORT

Whether presented as a formal account or as a narrative in the form of a letter, the report of the outcomes of an SPR should include the following:

- Name of student
- Date of SPR meeting
- Committee members and others present at the meeting
- Description of the presenting problem
- Summary of the discussion that ensued
- Committee decision and recommendations, including any necessary follow-up, remediation plans, requirements of the student, timelines, etc.

Copies of the outcome report shall be sent to:

- Student
- Course instructor or university clinical supervisor who initiated the SPR
- Members of the SPR committee
- Chairperson of the Student Recruitment and Retention Committee
- Advising office – student file
- Clinical experience office (when the SPR concerns a clinical experience)
- TLRN Department Chairperson
- Director of Advising and Student Services
- **FLOW CHART**