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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: John Verzani, Chair, University Faculty Senate  
Council of Faculty Governance Leaders

FROM: Wendy Hensel, Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost 

RE: Response to FGL Memorandum on CUNY Grading Policy

CC: Chancellor Félix Matos Rodríguez  
Senior University Registrar Vivek Upadhyay  
Members, Board of Trustees Committee on Academic Policy, Programs and  
Research (CAPPR)

DATE: June 28, 2022

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Thank you for sharing your concerns regarding the May 2021 CUNY Uniform Grade Glossary, Policies, and Guidelines (the “Memorandum”). Chancellor Matos Rodríguez has requested that I respond on his behalf. Please see below for detailed responses to each of the points you raised.

It is important to emphasize that many of the changes introduced in the Memorandum were in response to issues discovered during federal audits of financial aid at two of our colleges. Moreover, the Memorandum was reviewed by numerous stakeholders, including CUNY's Committee on Academic Policy, the Council of Vice Presidents of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (SAEM), the Council of Registrars, and the Academic Council of Provosts with representation from the Chief Academic Officers of all the CUNY institutions. Nevertheless, your comments reflect the need for additional clarity and guidance on these important issues.

It is important that we shape academic policies in a manner that is consultative, data-informed, and in compliance with federal and state financial aid regulations. There is no question that we will reach the best results when we have informed input from the faculty. We will work to establish a more systematic process for consulting with the University Faculty Senate on proposed policy changes going forward.

We thank you for your careful reading of the document and appreciate you bringing these concerns to our attention. If you have additional questions regarding the Memorandum, please direct them to Office of the University Registrar at **OUR@cuny.edu**.

**Please see the response to each item below:**

**1. On Grade Appeals:**

A. *Retract the Student Appeal and Grade Appeals Process sections on pp. 8-9. In particular, retract:*

i) *The timing restrictions on p.8: “Appeals must be filed [by the student] within 30 calendar days of grade assignment in CUNYfirst” and the subsequent stages are to follow 30 days after. Rationale: The 30-day deadlines would start and/or expire within the January break and the summer annual leave period.*

ii) *That the ruling of the department or college grade appeals committees be only a recommendation to the faculty member, who 15 days upon the receipt of the recommendation is to inform the Registrar of their “decision to either sustain the grade or submit a grade change.”*

*Rationale: Making the decision on the appeal only a recommendation to the instructor is inconsistent with a substantive student grade appeal process: it would render the appeal process without force and give students no real recourse from what they see to be faulty decision-making by their instructor. The proposed policy is also inconsistent with powers given to department or college bodies in some campus Governance Charters.*

B. *Honor the decisions made by campuses using their own approved grade appeal processes.*

This section was not intended to override the authority of the grade appeal committees—only to establish university-wide deadlines related to grade appeals that will allow the University to automate the grade appeal process. This automation will also instruct students on the grade change process and alert them to the final outcome once the grade is finalized. We will revise the memorandum to clarify that it does not override the campus grade appeal process.

We will revisit the question of timing in fall 2022 to determine a suitable standardized deadline that will give appropriate time for faculty to address appeals and not jeopardize the student's opportunity to continue their education.

**2. On FIN grades:**

A. *Retract on p.8: “An appeal instituted by a member of the faculty to change an administrative FIN must indicate that the work required to resolve the INC grade was in the instructor’s possession prior to the INC deadline date.”*

*Rationale: This nullifies long-standing policies on some campuses that allow faculty to permit a student to turn in work after the INC deadline. There the opportunity for such extensions has benefited many students over the years.*

B. *Honor the extensions granted to students beyond the INC deadline, if they are given by faculty according to policy approved by the campus policy-making body on academic matters.*

All CUNY campuses have had deadlines to resolve INC grades and associated appeals process for extension. Campus policies on extension requests remain, and the memorandum does not change that. Once the FIN grade (a failing grade) is issued, the student's aid for next semester may be negatively impacted, as students must make satisfactory academic progress in grades and completion of credits. We will review data regarding the number of students who have received INC grades that lapsed to FIN grades to determine if the changing FIN grades after the proposed deadline has benefitted students.

**3. *On the removal of the 0.00 quality points from the WU (Withdrawn Unofficially) so that receipt of a WU does not affect a student's GPA (Grade Point Average):***

*We recognize that this change may be merited given the fact that there are often cases in which students end up with a WU and the application of 0.0 quality points to their GPA (Grade Point Average) may be unfairly punitive. But a campus faculty/academic governance body may legitimately decide that regular, repeated receipt of WUs (Withdrawal Unofficial) by a student is not consistent with their being in good academic standing on that campus. Thus, colleges should be able to limit the times a student may receive a WU without effect on standing.*

*Thus, either allow campuses to add policies on how the number of WUs (Withdrawal Unofficial) will affect student standing or, if there will be a CUNY-wide policy, go through the proper academic policy-making process of consultation with campuses and approval of a policy by the CUNY Board of Trustees.*

We agree that it would be helpful to reflect further on our use of W grades (W, WA, WN, and WU grades). In Fall 2022, we will review these issues with faculty and other stakeholders.

Thank you for all that you do for our students.