ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Committee Name: Executive Committee, University Council
Date: November 19, 2026
Presented by: Ralph Deters, Chair, Executive Committee

Subject: Appeal Board Member Resources

SUMMARY

Student appeal policies and procedures governed by University Council are currently undergoing review to improve clarity, procedural consistency, and better align formal processes with current practice.

University Council members play an important role in the student appeals process, including matters related to student discipline and academic appeals. A survey conducted in fall 2025 found that many Council members were unaware that they could be called upon to serve on an appeal board. A key theme emerging from the survey was that members would be more willing and interested in serving on appeal boards if they had access to more resources and information outlining expectations and responsibilities.

In response to this feedback, several initiatives have begun to strengthen support for appeal board members. The first initiative was a policy amendment to establish a roster of faculty and student members available to serve on appeal panels. This proposal will be presented to Council for decision under item 5.1, with implementation planned for the 2027-28 academic year.

A second initiative involves the development of a formal training program for appeal board members. While the roster and training program are being developed, the Governance Office has prepared a resource guide to support members in understanding their roles and responsibilities and to help them feel more confident and prepared when participating in appeal hearings.

CONSULTATION

At its November 6th meeting, the Executive Committee reviewed the resource guide and suggested including a sample case file, along with examples of the types of documentation board members may receive, to help individuals better understand the appeal process and expectations. Executive members expressed support for the guide in principle, recognizing it as an evolving document and important first step in providing information and guidance for appeal board members while more formal training and resources are being developed.

The resource guide can be found in the Governance Channel of PAWS > Council > Appeal Boards

Additionally, a survey will be conducted beginning November 16th, 2026, to identify council members who are interested in serving on appeal boards for the 2026-27 academic year.

University of Saskatchewan



University Appeal Guidebook | Members, Students, and Chair

Governance Office
October 2026

BE WHAT THE WORLD NEEDS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Student and Member Appeal Board Guide 2
Appeal Board Chair Guide..... 4
Frequently Asked Questions..... 6

STUDENT AND MEMBER APPEAL BOARD GUIDE

Student Appeal Boards play an important role in ensuring appeals in Academic Misconduct and Academic Matters are considered fairly, consistently, and in accordance with university policy. Board members contribute independent judgment, participate in hearings and deliberations, and help ensure decisions are based on relevant evidence and approved grounds of appeal.

Appeal hearings provide an opportunity for a balanced airing of facts before an impartial board of decision-makers. All appeal hearings will respect the rights of members of the university community to fair treatment in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

CORE EXPECTATIONS

Appeal Board members are expected to:

- Act independently and impartially.
- Maintain confidentiality at all stages of the process.
- Review materials thoroughly and participate fully.
- Listen respectfully, remain patient and consider all perspectives.
- Focus on relevant evidence and approved grounds of appeal.
- Contribute constructively to deliberations and decision-making.
- Uphold principles of procedural fairness and good governance.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Before accepting to be part of hearing board, members should consider whether any actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest exists.

Examples may include:

- A personal or professional relationship with the student or instructor.
- Prior involvement in the matter under appeal.
- Any circumstance that could reasonably affect impartiality.
- When uncertain, members should consult the Governance Office and USask's Conflict of Interest Policy

RESPONSIBILITIES THROUGHOUT THE APPEAL PROCESS

Before the hearing:

- Review hearing materials in advance.
- Attend the pre-hearing meeting.
- Identify questions or areas requiring clarification.
- Advise the Governance Office of any concerns as early as possible.

During the Hearing:

- Participate actively and respectfully.
- Listen carefully to all parties.
- Ask neutral and relevant questions.
- Focus on evidence and approved appeal grounds.
- Remain open-minded until all information has been considered.
- Follow procedural guidance provided by the Chair.

During Deliberations:

- Consider the evidence objectively.
- Respect differing viewpoints.
- Focus on policy, procedure, and approved grounds of appeal.
- Work collaboratively toward a well-reasoned decision.

After the Hearing:

- Contribute to the Board's decision and decision report.
- Provide feedback on draft reports as requested.
- Continue to maintain confidentiality.
- Submit notes and records in accordance with Board procedures.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Appeal hearings involve sensitive personal and academic information. Board members must:

- Protect hearing materials.
- Keep deliberations confidential.
- Avoid discussing appeals outside the Board.
- Handle all records and documents appropriately.

NOTE: Confidentiality obligations continue after the appeal has concluded.

GOVERNANCE OFFICE SUPPORT

The Governance Office provides administrative and procedural support, including scheduling, hearing logistics, documentation coordination, and procedural guidance.

The Appeal Board Chair provides leadership throughout the hearing and deliberation process.

Legal counsel may be available in complex matters to provide procedural or legal advice. Legal counsel supports the Board but does not make decisions on its behalf.

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESS

- Be prepared.
- Be fair.
- Be respectful.
- Be objective.
- Ask thoughtful questions.
- Focus on evidence.
- Maintain confidentiality.

APPEAL BOARD CHAIR GUIDE

The Chair is responsible for leading the appeal process, facilitating fair participation, guiding deliberations, and overseeing preparation of the Board's decision report. The Chair helps create an environment that is respectful, impartial and procedurally fair.

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chair is responsible for:

- Leading the hearing process.
- Facilitating respectful participation.
- Managing hearing procedures and timelines.
- Maintaining procedural fairness.
- Guiding Board deliberations.
- Leading preparation of the decision report.

BEFORE THE HEARING

- Review all appeal materials.
- Become familiar with the approved grounds of appeal.
- Identify key issues requiring clarification.
- Lead the pre-hearing meeting to discuss logistics and procedures.

DURING THE HEARING

Set the Tone (Chair notes will be provided)

- Welcome participants.
- Explain the hearing process.
- Clarify expectation regarding professionalism and respect.
- Ensure participants understand the order of proceedings.

Facilitate Participation

- Encourage questions from all Board members.
- Ensure participants have a fair opportunity to be heard.
- Promote respectful dialogue among all parties.

Maintain Focus

- Keep discussions relevant to the approved appeal grounds.
- Redirect discussion respectfully when necessary.
- Monitor time appropriately while avoiding unnecessary pressure.

Ask Neutral Questions

Questions should seek clarification and understanding rather than advocate for a particular outcome. The Chair should avoid leading questions and maintain an impartial approach throughout the hearing.

MANAGING DELIBERATIONS

The Chair is to:

- Encourage differing viewpoints.
- Ensure all Board members have opportunities to contribute.
- Focus discussion on evidence, policy, and procedure.
- Avoid influencing deliberations unnecessarily.
- Support thoughtful and informed decision-making.

An effective deliberation framework includes:

1. What facts have been established?
2. What evidence is relevant?
3. What policies or procedures apply?
4. Have the approved grounds of an appeal been demonstrated?
5. What outcome is supported by the evidence?

DECISION REPORT RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chair leads preparation of the decision report. A strong report:

- Identifies the issues considered.
- Addresses the approved grounds of the appeal.
- Clearly explains the Board's reasoning.
- Connects conclusions to evidence.
- Uses objective and professional language.
- Reflects the Board's collective decision.

WORKING WITH THE GOVERNANCE OFFICE

The Governance Office is the Chair's primary resource for:

- Procedural questions.
- Scheduling and logistics.
- Witness coordination.
- Documentation support.
- Access to legal counsel where appropriate.
- Report-writing support.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHY AM I BEING ASKED TO SERVE ON A STUDENT APPEAL BOARD?

Hearing student appeals is one of University Council's responsibilities. All Council members (except ex-officio members) are members of the Council-wide Student Academic Hearing and Appeals Committee. It is from this Committee that individual Appeal Boards are created.

CAN I DECLINE A REQUEST TO SERVE?

Yes. While Appeal Board service is part of Council service, scheduling and availability constraints are recognized.

WHO CAN SERVE ON AN APPEAL BOARD?

Any eligible member of University Council may serve.

WHAT IS THE TYPICAL TIME COMMITMENT?

Most appeals require **approximately 10 hours**, including preparation, the hearing, deliberations, and review of the decision report.

HOW ARE HEARINGS CONDUCTED?

Hearings are generally conducted virtually and typically occur during regular business hours.

CAN THE BOARD REQUEST ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

Yes. The Board may request additional information, documentation, witnesses, or expert advice when it believes additional information would assist in understanding the appeal. Any information received must be shared with both parties.

WHEN IS LEGAL COUNSEL INVOLVED?

Legal counsel is generally engaged only in more complex matters or where one or more parties have legal representation. The Chair continues to lead the hearing when legal counsel is present.

COULD AN APPEAL RESULT IN COURT PROCEEDINGS?

Judicial reviews are uncommon. Should one occur, University legal counsel manages the matter and Appeal Board members typically have little direct involvement.

WHAT TRAINING IS AVAILABLE?

Appeal Board information is included within Council orientation, and through this guide. Additional information or training can be provided if requested.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

The Governance Office is the primary point of contact for questions regarding appointments, proceedings, scheduling, conflicts of interest, or Board responsibilities.

For more information

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