

# VCU Memo

School of the Arts

V i r g i n i a C o m m o n w e a l t h U n i v e r s i t y

## MEMORANDUM

Department of Art History

**To:** Academic Deans & Program Directors

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**From:** Eric Garberson, Outgoing Chair  
Admissions & Academic Standards Committee  
University Graduate Council

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**Date:** May 13, 2009

**RE:** Appeals Procedures

The members of the Admissions and Academic Standards Committee would like to call the attention of all program directors, department chairs, and academic deans, to the revised appeals procedures recently posted to the VCU Graduate Bulletin (<http://www.pubapps.vcu.edu/bulletins/graduate/?uid=10045&iid=30618>). The new copy sets forth the procedures by which students may appeal termination from graduate programs at VCU.

The revised procedures were developed by AAS after considerable deliberation. We drew on our own experience as the body charged with hearing student appeals at VCU, as well as research into appeals procedures at peer and other Virginia institutions.

The AAS Committee recommends that the appeals procedures currently in place at the department or program and school level be reviewed. These may now be outdated, thus no longer providing adequate preparation for the final appeal at the University level. Department, program, and school procedures should be clearly spelled out and made accessible to students in an appropriate manner (in handbooks or on web sites). If no formal procedures exist, they should be formulated and posted as appropriate. Students must also be informed that the University procedures are posted in the Bulletin. The Bulletin copy should not be pasted into on-line or hard-copy manuals, in order to avoid circulation of outdated materials should the procedures be revised again. Instead, a link to the on-line Bulletin should be provided.

The Committee would also like to take this occasion to stress the importance of clearly stated and easily accessible appeals procedures, as well as the need to follow these and other program policies. Over the years, AAS has reviewed terminations from graduate programs from across the University. The most difficult cases are those where policies and procedures have not been followed, are not clear, or, in a few instances, are not reasonable or fair. It should also be noted that deviations from written policy can cause significant problems even when undertaken for the student's benefit. Deviation can be construed as preferential treatment, even by the student it is intended to help. Another problem is inadequate documentation of the process that led to the student's termination, both in departmental files and in the materials submitted when AAS hears an appeal.

Having served on AAS for six years, four of those as Chair, I have seen many problems created by poorly articulated policies and by deviations from standard procedure. As I leave the Committee, I express my full support for its recommendations.