

Grade Appeal Procedure

A grade appeal may be submitted if the student believes that the instructor has committed an error in the calculation or assignment of the final course grade. Examples of situations that may merit a grade appeal include miscalculations of a total grade, assignment of the wrong grade at the end of the term, or failure to adhere to policies stated on the syllabus or in assignment criteria. Grade changes occur only when there is clear and convincing evidence that the instructor committed an error in assigning the course grade. Any other issue or complaint that the student has against a faculty member should be addressed as prescribed in the University's Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Students are strongly encouraged to contact the student ombudsperson when considering whether to submit a grade appeal. The ombudsperson can inform the student of his or her rights and of any relevant policies and procedures and help guide them during the process.

A grade assigned during the fall semester may be appealed no later than the end of the second week of the spring semester, and a grade assigned during the spring or summer may be appealed no later than the end of the second week of the fall semester.

There are three steps to the grade appeal process:

- 1) Appeal to instructor.
- 2) Appeal to Department Chair.
- 3) Appeal to Academic Dean.

More detailed information about each step is provided below.

Note: In this document, a business day refers to Monday – Friday, from the first day of the semester until the last day of classes in the semester. Business days do not include weekends, holidays, spring break, final exams week, breaks between semesters, or any time the University is closed.

Step 1: Appeal to instructor. The student contacts the instructor to appeal the grade. The initial appeal must be made via University email and explain why the student thinks the grade should be changed. The instructor should respond to the student's appeal via University email within seven business days to preserve a written record of the exchange. The instructor or the student may ask for a face-to-face meeting to discuss the appeal after the email is sent; however, a written log of the discussion should be preserved.

Step 2: Appeal to Department Chair. If no Program Director oversees the course, if the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of Step 1, or if the instructor does not respond within seven business days, the student may contact the Chair of the Department where the course is situated to

make his or her case within five additional business days. This appeal must be made via University email and explain why the student thinks the grade should be changed. The chair may request a face-to-face meeting and/or supporting documents from the student and instructor. If the course in which the grade was assigned is overseen by a departmental director or Program Director, the chair must consult the director after receiving the supporting documents. The chair should respond within five business days to acknowledge receipt of the student's request, and a decision should be offered within five business days of the student's submission of supporting documents. If the chair thinks the grade should be changed, the chair may recommend to the instructor that the grade be changed, but cannot require the instructor to do so.

Note: Once the student has escalated the grade appeal beyond the instructor, the student and instructor must not discuss the grade appeal with each other.

Step 3: Appeal to academic Dean. If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of Step 2 or if the Department Chair does not respond within five business days, the student may appeal his or her grade to the academic Dean of the college where the course is situated within five additional business days.

Appeals to the Dean must include the following items, submitted to the Dean electronically or in print:

- 1) A copy of the Grade Appeal Form, available online and in hard copy from the Registrar/Student Business Office;
- 2) A written explanation of the student's reason for appealing the grade;
- 3) Copies of relevant documents, including work the student submitted in the class, the course syllabus, and assignment instructions.
- 4) Any other documents relating to the appeal that may have been generated during steps 1 and 2.

The Dean reviews the appeal and determines whether the student's appeal implies an error by the instructor; other types of complaints may be handled using the existing complaint procedure as specified in the University's Collective Bargaining Agreement. The Dean may request a meeting with or additional information from the student and/or instructor in the process of considering the appeal. The appeal may be dismissed by the Dean if the appeal does not suggest that the instructor may have committed an error.

If the Dean determines there may be a reasonable basis for the student's grade appeal, the Dean, in consultation with the Department Chair and, if applicable, the appropriate departmental or Program Director, will form a committee of three faculty members to review the appeal and make a decision. The Department Chair and/or director that oversees the course where the appeal was generated cannot serve on the committee. The Dean should make every effort to have the committee consist of one tenure-track faculty member from the program, one tenure-track faculty

member from the department, and one tenure-track faculty member from an outside department. The Dean may choose to sit on the committee but does not have voting power.

All efforts should be made for the committee to hold an in-person hearing at which the student, instructor, and all committee members are present. The student may bring a support person with him or her to the hearing; a FERPA waiver may be required. The support person may consult with the student during the hearing or step out with the student to speak to him or her privately; he/she may also take notes during the session so the student has a record of the discussion. However, the support person may not argue on behalf of the student. The student may also request that the student ombudsperson be present at the meeting.

If a face-to-face meeting is not feasible, the committee collects a written statement from the student and the instructor. The committee may also consult the Department Chair and/or appropriate departmental or Program Director if desired.

Upon considering all of the evidence the committee prepares a final report based on its findings for the Dean. The committee may decide that no grade change take place or that the grade be changed. Changes should be made only if there is clear and convincing evidence that the instructor assigned the grade in error.

The committee relates its decision to the Dean, and the Dean informs the student and instructor of the committee's decision. If the committee determines that the instructor has made an error and that the grade should be changed, the Dean asks the instructor to change the grade. If the instructor refuses, the Dean requests in writing that the registrar change the grade.

All efforts should be made to reach a decision within fifteen business days of the Dean receiving the students' appeal. The appeal process ends once the Dean has conveyed the committee's decision, and the student may not appeal the grade further.

Appeals made during summers or during instructor absence: If it is necessary for a grade appeal to be handled during Summer I or Summer II, the Dean may ask faculty members who are teaching summer courses to serve on the committee. If no faculty are available, the Dean may ask Department Chairs to serve as committee members. If the appeal is made during the summer or when an instructor is on sabbatical or approved University leave, and the instructor did not reply to the student's initial email, step 2 should be followed as normal. At step 3, the formal appeal to the academic Dean, the Dean should make an effort to contact the instructor to determine when he/she will be back on campus or available to provide input on the grade appeal. Every effort should be made by the academic Dean to involve the instructor in the appeal process and the academic Dean may delay the appeal process until the instructor is available. Delays may be any length, but may not extend more than one month into the following semester. Appeals may only proceed without the instructor's input if there are compelling reasons that the delay would be detrimental to the student, such as needing the appeal to remain in a program or to take the next course in a sequence. The academic Dean will notify the student of the delay.

Note: Exceptions to the timeline presented in this policy are possible in cases where following the time lines prescribed would cause undue hardship on the student (e.g. prolonged illness, military service, etc.). These exceptions should be documented by the Academic Dean of the college where the course that has the grade being appealed is housed.

Note: The failure of a faculty member, Program Director, or Department Chair to respond to the grade appeal within the five business day window shall not be used as grounds for disciplinary action, nor shall the grade appeal process and its results be used as the basis for disciplinary action against the faculty member.