

# Policy and Procedures for Appealing Final Course Grades

## I. Policy and Purpose

The grade appeal procedure serves the needs of graduate and undergraduate students who believe they were unjustly awarded a final course grade by a faculty member acting prejudicially or capriciously. The burden of proof rests with the student. This policy applies to the final grade for the award of academic credit and does not apply to graduate and undergraduate examinations that are administered as part of the degree progression and certification processes (such as comprehensive examinations and candidacy examinations at the graduate level). The Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) guides the grading policies for the School of Medicine as per [https://www.evms.edu/education/resources/student\\_policies\\_handbooks/md\\_student\\_handbook/](https://www.evms.edu/education/resources/student_policies_handbooks/md_student_handbook/)

## II. Expectations

Students must initiate the first review of the appeal within 14 calendar days of the official end of the semester in which the grade was awarded. For grades awarded and appealed from fall and summer semesters, the entire appeal process must be completed before the official end of the next semester; the entire appeal process for grades awarded and appealed from the spring semester must be completed before the official end of the next fall semester. At all stages of the grade appeal processes outlined below, the instructor of record (instructor hereafter) and student shall be notified of any actions recommended or taken by the chair/director, Grade Appeal Review Committee, Dean, and the appropriate Executive Vice President (either the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs or the Executive Vice President for Health Sciences).

## III. Appeal procedures

A. Informal Resolution: Prior to initiating a formal appeal, the student must attempt to consult with the instructor to request an explanation of the method of evaluation and to determine whether an error has been made. Efforts to consult with the instructor must be documented by the student. The outcome of the meeting must be documented by the faculty member. The appeal process will end if both the student and the instructor agree on the assigned grade. For all other stages in the appeals process see below.

### B. Formal Resolution, Step 1

1. If the student is not satisfied with the results of the consultation with the instructor or the instructor is not available, the student may submit a grade appeal to the chair or director of the department/program in which the instructor is teaching. The Chair/director will conduct the first review of the student's appeal unless the instructor is the department chair. The student's case must be presented on the Grade Appeal Form with supporting documents/explanations to the instructor's department chair within 14 days of the consultation with the instructor. If the instructor is the department chair, the student will submit the Grade Appeal Form and documents to the Dean (or designated Associate Dean), who will conduct the first review following the procedures described in IIA.1-8. If the instructor is a Dean or EVP, the student will submit the Grade Appeal Form and documents to the chair/director of the department/program in which the Dean or EVP is teaching the course.
2. The student's Grade Appeal Form should (1) state specific reasons and give examples of faculty prejudice or caprice, (2) show that prejudice or caprice affected the awarding of the final course grade, and (3) be presented as a complete package and include all other supporting documentation.

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This policy is very narrowly focused on final grades. We would like to see another policy that addresses disputes over individual grades during the semester and faculty obligation to meet with students to discuss and resolve conflicts.

We made a few changes, mostly to clarify the procedure, including moving the provision for an instructor who is chair or dean up to formal resolution step 1.

We note that the website and form for student grade appeal must be updated to reflect the deadlines here (e.g. 14 days after final grade to initiate appeal, etc).

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3. The chair/director shall notify the instructor of the appeal and provide them with copies of the form and other documents submitted. The chair/director shall also request a response from the instructor that should include at least the course syllabus, grade distribution for the course, attendance policy, the grading plan for the course, and other grading rubrics.
4. The chair/director shall review all documents and may hold a hearing where both the instructor and student are present. No other persons will attend the hearing, and the hearing must be recorded.
5. If the chair/director concludes that there is no cause for complaint, the student and the instructor will be notified in writing of the decision within seven days of receipt of the request for an appeal and the supporting documents. The student may request a second review of the appeal.

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C. Formal Resolution, Step II

1 If student requests a second review, the chair/director will notify the college/school Grade Appeal Review Committee of the need for a review and submit all documents to the committee. The instructor and the student will be notified of this action.

2. The chair/director will ask the college/school Grade Appeal Review Committee to select the reviewers within five working days. (See Section for the composition of the committee.)

3 The faculty and the student who form the Grade Appeal Review Committee will notify the instructor and student involved in the appeal when the review will take place and request needed documents.

4. The Grade Appeal Review Committee will review the documents, consult with relevant parties as needed and determine if there is sufficient evidence in the documents to support the student's appeal, or if more information is needed in which case a hearing with the student and instructor may be held. The review and hearing must be scheduled within 15 working days of the committee receiving the materials.

6. If the instructor is the department chair, the student will submit the Grade Appeal Form and documents to the Dean (or designated Associate Dean), who will conduct the first review following the procedures described in II.A.1-8.

7. If the instructor is a Dean or EVP, the student will submit the Grade Appeal Form and documents to the chair/director of the department/program in which the Dean or EVP is teaching the course.

D. Decision and action

Findings of the Grade Appeal Review Committee will be submitted to the Chair/Director and Dean. The decision and rationale must be provided in writing to the instructor. The outcome of the committee's review will be documented and communicated to the instructor, the student, the department chair/director, and Dean.

1. If the Grade Appeal Review Committee finds on behalf of the instructor, the original grade will stand, and the instructor and the student will be notified.

2. If the Committee finds that there is sufficient evidence that the grade was awarded with prejudice or caprice, the Chair/director will consult with the instructor to suggest a grade change and provide a rationale for that decision. In the event of an instructor's refusal to accept the recommendation of the Committee or Chair/Director, recommendation the Dean will award the recommended grade and notify the instructor and student. This decision will be final.

3. If the instructor is unavailable due to death, serious illness, or any other cause to participate in the appeal process, the Dean will consult with Chair/Director and award the grade recommended by the Committee. The Dean's decision will be final.

IV. Grade Appeal Review Committee

A. Committee Composition and Duties

1. Each college/school will create a Grade Appeal Review Committee that has one representative from each department/program in the college/school and a list of potential student members. If an appeal is heard, the Dean will select two faculty members and one student from these lists.

2. Representatives must be full-time faculty in an academic department/program elected by the department faculty. No administrators may serve on grade appeal committees. Chief Departmental Advisors and Graduate Program Directors shall not be eligible to serve on the committees involving students from programs they serve.

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4. A grade may also be changed if the change is authorized by the Dean when the change has been recommended as a remedy for a student under policies governing personal misconduct, harassment, discrimination, or sexual misconduct. ¶

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3. Terms of service will be for two years. Members may be re-elected for an additional two-year term.
4. At the beginning of each academic year, each department/school in the college will submit a list of full-time students eligible and willing to serve on the committee. This list will be formulated each year. When needed, one student will serve on a review committee.
5. The committee will select its own chair.
6. Two faculty members and one student selected from the names submitted by each department will review the appeal including documents from the student filing the appeal and the instructor of record. Neither the faculty members nor the student member shall be from the instructor's or student's department.
7. Both the instructor and the student will have the right to challenge, for a valid cause, any or all the members of the committee, and in that event, replacements will be appointed, and no further challenge will be permitted.

#### V. Instructors' Responsibilities and Rights

The following are guides for the instructor's responsibilities and rights.

1. Instructors have a duty to meet with students to explain the course grading procedure and the process for determining the final grade.

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2. When requested, instructors must provide the documents requested for a review at all levels. These documents will include at least the course syllabus, grade distribution, attendance policy, and grading procedures for course tasks with rubrics. Other documents may be included or requested.

3. Instructors must participate in a grade appeal process.

4. No instructor shall be forced or coerced into making a grade change.

5. If a finding of prejudice or caprice is determined the Dean, may seek further action.

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#### VI. Procedures for Hearings

A hearing involving the faculty member and the student may be held at any level of appeal.

- a. After the Grade Appeal Review Committee reviews the appeal form and supporting documents and the instructor's documents, a hearing may be held to clarify issues and/or to receive further evidence. Both the student and the instructor may submit additional materials at the hearing.
- b. Hearings may be held at any level only when the instructor and the student can participate. No other person may attend this hearing without the approval of the Grade Appeal Review Committee.
- c. The conclusions, decision(s), and a rationale for these must be disseminated in writing to the instructor and to the student.

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#### VII. Records

- a. All Grade Appeal Review Committee hearings will be recorded.
- b. All documentation of the grade appeal process, including recordings, will be kept in a secure location in the Dean's office for a minimum of one year.

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- Approved by the president  
May 2, 2016  
Revised February 13, 2018  
Revised May 16, 2022

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