

I. Grade Appeals

The purpose of this policy is to explain the conditions and procedures for the appeal of course grades and other graded program requirements (e.g., comprehensive examination, qualifying examination, thesis, dissertation, and other culminating experiences).

Throughout this policy, the term “instructor” refers to the instructor of record who is responsible for issuing the course grade. “Instructor” may also refer to the program coordinator when the program faculty issues a grade for program requirements that do not reside in a course (e.g., comprehensive examination, qualifying examination, thesis, dissertation, and other culminating experiences).

Students may appeal final course grades, results of capstone experiences, comprehensive and qualifying examinations, defenses, and other graded program requirements. The grade appeal process must be initiated by the student within 20 class days from the date the grade is awarded.

A student has the right to appeal a grade if he or she feels the grade was awarded as a result of arbitrary grading. The grade appeal process is not appropriate for a student’s disagreement or dissatisfaction with an instructor’s professional evaluation of coursework. Arbitrary grading is defined here as using standards that are substantially different from those announced by the instructor or described in the course syllabus or program documents.

The student may confer with the Student Government Association or Graduate Student Association president/designee regarding the complaint at any time during the Steps Toward Redress for Grade Appeals. The president/designee will listen to the complaint, counsel the student as to the merits of the case, review the steps as outlined in the formal procedures for grade appeals, assist the student in writing the appeal, and may attend the hearing upon the request of the student as a non-participating representative.

Steps Toward Redress for Grade Appeals

1. The student will contact the instructor in writing with a request to meet regarding the grade in question. The request for a meeting should be specific that it is to discuss the grade received by the student. The request must be made within 20 class days after the grade is awarded. There are certain professional courses within the University for which the final grade is awarded upon completion of a designated number of weeks. The student will need to review the time frame for awarding the grade with the department chairperson. A grade appeal cannot be brought forward while an academic integrity matter is being resolved for that course, student, and instructor. In the event the academic integrity matter is resolved in favor of the student, the 20 class days start when the academic integrity process has completed.

No instructor shall be allowed to delay the resolution of a grievance by failing to hold a consultation with a student within the designated time, unless *bona fide* reasons such as illness, personal emergency, or campus absences for professional reasons make this time limit unreasonable. If the instructor is unavailable, the student may skip to Step 2.

If the issue is resolved after meeting with the instructor, the student's grade may be changed in Step 1 of this procedure by written consent of the instructor.

2. If unable to resolve the difference with the instructor, the student shall take the grievance within five class days of this discussion to the department chairperson (or dean, if the instructor involved is the department chairperson).

If the instructor who assigned the grade is unavailable, for example, the instructor is no longer employed by the university and is unresponsive to the student's request for a meeting or is otherwise unavailable and unresponsive, the department chair will confer with the faculty in the department and appoint a full-time faculty member who is knowledgeable of the subject matter to act in the stead of the unavailable instructor.

The chairperson shall attempt to resolve the dispute within 10 class days by meeting with the student and the instructor. The student's grade may be changed at Step 2 of this procedure by the written consent of the instructor. At this meeting the chairperson (or dean) will have the student and the instructor complete and sign the Grade Appeal Form and give a copy to the student. The department chairperson maintains the original. If the student took the course online ~~and~~ or does not live within a reasonable driving distance of the main campus, the grade appeal form may be sent electronically, but it must include scanned or electronic signatures.

3. As a last resort and only after Steps 1 and 2 have been carried out, the student may file a formal complaint in writing within three (3) class days to the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The student must meet with associate vice chancellor for academic affairs and bring to the meeting ~~the appeal which must include~~ a written statement which clearly explains the basis of the appeal and the Grade Appeal Form. The purpose of this meeting is to: a) confirm that prior steps in the appeal process have been followed properly (if not, the appeal shall be redirected back to the appropriate lower level); b) review the relevant grounds for a grade appeal with the student; and, c) inform the student of the next step in the appeals process. Following the conference, if the student decides to proceed with the formal appeal, the associate vice chancellor academic affairs will immediately consult with the Academic Integrity and Grievance Committee chairperson. On the basis of this consultation, the associate vice chancellor for academic affairs will notify the student in writing that the grade appeal will be referred to the Academic Integrity and Grievance Committee for a hearing or to the vice chancellor/provost if the case does not fall within the purview of the Academic Integrity and Grievance Committee.

The student is responsible for demonstrating that arbitrary grading occurred and must proceed with an appeal in good faith. Abuse of the grade appeal process may result in a disciplinary

referral by the AIGC to the Office of the Dean of Students for violating the university Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Behavior (Policy Number 516.3).

Procedures for Formal Grade Appeals Handled by the Academic Integrity and Grievance Committee

This committee is a Faculty Senate committee. Its makeup and purpose are governed by the Constitution of the University Assembly of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Article III. It provides the members of hearing panels.

The Academic Integrity and Grievance Committee (AIGC) shall handle all aspects of the formal student grade appeals except for a claim of discrimination that is forwarded to Human Resources. The AIGC shall follow these procedures for conducting grade appeal hearings. ~~promulgate rules governing its proceedings, which shall be consistent with the following hearing procedures set forth in the 1967 Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students.~~ The procedures shall be distributed to all members of the committee by the associate vice chancellor for academic affairs. Reasonable deviations from the time frame or procedures will not invalidate a decision unless the deviations cause significant prejudice to the student.

1. At least 10 class days before the date set for the hearing, the student and the instructor will be notified in writing of the nature of the appeal and of the date, time, and place the case is to be heard. They shall also be notified that, should either party choose not to appear, the hearing will proceed as scheduled. For the purposes of this section, the day after the date the letter of notification is mailed or emailed shall be the first day of the 10-day period. The committee must hear the case within 15 class days of the time the appeal was filed, if at all possible. The determination of the date, time, and place of the hearing will include consideration of the student's and the instructor's schedules and of their convenience, but in the interest of fairness, reasonable speed shall be the watchword.
2. The student and instructor will be notified that each can bring witnesses ~~in~~ on his or her behalf, that each will have a reasonable opportunity for confronting witnesses appearing against him or her, that each has the right to be present during all phases of the hearing, and that each may bring to the hearing two non-participating representatives. Legal representation at grade appeal hearings is prohibited.
3. At least five class days before the committee is convened, the student and the instructor must submit to the associate vice chancellor for academic affairs all the information that each feels is pertinent to the appeal. This information must be in writing and supported in detail, and it should specify what ~~additional evidence and~~ witnesses the student or instructor will bring to the scheduled meeting. Copies of this information will be distributed to all involved parties. Students appealing grades are reminded that the burden of proof is on the student; i.e., the student must be able to support his or her assertion. All submitted materials must be directly related to the conditions for arbitrary grading as defined in this policy.

4. A hearing panel will be selected from the AIGC to consider the appeal. A panel chair will be chosen from among the faculty members present at the hearing panel. The chairperson shall serve as the chairperson of all appeals hearing panels. The chairperson may designate a provisional hearing panel chair in those instances when the committee chairperson is not available. A quorum hearing panel for a grade appeal consists of a panel chair, two additional faculty members, and two students. On all grade appeals involving graduate or professional degree curricular matters, at least one graduate faculty member and one graduate student shall be included on the hearing panel. Of this number, all must be present.
5. The hearing panel committee will not make any decision on a specific appeal until it has been determined that all pertinent written documents, oral testimony from the student and the instructor, oral testimony from witnesses and official records from the student's college or school dean and from the Office of Admissions and Records and Registration have been submitted and reviewed.
6. The only persons present at meetings of this committee shall be committee panel members, designated observers, Student Government Association president/designee upon request by the student, parties to the action being considered by the committee and the student and the instructor along with their non-participating representatives, and witnesses actually testifying before the committee. With prior notice to the hearing panel, any of the parties involved in the appeal, the student, the instructor, or witnesses, may appear via synchronous technology rather than in person. All proceedings shall be recorded except for panel deliberations.
7. Written statements by witnesses in lieu of personal appearance should not be allowed except in rare instances.
8. During the process of making a decision on a case, the panel shall consider only that information which (a) has been presented during the hearing and (b) is relevant to the charge grounds for a grade appeal.
9. A decision to change or direct changes in a student's course grades requires a majority vote of the committee hearing panel on appeal; in the case of a tie, the grade assigned by the instructor shall stand.
10. Upon conclusion of the appeals hearing, the committee panel will make a decision in writing and sign appropriate appeal documents. The chairperson of the committee panel chair will return the master file and the tape recording of the hearing, and prepare a summary of the findings, decision, and recommendations for the associate vice chancellor for academic affairs within three class days of the hearing. The chairperson of the committee associate vice chancellor for academic affairs shall send a letter explaining the findings and the decision within 10 class days of such decision to the student, instructor, department head, college dean, and in case of a grade change, to the Office of Records and Registration. Either party may appeal the panel's decision in writing to the vice chancellor/provost with a copy to the chairperson and the non-appealing party, within 10 class days after receipt of the decision.
11. The vice chancellor/provost shall review the decision of the committee on appeal within ten class days of receipt of either party's appeal of that decision. Reasonable deviations

from the time frame or procedures will not invalidate a decision unless the deviations cause significant prejudice to the student.

12. The vice chancellor/provost shall have the authority to:
 - a) Approve the recommendation of the AIGC panel;
 - b) Remand the case to the original hearing panel for rehearing;
 - c) Remand the case to a different hearing committee for rehearing; *or*
 - d) Reverse the decision of the hearing panel.
13. The vice chancellor/provost shall notify the appealing party and the non-appealing party of his/*her* decision within *ten* class days of receipt of the appeal. The vice chancellor/provost shall return the records to the associate vice chancellor for academic affairs for filing and for appropriate action. The vice chancellor/provost's decision shall be final.