

<b>Policies of the University of North Texas</b>	Chapter 6
<b>15.2.7 Grade Appeals</b>	Faculty Affairs

**Policy Statement.** Students are responsible for meeting the standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled as well as requirements for completion of their academic programs. Faculty members are responsible for establishing standards of academic performance and for evaluating student performance in an equitable manner. Faculty decisions in such matters are considered authoritative and can be overturned only when it has been determined that a grade was assigned in an inequitable, arbitrary, or erroneous manner. This policy outlines the grounds for a student grade appeal and the process by which it must be carried out.

**Application of Policy.**

Students and Faculty

**Definitions.**

1. **Course.** “Course” means a unit of study that, upon completion, is recorded on the student’s transcript, or any other graded requirement for program completion (e.g., internship, comprehensive examination, thesis, dissertation).
2. **Grade.** “Grade” means the final grade issued at the end of a course. Grades assigned for parts of a course (e.g., reports, examinations) may not be appealed and are not subject to review except to the extent that they impact the appeal of the final course grade.
3. **Student.** “Student” means the individual who received the grade and who has initiated an appeal. Individuals may not initiate appeals on behalf of others.
4. **Instructor.** “Instructor” means the faculty member responsible for the course in question.
5. **Department Chair.** “Department Chair” means the individual holding administrative authority for instructors.
6. **Committee.** “Committee” means either a standing appeal committee constituted by the department, college, or school, or an ad hoc grade appeal committee appointed by the chair to review a particular appeal.
7. **Dean.** “Dean” means the administrative authority for the chair or academic unit in which the grade appeal is lodged.

**Procedures and Responsibilities.**

**1. Appropriate Grounds for Appeal.**

Grades are subject to appeal only when the student believes that the grade was awarded in an inequitable, arbitrary, or erroneous manner. Appropriate grounds for appeal include circumstances

where the grade was assigned based on:

- a. inequitable treatment that is the result of departure from the instructor's stated standards, and course policies; or
- b. a decision based on an error in fact.

If the student believes that the grade was assigned inappropriately due to discrimination or sexual harassment, the case must first be resolved through procedures for such complaints (see UNT Policy 1.3.24, Information and Procedural Guidelines for Pursuing and Resolving a Complaint of Discrimination, Including Sexual Harassment). Changes in a grade due to violations of academic integrity cannot be appealed through this process.

**Responsible Party:** Students, Office of Equity and Diversity

## **2. Time Limits for Appeal and Resolution.**

The formal grade appeal should be resolved within a maximum of 13 weeks after the semester in which the grade was officially posted. Under extraordinary circumstances, the chair may grant an extension of any time limits identified in this policy.

- a. The student must consult with the instructor as soon as possible and no later than 10 calendar days after the start of the following academic term, inclusive of fall, spring, summer and intersession terms.
- b. The student must initiate a formal grade appeal in writing to the department chair within five weeks (35 calendar days) of the date the grade was officially posted in the university system.
- c. If unresolved, the chair must forward the appeal to a faculty committee within seven (7) calendar days of its receipt.
- d. A grade appeal case should be resolved within five weeks (35 calendar days) of the chair's receipt of the written appeal.
- e. An appeal to the Dean, described below and based solely upon procedural grounds, may extend the time limit on resolution of the grade appeal by no more than three weeks (21 calendar days).
- f. If any person, whether student, faculty or administrator, fails to respond to requests made as part of the grade appeal process within one week of the request, the requester may move forward without that response.
- g. The grade issued by the instructor remains in effect during the appeal process.

**Responsible Party:** Students, Instructors

**3. Procedures for the Appeal.**

A. Informal Consultation with Instructor

The student must first discuss the course grade with the instructor in an attempt to resolve the issue. This discussion should occur as soon as possible after receiving the grade and not more than 10 days after the start of the following academic term. If the instructor is unavailable or unresponsive, the student should immediately contact the department chair for guidance, as the 35-day time limit for formal appeal includes this faculty consultation period.

B. Formal Grade Appeal to Department Chair

If consultation with the instructor does not resolve the student's concerns, the student may submit a formal appeal to the department chair within the time limit for initiating an appeal.

- i. The department chair may attempt to resolve the issue through consultation with the instructor and the student. If both instructor and student agree to a resolution, the appeal ends at this level. The resolution must be described in writing, signed by the department chair, acknowledged in writing as received by the student and instructor, and filed in the student's record in the department.
- ii. If the chair does not engage in a consultation, or if the consultation does not resolve the issue, the chair refers the appeal to a faculty committee within seven (7) calendar days of receiving the formal appeal.

C. Faculty Committee Review and Resolution

The committee that reviews the grade appeal may be a standing appeal committee comprised of faculty. If no such committee exists, the department chair appoints an ad hoc grade appeal committee of three faculty members: one selected by the student, one selected by the instructor, and one selected by the chair with agreement of the other two committee members. Committee members may include any person holding a faculty appointment in the department, college or university. The chair's appointee will chair the faculty committee.

- i. The committee requests a written statement from the instructor for review along with the student's appeal. The committee may request additional information and will meet with the student, the instructor, and/or others, as it sees fit.
- ii. The committee issues one of the following recommendations to the instructor:
  - The grade should remain unchanged, as it was assigned in an equitable and valid

manner.

- The grade should be changed. In this case, the committee must provide a written explanation of this finding to the instructor.

iii. If a grade change is recommended to the instructor, one of the following may occur

The committee requests that the instructor change the grade, in response to the written explanation to the instructor, and the instructor agrees to change the grade.

The committee requests that the instructor change the grade, in response to the written explanation to the instructor, and the instructor disagrees with the committee. In such cases, the instructor should provide a written explanation of their disagreement to the committee.

- The committee may then concur with the instructor's assessment and allow the grade to stand unchanged.
  - However, if the committee upholds its conclusion that the grade should be changed, it may recommend an administrative change of grade to the department chair.
- iv. Upon the conclusion of the exchange with the instructor regarding its recommendations, contained in steps C-ii and C-iii, above, the committee submits its final recommendation in writing to the department chair.
- v. The department chair notifies both student and instructor of the final resolution to change or not change the grade. The resolution must be described in writing, signed by the department chair, acknowledged as received by student and instructor, and filed in the student's record in the department. The department chair changes the grade, as appropriate. The grade appeal ends at this level and, except under extraordinary circumstances (e.g., the closure of the university due to weather, students' hospitalization, administrative mandate), shall be completed within 35 calendar days of the chair's receipt of the written appeal. The only further basis for appeal is on procedural grounds.

#### D. Dean's Procedural Review

If either student or instructor believes there was a procedural error in the process, that party may request reconsideration on procedural grounds by filing a written request for review to the dean within 7 (seven) calendar days of having received notice of the resolution. This request must specifically state the procedural grounds for requesting the reconsideration. If the dean determines that the procedures were followed, the dean responds in writing that the faculty committee's determination has been upheld. The decision of the dean is final.

- i. If the dean determines that there were procedural errors, the appeal will be considered anew, and the dean will appoint a new ad hoc grade appeal committee, comprised of individuals holding a full-time faculty appointment within the University. That committee reviews the grade appeal as described in steps C-ii and C-iii, above.
- ii. Upon the conclusion of the exchange with the instructor regarding its recommendations, contained in C-ii and C-iii, above, the committee submits its final recommendation in writing to the dean.
- iii. The dean shall provide notice of the final resolution to the student, instructor and department chair. The resolution must be described in writing, signed by the department chair, acknowledged as received by student and instructor, and filed in the student's record in the department. The department chair changes the grade, as appropriate.
- iv. This process shall extend the timeline by no more than 21 calendar days, except under extraordinary circumstances. The decision of this committee may not be appealed further.

**Responsible Party:** Faculty Review Committee, Dean

#### **4. Records Retention.**

Documentation of all formal grade appeals, including procedural appeals, whether resolved by a faculty committee, the chair, or the dean, must be maintained in department files for a period of time designated in the university records retention policy.

#### **References and Cross-references.**

UNT Policy 1.3.24, Information and Procedural Guidelines for Pursuing and Resolving a Complaint of Discrimination, Including Sexual Harassment (<http://policy.unt.edu/policy/1-3-24>)

AAUP Policy: The Assignment of Course Grades and Student Appeals  
(<http://www.aaup.org/file/assignment-of-grades.pdf>)

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