

**LAMAR UNIVERSITY  
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST  
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

TO: THE STUDENT APPEALING A COURSE GRADE

FROM: Dr. Steve Doblin, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

**NOTE: PRIOR TO BEGINNING THIS PROCESS, THE STUDENT SHOULD MEET WITH THE INSTRUCTOR WHO AWARDED THE GRADE TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION AND TO ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM.**

Introduction

The instructor (defined as one who has the responsibility for a class, special problem, or thesis) has the authority in his or her class over all matters affecting the conduct of the class, including the assignment of grades. Student performance should be evaluated according to academic criteria made available to all students within the first two weeks of each semester, and grades should not be determined in an arbitrary or capricious manner. When a student disagrees with the final grade given by an instructor, fair play requires the opportunity for an orderly appellate procedure. A student must initiate the appeal procedure within 20 school days (excluding Saturday, Sunday, and official student holidays) of the beginning of the semester subsequent to the one in which the grade was awarded if enrolled that semester (otherwise, within 20 school days of the next semester in which the student is enrolled), or 150 calendar days after the issuance of spring semester grades, should the student not be enrolled during either summer semester. This appellate process does not involve allegations concerning the competence of a faculty member, the fairness of examinations, the difficulty of a course, the grade on an assignment or test within a course, or matters of a general academic nature. Rather, its purpose is to provide for the collection and evaluation of evidence shedding light on an allegation that a course grade is invalid because of behavior that is arbitrary, capricious, unethical, or contrary to standard academic practice on the part of an instructor of record.

When you challenge a grade, the burden of proof lies with you. Be certain that your case for appeal is complete and thorough. Read the following description of the grade appeal process carefully, and follow each step. It is your responsibility to bring the original Appeal Form for Grade Review, a copy of which is attached to this memo, to each stage in the appeal process. (If the appeal reaches the office of the Provost, you will present a copy of this form to him.) Additional information concerning the grade review process is available in the *Student Handbook*. It should be noted that if the chair and/or dean finds for the student, the faculty member has the same right of appeal as the student.

## Procedure Checklist

- [ ] 1. You should have obtained these papers from a chair in a department office, from a dean in a college office, or from a representative of the Office of Academic Affairs (100 Plummer Administration Building). If you have any questions, your department chair, your dean, the Senior Associate Provost (880-8400), or the Provost (880-8398) will be happy to explain the entire process, in addition to your rights and obligations.
- [ ] 2. The first step in the grade review process is a discussion between the student and the instructor who awarded the grade. If you have not already had such a discussion, you must do so immediately.
- [ ] 3. Fill in the information that is requested at the top of the Appeal Form for Grade Review, which is attached.
- [ ] 4. On a separate paper (8.5" x 11") to be attached to the Appeal Form for Grade Review, summarize your reasons for believing that you deserve a change of grade in the course. You must include a summary of the discussion with your instructor, emphasizing why you believe that the instructor acted in an arbitrary capricious, unethical, or academically non-standard manner.
- [ ] 5. Give the instructor a copy of your summary, and ask him or her to sign the Appeal Form for Grade Review and return it to you. If the instructor refuses to sign the form, proceed to the next step.
- [ ] 6. Make an appointment with the chair of the department in which the course was taught. Explain to the chair the problem with your grade, and give him/her the Appeal Form for Grade Review (with attachment). The chair will schedule a meeting with you and the instructor, either separately or together. If no agreement is reached at this meeting, the department chair will sign the Appeal Form for Grade Review and return it to you, and will write his/her own assessment of the grade dispute. A copy will be given to you as well as included in the materials forwarded to the college level. You should give the chair copies of all materials that you have that were relevant to the calculation of your grade. The instructor will do the same. Proceed to Step 7. (*If the department chair is also the instructor, skip Step 6 and proceed to Step 7.*)
- [ ] 7. Make an appointment with the academic dean of the college in which the instructor teaches. Explain to the dean the problem with your grade, and give him/her the Appeal Form for Grade Review (with attachment). The dean may convene the college's Student-Faculty Relations Committee to review the materials related to the grade appeal (given to him/her by the department chair) and to meet with you and the instructor, after which the Committee will make a recommendation to him/her. Based upon the dean's analysis of the situation, perhaps informed by a

recommendation from the Student-Faculty Relations Committee, he/she will try to resolve the problem. If no solution is reached and you wish to continue your appeal, the dean will sign the Appeal Form for Grade Review and give you a copy. *(If the dean is also the instructor, skip Step 7 and proceed to Step 8.)*

- [ ] 8. Within one week of the dean's decision, you must bring to the Office of the Provost (Room 100, Plummer Administration Building; 880-8398) the copy of your Appeal Form for Grade Review and a written letter of appeal of his/her decision, summarizing your reason(s) for it. These items will constitute your appeal to the Provost. The Provost will then contact the dean and obtain the original Appeal Form for Grade Review and all materials relevant to your appeal.
  
- [ ] 9. When the complete appeal package is received by the Provost, he will appoint a University Grade Review (UGR) Committee from among the members of the five college Student-Faculty Relations Committees (four faculty from colleges other than the one in which the appeal originated and three students, at least one of whom shall be a graduate student and all of whom shall be majors in departments other than the department in which the appeal originated) and will contact you at either the telephone number or the e-mail address you provided in the heading on the Appeal Form for Grade Review. You will be provided a list of the members and alternates of the UGR Committee (one of which you may challenge for cause) and an academic records release form. The UGR Committee will review all materials related to the appeal (given to the Provost by the dean), meet at least with you and your instructor, and will make a recommendation to the Provost, who will make the final decision.

**APPEAL FORM FOR GRADE REVIEW**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ LOCAL/CELL TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

CLASS: [ ] Freshman; [ ] Sophomore; [ ] Junior; [ ] Senior; [ ] Graduate Student

MAJOR: \_\_\_\_\_ ADVISOR \_\_\_\_\_

*NOTE: Notify the Office of the Provost if any of the above data change.*

COURSE: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Course Prefix, Section, Title)

SEMESTER IN WHICH DISPUTED GRADE WAS AWARDED: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Semester / Year)

INSTRUCTOR'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE RECEIVED: \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE EXPECTED \_\_\_\_\_

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To the Instructor: Because you and the student were unable to resolve the grade dispute to your mutual satisfaction, the appeal is being carried to the departmental level. You should sign this Appeal Form for Grade Review in the space provided below, indicating only that the conference described took place, return it to the student, and make a copy of the summary statement. Your department chair will request a meeting with you and the student, either separately or together. However, within 10 working days of signing the Appeal Form for Grade Review and prior to this meeting, you should give the chair a copy of all materials used in the calculation of the student's grade, a copy of the course syllabus, a copy of your grade book including all students in the class and the grades they were assigned, your written statement summarizing the way in which you assigned the students' grades, and the copy of the student's summary statement and your response to it. "University Procedures in Reference to Student Academic Grievances," in which the grade appeal process is described, is included in Appendix H in the *Faculty Handbook*. If your chair and/or the dean finds in favor of the student, you have the same right of appeal to the next higher authority as the student.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

To the Department Chair: You must schedule a meeting with the student and the instructor, either separately or together, and attempt to resolve the grade dispute. In the event you are unable to do so, you must:

- (1) sign the Appeal Form for Grade Review and return it to the student; and
- (2) furnish copies of all materials relevant to the calculation of the student's grade to the dean of your college:
  - a. a copy of page(s) from the course grade book with names (but not the grades) of other students in the class deleted;
  - b. all tests, quizzes, reports, exams, or other materials which were used in determining the grade (student should supply copies of those which were returned);
  - c. a description of the procedure utilized to calculate the course grade, as well as the grading criteria actually given to the students, in writing, at the beginning of the course.

In addition, you should forward to your dean the student's summary statement and the instructor's response along with whatever else either party deems pertinent as part of the appeal package (e.g., handouts, class notes, letters of support), and include a written summary of your own assessment of the grade dispute. This must be completed within at least 15 working days of your receipt of the Appeal Form for Grade Review from the student. Please sign and date below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

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To the Dean: You should convene the college's Student-Faculty Relations Committee and/or attempt to reconcile the problem concerning the disputed grade. (Note: The Committee must meet at least with the appellant and the instructor, either together or separately, to hear their perceptions of the dispute and related issues.) If this proves impossible (i.e., you decide to deny the appeal based upon the Committee's recommendation and/or your own actions/analysis), within three weeks following your original receipt of the appeal from the chair you must schedule a meeting, in person, with the student and inform him/her of your decision. Then, ask if he/she wishes to continue the appeal. If not, within a week provide the student with a letter summarizing the content of the conversation and the student's decision not to continue the appeal, and the process has been concluded. You should retain all the materials relevant to the appeal in your files for at least three years. If so (or if the student is unsure),

- (1) inform the student both orally and in writing that he/she must present the required appeal documents to the Provost within seven days of your meeting;

