

LAMAR UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

TO: THE STUDENT APPEALING A COURSE GRADE AND WHO IS TAKING ALL OF HIS/HER LAMAR UNIVERSITY CLASSES ONLINE

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

NOTE: **PRIOR TO BEGINNING THIS PROCESS, THE STUDENT SHOULD TALK WITH THE INSTRUCTOR WHO AWARDED THE GRADE TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION AND TO ATTEMPT TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM. WHILE IT IS BEST TO MEET FACE-TO-FACE, IF POSSIBLE, DISCUSSION VIA TELEPHONE, E-MAIL, COURSE CHAT ROOM, VIDEO CONFERENCE, OR OTHER TECHNOLOGY-BASED MEDIA IS ACCEPTABLE.**

Introduction

The instructor (defined as one who has the responsibility for a class, special problem, internship, 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. In general, 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 any summer semester. In the case of accelerated courses in year-round programs, the student must initiate the appeal procedure within 20 school days of the posting online of the final course grade if enrolled in another distance education course, or within 40 calendar days of the posting of the final course grade to be appealed if not enrolled in another Lamar University course. 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 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 transmit the original Appeal Form for

Grade Review, a copy of which is posted online at <http://facultystaff.lamar.edu/academic-affairs/policies/index.html>, either by fax or electronically, to the university official at each stage in the appeal process. (If the appeal reaches the office of the Provost, you will transmit this form to him./her) Additional information concerning the grade review process is available in the *Student Handbook* (<http://students.lamar.edu/student-handbook.html>). 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 an electronic version of these documents from the Academic Affairs website or a paper copy 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 (409-880-8400), or the Provost (409- 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 via one of the modes of communication described in the “NOTE” at the beginning of this document between the student and the instructor who awarded the grade. If you have not already had such interaction, you must do so immediately.
- [] 3. Fill in the information that is requested at the top of the Appeal Form for Grade Review for Online Students, which is attached.
- [] 4. In a separate document created in Microsoft Word, describe 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, and/or academically non-standard manner. You will submit this document at each stage along with the Appeal Form for Grade Review,
- [] 5. Provide the instructor a copy of your summary and Appeal Form for Grade Review, with the information requested in the heading completed, via e-mail or fax, and ask him or her to respond to these two documents and return them to you via e-mail or fax. If the instructor does not respond within ten days of receipt of these documents, proceed to the next step.
- [] 6. Contact the chair of the department in which the course was taught. Explain to the chair the problem with your grade, and provide him/her with your summary document and the Appeal Form for Grade Review. The chair will schedule a meeting with you and the instructor, either separately or together, via one of the modes of communication described in the “NOTE” at the beginning of this document. If no agreement is reached at this/these meeting(s), the department chair will provide his/her written assessment of the situation (using Microsoft Word) and send it to you. A copy of this document will be included in the

materials forwarded to the college level. You should provide the chair copies of all materials that you have that were relevant to the calculation of your grade, to include all graded materials returned to you. 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. Contact the academic dean of the college in which the instructor teaches. Explain to the dean the problem with your grade, and provide (via e-mail or fax) him/her your written summary, the response from the chair, and the Appeal Form for Grade Review. 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 (either electronically or in person), 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 provide you with a summary (created in Microsoft Word) of the rationale for his/her decision, along with the recommendation of the Committee (if applicable). *(If the dean is also the instructor, skip Step 7 and proceed to Step 8.)*
- [] 8. Within one week of receiving the dean's decision, you must send, via e-mail or fax, to the Office of the Provost (carol.lindsey@lamar.edu or 409-880-8404) a copy of your summary, the responses from the dean and chair, your Appeal Form for Grade Review, and a letter of appeal of his/her decision (using Microsoft Word) summarizing your reason(s) for it. These items will constitute your appeal to the Provost. The Provost will then contact the dean and obtain all other materials relevant to your appeal. If there are any materials of which you do not have a copy, they will be transmitted to you at this time.
- [] 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 the telephone number or 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, which you must sign and return to the Provost. The UGR Committee will review all materials related to the appeal (given to the Provost by the dean), will meet at least with you and with the instructor using one of the modes of communication described in the "NOTE" at the beginning of this document – you will be contacted by the URG chair to arrange a suitable date and time – and will make a recommendation to the Provost, who will make the final decision.

APPEAL FORM FOR GRADE REVIEW FOR ONLINE STUDENTS

NAME: _____ TELEPHONE : _____

FAX: _____ 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 (Phone: 409-880-8398, Fax: 409-880-8404).

COURSE IN WHICH DISPUTED GRADE WAS AWARDED:

(Course Prefix, Section, Title)

SEMESTER OR MONTH (IF ACCELERATED COURSE) IN WHICH DISPUTED GRADE

WAS AWARDED: _____
(Semester (or Month) / Year)

INSTRUCTOR'S NAME: _____

GRADE RECEIVED: _____ GRADE EXPECTED: _____

To the Instructor: Because you and the student were unable to resolve the grade dispute to your mutual satisfaction, this appeal is being carried to the departmental level. You should summarize in writing, using Microsoft Word, your rationale for denying the student's grade appeal and send it to the student via e-mail or fax, along with the Appeal Form for Grade Review for Online Students (with which the appellant provided you), which you should sign and date indicating only that you have read the student's statement and have responded to him/her. Within 10 working days of signing the form, you should give your 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, a written statement summarizing the way in which you assigned the students' grades, a copy of the appellant's summary statement and your response to it, and a copy of the Appeal Form for Grade Review for Online Students which you have signed. Your department chair will request a meeting with you and the student either separately or together using one of the modes of communication included in the "NOTE" at the beginning of the Grade Appeal Checklist, to discuss the appeal and the documentation provided by both you and the student. You should take with you to this

conference copies of the materials you gave to your chair, which will also be provided to the student (taking care to preserve the anonymity of the other students in the class). If your chair cannot help you and the student arrive at a solution and 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 should schedule a meeting with the student and the instructor, either separately or together, and attempt to resolve the grade dispute. The modes of communication that may be used for this purpose are included in the “NOTE” at the beginning of the Grade Appeal Checklist. In the event you are unable to do so, you must:

- (1) inform the student, in writing (using Microsoft Word) of your decision to deny his/her appeal and the rationale for it, via e-mail or fax; and
- (2) furnish copies of all materials relevant to the calculation of the student's grade to the student as well as the dean of your college, making certain to preserve the anonymity of the other students in the class:
 - a. a copy of page(s) from the course grade book with names (but not the grades) of other students in the class expunged;
 - 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); and
 - c. a description of the procedure utilized to calculate the course grade, as well as the grading criteria actually given to the students (either orally or in writing) at the beginning of the course.

In addition, you should obtain and forward to your dean all materials given to you by the student and the instructor, whatever else either party deems pertinent to the appeal process (e.g., handouts, class notes, letters of support), and a written summary of your own assessment of the grade dispute and decision, which you should also give to the student. This must be done within at least 15 working days of your receipt of the Appeal Form for Grade Review from the student.

Signature

Date

To the Dean: You should convene the college’s Student-Faculty Relations Committee and/or attempt to reconcile the problem. (Note: If you refer the appeal to the Committee, that body must meet at least with the appellant and the instructor either together or separately, to hear their perceptions of the dispute and related issues, using one of the modes of communication included in the “NOTE” at the beginning of the Grade Appeal Checklist.) If this proves impossible (i.e., you decide to deny the appeal based upon the Committee’s recommendation and/or as a result of your own actions/analysis), within three weeks following your original receipt of the appeal from the student, you must schedule a meeting with him/her using one of the modes of communication described in the “NOTE” at the beginning of the Grade Appeal Checklist, and inform him/her in writing (using Microsoft Word) of your decision and the rationale for it. Also, ask if he/she wishes to continue the appeal. If not, the process has been concluded, and you should retain all the materials relevant to the appeal in your files for at least five years. If so (or if the student is unsure),

- (1) provide the student the Appeal Form for Grade Review for Online Students with appropriate annotations in each section (i.e., Instructor, Chair, Dean), as well as your statement of denial of appeal and the rationale for it, and inform him/her that these documents must be given to the Provost as the appeal documents along with the student’s own written statement of appeal with rationale;
- (2) inform the student in writing that he/she must appeal to the Provost *within seven days of receipt of your communication*, which should either be e-mailed or sent via certified U.S. mail, return receipt requested;
- (3) notify the Provost, in writing, of the potential appeal; and
- (4) retain all materials relevant to the process for transmittal to the Provost if requested following the one-week appeal period.

Check One: Student-Faculty Relations Committee Convened (attach recommendation)

Student-Faculty Relations Committee Not Convened

Signature

Date

To the Office of the Provost: Included with this form are all materials pertinent to a grade appeal which has progressed from the instructor level through the decanal level. Please sign and date this Appeal Form for Grade Review for Online Students and indicate the action(s) taken.

Signature

Date

Referred to University Grade Review Committee

Student contacted on _____
Date/Time

Other (describe below)

