

LAMAR UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

TO: THE DISTANCE EDUCATION 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 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 either 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, or matters of a purely 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 arbitrary capricious, or unethical behavior 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 <https://sacs.lamar.edu/acadaffairs/forms/GradeAppealProcess.pdf>, either by fax or electronically,

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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.) 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 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 Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (Dr. Kevin Smith, 880-8400), or the Provost (Dr. Steve Doblin, 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 Distance Education 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 and/or a capricious 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 included in the materials forwarded to the college level. You should provide the chair copies of all

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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), 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 (harvilynne.mcneel@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 waiver form, which you must sign and return. The UGR Committee will review all materials related to the appeal (given to the Provost by the dean), and will make a recommendation to the Provost, who will make the final decision. If the University Grade Review Committee decides to talk with you using one of the modes of communication described in the “NOTE” at the beginning of this document, you will be notified by the chair of the date and time.

APPEAL FORM FOR GRADE REVIEW FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION 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.

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, the 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 this Appeal Form for Grade Review for Distance Education Students. 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. You should take with you to this conference all materials used in the calculation of the student's grade, which will also be provided to the student (taking care to preserve the anonymity of the other students in the class). At this time you should provide your department chair with a copy of your response to the student's statement of appeal. A 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*, and the process is described online at <https://sacs.lamar.edu/acadaffairs/forms/GradeAppealProcess.pdf> . 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 should schedule a meeting with the student and the instructor, either separate 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 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 (either orally or in writing) at the beginning of the course.
- (3) In addition, you should obtain and forward to your dean whatever else either party deems pertinent as part of the appeal package (e.g., handouts, class notes, letters of support), and include the written summary of your own assessment of the grade dispute which you have already given to the student.

Signature Date

To the Dean: You should convene the college=s Student-Faculty Relations Committee and/or attempt to reconcile the problem concerning the disputed grade. 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 two weeks following your original receipt of the appeal you must schedule a meeting with the student 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) inform the student in writing that he/she must appeal to the Provost *within seven days of receipt of your communication*;
- (2) provide the student, via e-mail or fax, the Appeal Form for Grade Review for Distance Education Students with appropriate annotations in each section (i.e., Instructor, Chair, Dean) and 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;
- (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 within 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 Distance Education and indicate the action to be taken.

Signature

Date

Referred to University Grade Review Committee

Student contacted on _____
Date/Time

Other (describe below)

