

**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, 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 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 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 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.

Grade Appeal Checklist

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- [] 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 and/or a capricious 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), 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, 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 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. 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 in person, you will be notified by the chair of the date and time.

APPEAL FORM FOR GRADE REVIEW

NAME: _____ LOCAL 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 changes.

COURSE: _____
(Course Prefix, Section, Title)

SEMESTER IN WHICH DISPUTED GRADE WAS AWARDED: _____
(Semester / 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 sign this Appeal Form for Grade Review in the space provided below, indicating only that the conference described took place, and return it to the student. Your department chair will request a meeting with you and the student, either separately or together. You should take with you to this conference all materials used in the calculation of the student's grade. At this time you may wish to provide your department chair with a response to the student's statement. 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*. 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

Appeal Form for Grade Review

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. 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 (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 a written summary of your own assessment of the grade dispute.

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 and inform him/her of your decision. Then, 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 three years. If so (or if the student is unsure),

- (1) inform the student both orally and in writing that he/she must appeal to the Provost *within seven days of your meeting*;
- (2) sign the original Appeal Form for Grade Review (which the student has), give a copy to the student, and inform him/her that it must be given to the Provost as the appeal document;
- (3) notify the Provost, in writing, of the potential appeal;

Appeal Form for Grade Review

- (4) retain the signed, original Appeal Form for Grade Review and all materials relevant to the appeal 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 and indicate the action to be taken.

Signature

Date

Referred to University Grade Review Committee

Student contacted on _____
Date/Time

Other (describe below)

