

PROCEDURES FOR GRADE APPEALS

Procedure for Grade Appeals

Guidelines for Interpretation and Implementation

Scope of Review

Grade appeals must be based on problems of process and not on differences in judgment or opinion concerning academic performance. The burden of proof rests on the student to demonstrate that one or more of the following occurred:

- The grading decision was made on some basis other than academic performance and other than as a penalty for academic misconduct.
- The grading decision was based upon standards unreasonably different from those which were applied to other students in the same course and section.
- The grading decision was based on an unreasonable departure from previously articulated standards, such as standards defined in the course syllabus.

The chairperson, grade appeal committee, or dean may recommend grade changes but shall have the power to alter grades only in cases of clearly established procedural error or substantial capriciousness or arbitrariness in evaluation.

Timeline

The formal procedure must be started within 45 calendar days after the contested decision or grade was officially recorded. The grade appeal process officially begins on the date the "Academic Appeal" document is received by the faculty member.

Appeal Record

Any appeal must be in writing, dated and headed with the words "Academic Appeal." Once a formal appeal is presented to a faculty member, it must be presented in its original form at all later levels of appeal, although new statements may be added at any time.

Any evidence and all direct and supporting statements once made become part of the permanent record of the appeal and must be produced at each level of appeal.

At each level of appeal, a written, dated decision and written reasons for the decision must be provided to the affected party or parties--the student, the faculty member, and any person who has rendered a decision at an earlier level of appeal.

Students are permitted to submit evidence in writing. At the discretion of the University, students may be invited to present their appeal in person.

Grade Appeal Process

First Level: Appeal to the Faculty Member

A student will, where possible, attempt to resolve the issue informally with the professor before filing a written grievance. Should attempts at informal resolution fail, the student may wish to file a formal grade appeal. After receiving a formal appeal, the faculty member shall assure that a written decision with express reasons is available or delivered to the student within 30 calendar days. Should the student fail to take further action within seven calendar days after receiving the faculty member's decision, that decision shall stand. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision or does not receive a response from the faculty member within 30 calendar days, he or she may proceed to the second level of appeal.

Second Level: Appeal to the Department Chair/Program Director

If the student elects to continue the appeal, he or she may appeal to the chair of the department or program director if there is no chair. The chair or director shall assure that a written decision or recommendation about the appeal is available or delivered with express reasons within 30 calendar days after receiving the appeal.

If the student is dissatisfied with the decision or does not receive a response from the chair or director within 30 calendar days, he or she may proceed to the third level of appeal. Should the student or faculty member fail to take action on the chair's decision or recommendation within seven calendar days following its receipt, the accepted recommendation of the faculty member or new decision by the department chair shall be final.

Third level: Appeals Committee

If the student elects to continue the appeal after the chair's decision or recommendation has been received, he or she may take the matter to the dean of the appropriate academic unit (or the dean's designee) within seven calendar days.

The dean shall ascertain within 30 calendar days whether the appeal procedures at the first and second levels have been duly followed; if they have not, he or she will require that they be followed before taking further action.

The appeals committee shall consist of three faculty members chosen by the dean or the dean's designee. The dean or designee shall serve on the appeals committee as chairperson without vote. All deliberations of the committee will be closed and confidential.

Faculty from the same department as the faculty member involved in the case may not serve on the appeals committee.

The appeals committee should meet as soon as possible, but no later than 30 calendar days after a written, dated request for appeal at this level has been received and the Dean has ascertained that appeal procedures at the first and second levels have been duly followed. The presence of all eligible committee members (the three faculty members and the dean or designee) shall constitute the quorum.

A written recommendation shall be furnished by the appeals committee and transmitted through the office of the dean to all affected parties within seven calendar days after the conclusion of the committee's deliberations.

The decision of the appeals committee is final.

Note: *There is a separate appeal procedure for courses taught in the College of Law. Students with grievances in College of Law (<http://www.law.du.edu/>) courses should consult the specific guidelines for academic grievance procedures for that unit.*