

Hunter College Grade Appeals Procedures

(Approved by the Hunter Senate 10/9/85, revised 5/04/2005, 3/25/15, 11/9/2022)

Scope of the Grade Appeal

The grade appeal process is designed to adjudicate the fairness of the final grade a student receives in a course. The appeals committees (see below) cannot alter the grade given by the instructor on a particular assignment. The appeals committee shall consider whether the instructor followed the grading criteria laid out in the course syllabus and whether the grading was arbitrary and capricious. (On occasion, an instructor may have good reason to alter a syllabus; in such cases, students must be informed in writing before the changes take effect.) A grade appeal should be limited to the grade that the student received. Other complaints about a course and/or an instructor should be raised in a timely manner (during the semester in which the course is given) to the department chair or program head.

I. Appeal at the Department/Program (or School) Level

Step 1: Student-Initiated Discussion with Instructor

When a student believes that a final grade was not graded correctly, they must first confer with the instructor, in person (or via Zoom), regarding the accuracy of the grade received. This conference should be held within the **first three weeks of the semester following receipt of the grade**. At this time errors may be corrected.

If the grade is not an error, the student and instructor must review together all class material pertinent to the grade.

Step 2: Student Request for Department/Program/School Grade Appeal

If the student is not satisfied, or if the instructor does not meet with the student within the first three weeks of the semester, the student should promptly contact the Department Chair/Program Director (or School Dean in units with no departments) by submitting a written appeal, a statement that presents the basis for the grade appeal. This appeal must be submitted **within the first five weeks of the semester following receipt of the grade**. The Department Chair/Program Director/School Dean shall be responsible for giving the student a copy of the *Hunter College Grade Appeals Procedures* as set forth in this document.

Step 3: Department/School Grade Appeals Committee and Hearing

The Department Chair/Program Director/School Dean shall convene a Department/School Grade Appeal Committee of three members **within two weeks of receiving the appeal**. The student has the right to request in writing that the Chair appoint a student as a member of the Department/Program/School Grade Appeals Committee. The Committee (if not otherwise specified in the By-laws) shall consist of three full time members of the Department/School faculty, unless the student has requested that a student be appointed as the third member of the

committee. The Department Chair shall designate one faculty member of the Committee as Chair, who will be responsible for gathering the pertinent materials from the student and instructor for review by the Committee. This should include the relevant work submitted by the student, the instructor's grading criteria for this course (including the course syllabus), course assignments, and the instructor's evaluation of the work submitted as well as any other pertinent evidence. All materials shall be shared with the other members of the committee.

The Department Grade Appeals Committee must notify the student and the instructor, in writing, that they have the right to appear, separately, before the committee. **Within three weeks of its appointment**, the Department Grade Appeals Committee will convene a closed hearing where both parties have the opportunity to testify separately.

Step 4: Written Report of Decision

After the hearing the committee will render its judgment and prepare a brief written report, written by the chair of the committee with the support of a majority of the committee, explaining the reasons for its ruling, and whether the decision was unanimous, without mentioning any names or details that might violate confidentiality. The committee chair will submit the report to the department chairperson within two weeks of the hearing. The Department Chair will send it to the parties involved within two weeks of receipt. This will allow the losing party to make an informed decision as to whether to appeal to the Senate Grade Appeal Committee.

If neither party appeals to the Senate Grade Appeals Committee within the designated time frame (see below), the department chair will ensure, if required, that a change of grade was submitted to the registrar.

Notes Re: Department/School Appeal:

- a. No grade changes can be made after a degree has been officially conferred.
- b. If the instructor of the course in question is presently a Department Chair or the Director of a program, that person will designate another senior faculty member to form the department/program grade appeal committee and perform the duties otherwise assigned here to the chair/program director.
- c. A letter grade may not be changed to Pass/No Credit, unless a student has requested it before the end of the semester.
- d. If a student is appealing a grade from an instructor who is absent the next semester, the chair will endeavor to be in contact with the instructor and gather all the relevant documentation as specified above. The instructor will also be invited to testify remotely

II. Appeal at the Senate Level

Step 1: Initiating Appeal at the Senate Level

In cases in which the student or the instructor is dissatisfied with the decision of the Department/School Grade Appeals Committee, they may appeal to the Senate Grade Appeals Committee. This appeal must be initiated within two weeks of having been notified of the Department/School decision.

The individual initiating the appeal must fill out a *Grade Appeals Form* that is available in the Senate Office--Room HE1018, stating the basis for the appeal. The individual should also submit to the Senate Office for the Senate Grade Appeals Committee all information that they believe relevant to the appeal.

Step 2: Senate Grade Appeal Set Up

Upon receipt of this material the Senate Grade Appeals Committee will request the Department/School to forward copies of the following for the Senate file:

1. Student's initial written complaint to Department Chair.
2. Written notice to student and instructor of right to appear before the Department/School Grade Appeals Committee and the student's right to request that the Department Chair appoint a student member to the Grade Appeals Committee.
3. All materials used by the Department/School Grade Appeals Committee in reaching a decision.
4. The course syllabus.
5. The report sent to the chair and the parties from the Department Grade Appeals Committee on the decision and the basis for it.

Step 3: Senate Grade Appeal Hearings

The Senate Grade Appeals Committee (consisting of 4 faculty members and 3 students with a quorum being 51% of the Committee) will then review all the relevant evidence. The Committee may interview the individuals involved in the grade appeal and other resource persons. It shall notify the student and the instructor of a scheduled committee meeting, thereby providing an opportunity for them to appear separately before the committee.

The Senate Grade Appeal Committee shall confine its consideration to whether the instructor applied the specified grading standards of the course, whether the grade was arbitrary and capricious, and whether the appeal process at the depart/program level was properly followed.

After considering the evidence, the Committee will meet in closed session and will reach a decision by majority vote. All proceedings are confidential. The Chair of the Committee shall inform all parties concerned (i.e. student, instructor, department chair, registrar) of its decision in writing within two weeks of the decision. **The decision of the Senate Grade Appeals Committee is final.**

Notes re: Senate Grade Appeal

- a. The Senate Grade Appeals Committee does not permit department grade appeals to be bypassed. The Senate Grade Appeals Committee reserves the right to send appeals back to the departmental level for reasons of significance (e.g., new evidence or testimony introduced).
- b. The Senate Grade Appeals Committee may not accept appeals (a) in cases where a charge of academic dishonesty is pending, or (b) concerning changes from a letter grade to Pass/No Credit.

Rationale for Changes in Grade Appeal Procedures:

The rules and procedures for grade appeals must be fair and transparent. The current rules undermine due process. When a department grade appeal committee, through its chair, writes its report explaining the decision, this report is not made available to either party disputing the grade. Only the Department Grade Appeal Committee, the department chair, and the Senate Grade Appeal Committee (SGAC) see it. The student and instructor also need to see the report. This will help them make an informed decision as to whether to appeal or not. Putting together an appeal is time-consuming and it is valuable and reasonable to know why you lost so as to determine the grounds on which to appeal. The department grade committee chair can write the report to protect confidentiality by omitting all names and details of what transpired.

This procedural change will also improve the efficiency of the SGAC process. Currently, the committee hears a number of frivolous appeals because the parties do not know why they lost. In addition, because the party appealing to the SGAC has not seen the report, they usually spend valuable time in the hearings rearguing the case already heard at the department level where the committee has more subject matter expertise. A losing party who knows why they lost will be able to make a more focused appeal. And seeing the report, the student or instructor will be able to learn from the experience and adjust future behavior. Without seeing the department committee's reasons, a student or instructor can lose two appeals and never know why.

This new procedure will also protect against another problem- the overloading of the grade appeal process. In a number of grade appeal cases there are often other issues going on between the instructor and the student in addition to the grade appeal. These often exacerbate the grade appeal, which are not simple to begin with. Because grade appeals are currently so broadly understood, the grade appeal process often becomes a conduit for other grievances and issues that are beyond the purview and capacity of the grade appeal committee and are better dealt with by the chair and other offices at the college. Currently too many issues get channeled into the grade appeal process. Students should not have unrealistic expectations about what a grade appeal committee can do. It cannot regrade a paper but it can ensure that the rules for grading for the class are stated clearly in the syllabus and followed, and that the grading was not arbitrary and capricious.

Changes to the procedures have also been made to generally update this document to provide clarity, efficiency, and corrected language wherever possible.