

GRADE APPEALS SYSTEM
Approved by Faculty Senate 4/29/2020

The purpose of the grade appeals system is to afford an opportunity for an undergraduate or graduate student to appeal a final course grade under certain circumstances. Faculty judgment of students' academic performance is inherent in the grading process and hence should not be overturned except when the student can show that the grade awarded represents a gross violation of the instructor's own specified evaluation (grading) statement and therefore was awarded in an arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory manner. The evaluation (grading) statement utilized during the grade appeals process is the one contained in the instructor's syllabus at the beginning of the semester. This system does not apply to preliminary or comprehensive exams or to thesis or dissertation defenses; these issues are reviewed by the Faculty Senate Student Academic Relations Committee via the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement.

Step 1.

Within 15 class days (defined throughout the Grade Appeals System as Mondays through Fridays during regular fall, spring, and summer semesters, as noted in the FSU Academic Calendar maintained by the University Registrar. Class days are not dependent on whether an individual student has class on a particular day) following the date that final grades are made available to students, the student must contact the instructor in question to discuss the grade and attempt to resolve any differences. The student should document any attempts to contact the instructor in order to establish that the appeal was begun within this 15-class-day period. In the event that the instructor is not available, the student should provide that documentation to the instructor's program or department chair. It is expected that the student will first attempt to resolve the grade dispute with the instructor; however, either the student or the instructor may consult with the appropriate department chair, school director, or designee during this process.

Step 2.

If no resolution is reached within this 15-class-day period, after the student's documented attempt, the student has an additional 10 class days to submit a written statement to the department chair, school director, or designee. This statement must include an account of attempts to resolve the issue, as well as the evidence that forms the basis for the appeal.

Within 20 class days thereafter, the department chair, school director, or designee will set a date for a meeting of a grade appeals screening committee composed of three students enrolled in the academic unit offering the course to review the appeal. These students should be either undergraduate or graduate students, depending on the enrollment status of the student challenging the grade. The meeting should occur within that 20-class-day period, if practicable. Appropriate students who have no conflict of

interest will be chosen to serve on this screening committee by a student organization associated with the program or department, if such an organization exists. If none exists or if members of such an organization are not available, the department chair, school director, or designee will select appropriate students who have no conflict of interest. Both the student and the instructor may attend the meeting, as may the department chair, school director, or designee.

The role of the screening committee is solely to determine whether the student has presented sufficient evidence to warrant further review. Within five class days after this meeting, the screening committee will render its decision in writing (indicating that they recommend/do not recommend further review) to the department chair, school director, or designee, the student, and the instructor. A negative decision will end the appeal. A positive decision will trigger the next step in the process.

Step 3.

Within 15 class days of a positive decision from the grade appeals screening committee, the department chair, school director, or designee will appoint and arrange for a meeting of a grade appeals board. The meeting should occur within that 15-class-day period, if practicable. The board is composed of three faculty members and two students other than those who served on the screening committee. These students should be either undergraduate or graduate students, depending on the enrollment status of the student challenging the grade.

The purpose of this board is to determine whether or not to uphold the final grade assigned by the instructor. The board will consider only the evidence provided by the student and the instructor in making the determination. The student, the instructor, and the department chair, school director, or designee may attend the meeting.

The grade will be upheld unless the evidence shows that the grade was awarded in an arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory manner, as a result of a gross violation of the instructor's own evaluation (grading) statement. If the original grade is not upheld, the board will recommend that an alternative grade be assigned by the department chair, school director, or designee.

If the student has evidence that this grade appeals process has deviated substantially from these established procedures, resulting in a biased decision, the student may consult with the Office of Faculty Development and Advancement regarding referral to the Faculty Senate Student Academic Relations Committee.