

## Grade Appeal Process

This is a summary of the Official Grade Appeal Rules, which can be found in Section E of the [Purdue University Student Regulations Governing Student Conduct, Disciplinary Proceedings, and Appeals](#).

### When to Appeal a Grade

You may only appeal the final grade for a course. You may appeal if:

- You are able to demonstrate that “an inappropriate grade was assigned as a result of prejudice, caprice [without clear reason], or other improper conditions such as mechanical error, or assignment of a grade inconsistent with those assigned other students.”
- You wish to challenge the reduction of a grade for alleged academic dishonesty.

*Remember that the burden of proof is on the student, except in cases of academic dishonesty, where the burden of proof is on the instructor.*

If you feel the course was poorly designed or you received poor instruction—these may be legitimate concerns, but are more appropriately addressed by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (ADAA).

### Process of Filing a Grade Appeal (This must be completed in the following order)

1. Informal Attempt
  - a. Contact your instructor to request a grade change. If this is ineffective, move to the next step.
  - b. Contact the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (ADAA) to request a meeting. If a decision is made to move to the Formal Attempt stage, the ADAA will provide the name of the JMHC Grade Appeals Committee chair.
2. Formal Attempt (if step 1 fails to resolve the issue)
  - a. Prepare and submit a written appeal, within **30 calendar days** after the start of the regular semester (Fall or Spring) following the semester in which the grade was given, to the ADAA. (For example, the grade being appealed was granted in the Fall, so the written appeal must occur within 30 calendar days after the start of Spring. Summer session is excluded from the Grade Appeals process which means appeals of grades granted in the Spring will need to be submitted within 30 calendar days after the start of Fall.)
  - b. Your written appeal will be reviewed by the JMHC Grade Appeals Committee within **7 days** to determine if a hearing is needed.
  - c. If needed, a hearing will be scheduled within **14 days** after notification is given to both parties (student and instructor).
  - d. A written decision is sent to both parties within **3 days** of the hearing conclusion.
  - e. Both parties have **6 days** to appeal the decision in writing to the University Grade Appeals Committee.

### How to Prepare a Written Appeal (See Appendix B: Considerations for Students Preparing a Grade Appeal)

It is critical that you give ample time and attention to your written appeal. Your success in this process may be determined by your ability to present thorough and accurate information. The decision to grant an appeal hearing will be made based only on the written documentation reviewed by the committee.

Write your appeal in the form of a letter addressed to the members of the JMHC Grade Appeals Committee. Your opening paragraph should clearly state the basis of your appeal and quote your reason directly from the [Student Regulations](#). (For example: “I am appealing my grade of ‘C’ in HONR 20000 because I have evidence that indicates there was a mechanical error in the calculation of my homework grades.”) It is very important that the members of the committee clearly understand the basis of your appeal. See Appendix A for appropriate excerpts from the *Purdue University Grade Appeals System (Catalog; VI. General Academic*

*Requirements & Grade Appeals).*

Clearly state any evidence and facts that support your grade appeal. If you have negative comments about the instructor or class, this is not the appropriate place to share those thoughts. Likewise, exaggerated claims that cannot be verified will only hurt your case. A request for a grade appeal is a professional document.

Attach copies of any documentation that you have, which may include personal grade records, copies of graded work, email communication with the instructor, comparisons to the work of other students, and statements of support from other students. Not all of these items will apply to you depending on the basis of your appeal. Additionally, you may not be in possession of these documents if they are part of the instructor's class records. If that is the case, the committee will request this documentation from the instructor.

Have another person review your appeal documentation. This individual should critique it not only for spelling and grammar, but also for ease of understanding. Staff members in the [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), academic advisors, and professors are appropriate for this task.



John Martinson Honors College

## Verification of Attempts to Resolve a Grade Dispute (To be submitted to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs)

University Regulations (Section III.E.2.d) require that the student must make informal attempts to resolve grade disputes at the lowest possible level prior to formal action by the JMHC Grade Appeals Committee. These informal attempts at resolution must include consultation with the course instructor and, if that is not successful, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. **If the decision to file a formal grade appeal is made, this form must be completed and included with the formal grade appeal statement.**

STUDENT NAME \_\_\_\_\_

COURSE \_\_\_\_\_ ASSIGNED GRADE \_\_\_\_\_

I met with the student and discussed the disputed grade. We were unable to resolve the situation in a manner satisfactory to all parties.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Instructor's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I met with the student and have discussed the disputed grade. We were unable to resolve the situation in a manner satisfactory to all parties. All means of resolution within the college have been exhausted.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Grade Appeals Process Checklist

(To be submitted to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs)

Please initial next to each step taken. **If the decision to file a formal grade appeal is made, this checklist must be completed and included with the formal grade appeal statement and “Verification of Attempts to Resolve a Grade Dispute” form.**

- A. Received the JMHC Grade Appeal Packet \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Received *Considerations for Students Who Are Preparing a Grade Appeal* (included in the JMHC Grade Appeal Packet) \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Received the *Verification of Attempts to Resolve a Grade Dispute* form (included in the JMHC Grade Appeal Packet) \_\_\_\_\_

### Informal Attempt

- D. Met with course instructor to request a grade change \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Met with the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (if meeting with course instructor was unsatisfactory) \_\_\_\_\_
- F. Obtained signatures on the *Verification of Attempts to Resolve a Grade Dispute* form \_\_\_\_\_

### Formal Attempt (if previous steps were unsatisfactory)

- G. Notified the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and the JMHC Grade Appeals Committee of intent to file a formal appeal \_\_\_\_\_
- H. Prepared a written appeal within **30 calendar days** after the start of the regular semester (Fall or Spring) following the semester in which the grade was given \_\_\_\_\_
- I. Attached any and all documentation to the written appeal \_\_\_\_\_
- J. Had all documents reviewed for spelling, grammar, and ease of understanding \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of Student

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Printed Name of Student

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Date

## Appendix A

### Purdue University Grade Appeals System

(Catalog; [VI. General Academic Requirements & Grade Appeals](#))

#### General

In the academic community, grades are a measure of student achievement toward fulfillment of course objectives. The responsibility for assessing student achievement and assigning grades rests with the faculty, and, except for unusual circumstances, the course grade given is final. The grade appeals system affords

recourse to a student who has evidence or believes that evidence exists to show that an inappropriate grade has been assigned as a result of prejudice, caprice, or other improper conditions such as mechanical error, or assignment of a grade inconsistent with those assigned other students. Additionally, a student may challenge the reduction of a grade for alleged scholastic dishonesty.

The only University authorities empowered to change grades are the instructor or, in the case of teaching assistants, the faculty member in charge of the course in question and the chairperson of the University Grade Appeals Committee acting on behalf of the school and University grade appeals committees.

Informal attempts must be made to resolve grade grievances and appeals at the lowest possible level—through the course instructor, through the [Associate Dean for Academic Affairs], or through informal procedures outlined by the college...

When a student initiates a formal grade appeal, they should be prepared to state in what way their grade assignment was arbitrary, capricious, or otherwise improper. At that time, they may seek the assistance of the dean of students, the chairperson of one of the grade appeals committees, or their academic advisor.

In appealing a grade, the burden of proof is on the student, except in the case of alleged academic dishonesty, where the instructor must support the allegation.

### **College/School Grade Appeals Committees**

Each of the colleges/schools of Purdue University at the West Lafayette Campus will establish a Grade Appeals Committee to hear grade grievances and appeals that are not resolved informally at a lower level. Each committee will consist of two students (undergraduate or graduate corresponding to the status of the appellant), three members of the instructional faculty, and a non-voting chairperson. The chairperson of the committee will be an assistant or associate dean of the college/school appointed by the dean. The chairperson will be responsible for assuring adherence to established procedures, convening members for an appeal, and maintaining records. The chairperson has the authority to grant warranted time extension in the appeals process described below.

Voting members of the committee will be selected from a pool of at least eight students and eight instructional faculty. The pool of members of the committee will be selected according to the school/college procedures in the spring (not later than May 1) to commence serving on the first day of the following fall semester. No member shall serve more than two consecutive terms in the pool.

### **Initiating a Grade Appeal**

Prior to initiating a grade appeal, the student is strongly encouraged to resolve the situation with the instructor, department head, or head's designee. The department head is strongly encouraged to facilitate an informal resolution process between the parties.

### **Appeal Process**

A student who wishes to initiate a grade appeal must file a written statement of allegations, facts, and circumstances concerning the grade assigned with the chairperson of the Grade Appeals Committee of the college/school in which the course was taken. This must be done within 30 calendar days after the start of the regular semester following the one in which the questioned grade was given.

After the receipt of the student's written statement, the chairperson will promptly furnish a copy of the statement to the involved instructor who has seven days to make a written response. The chairperson will submit the statement of appeal and any responses to each of the members of the college/school grade appeals committee. Committee members will review the written documents within seven calendar days from the date they are received. If one voting member of the committee rules that the allegations warrant a hearing or are best addressed through a hearing, a hearing will be held; otherwise, the appeal will be denied. With reasonable cause, the chairperson may override the decision not to hear the case.

If the appeal is to be heard, the chairperson will promptly give notice of the time, date, and place of the hearing to the parties involved. The hearing will be scheduled not more than 14 calendar days after notice to the student and instructor.

The instructor will promptly make all pertinent grading records available to the college/school committee's

chairperson. In advance of the hearing, the chairperson may at his/her discretion make available to the student those records (or portions thereof) that he/she judges to be relevant in light of the student's allegations.

### **Conduct of College/School Grade Appeals Committee Hearing, General**

The hearing shall be closed, unless both parties agree in writing that it be open. The chairperson's determination of the hearing location and the number of individuals that can be conveniently accommodated shall be final. The student and the instructor are both entitled to be accompanied at the hearing by advisors of their choice. Because the hearings are administrative and not judicial in nature, the advisors may not be lawyers. Both parties have the right to present evidence and witnesses in their behalf and to confront and question opposing witnesses.

Under normal circumstances, if the duly notified student complainant does not appear for the hearing the complaint shall be dismissed, the case closed, and these actions not subject to further hearing or appeal. If, however, a duly notified faculty member does not appear, the hearing will continue on the presumption that there is no desire to challenge evidence or witnesses presented by the student.

An official audio recording shall be made of each hearing and filed by the chairperson of the respective college/school committee for at least one year. The recording will be confidential and used only if further appeal is granted by the University Grade Appeals Committee or under legal compulsion.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the committee may (by a majority vote of the committee membership) recommend changing the original grade. A written report of the committee's decision shall be sent to both parties and the chairperson of the University Grade Appeals Committee no later than three days after the conclusion of the hearing. Either party may, within six class days of receipt of the decision, file a written notice of intent to request further appeal with the chairperson of the University Grade Appeals Committee. If no such notice is received by the chairperson within the six-day period, the decision shall not be subject to further hearing appeal. If, at that time, the instructor who originally gave the grade is not willing to initiate a recommended change, the chairperson of the University Grade Appeals Committee shall file the directed change with the registrar who shall record the new grade. The chairperson of each college/school committee will maintain a written record of all grade appeals hearing in the college/school and provide an annual overview of the grade appeals process to the Provost.

### **Appeal of a College/School Committee Decision**

Under certain specific circumstances (Sec III-E-7-b) either the student or the instructor may file a request for an appeal of the college/school grade appeals committee decision. If the appeal request is granted, the case will be heard by the University Grade Appeals Committee. The process may be initiated by filing a personally signed notice of appeal with the chairperson of the University Grade Appeals Committee within the six-day limit (Section III-E-6-d). The notice shall be accompanied by a written statement of the alleged procedural irregularities or new evidence, or a substantial enumeration of why the appellant believes the college/school committee decision is erroneous or unfair. Upon request, the respective college/school committee chairperson immediately will transmit the audio recording of the college/school hearing and any other items of evidence presented at the college/school hearing to the chairperson of the University Grade Appeals Committee. The decision of the University Grade Appeals Committee to grant or deny appeals from school committees shall be final. If the University Grade Appeals Committee finds, on the basis of the appellant's written statement and other available evidence, that substantial procedural irregularities or inequities existed in the college/school hearing or that substantial new evidence has been uncovered, the University Grade Appeals Committee shall hear the case de novo. Additionally, the committee may, at its discretion, hear appeals from the college/school level, when the appellant's statement substantiates to its satisfaction that the college/school decision may have been erroneous or unfair. If the University Grade Appeals Committee grants an appeal, the chairperson shall promptly give notice to both parties of the time, date, and place of hearing (which shall be held not less than five and, whenever practicable, not more than 10 days after the receipt of such notice), as well as providing them with a copy of the procedures and sequence of events to be followed in conducting the hearing.

### **Other Academic/Grade Appeal Jurisdictions**

Informal boards or committees may be established within academic departments to resolve grade grievances

and appeals.

Students involved in cases of alleged academic dishonesty may be subject to disciplinary penalties under Section III-B-2-a of the Regulations Governing Student Conduct, Disciplinary Proceedings, and Appeals.

## Appendix B

### Considerations for Students Preparing a Grade Appeal

An appeal of a grade requires time and effort on the part of several people—primarily the student who makes the appeal. This document is intended to help you prepare your appeal carefully and quickly.

#### Do you really have reason to appeal?

You may feel that you had poor instruction or that course objectives were unreasonable and assignment grades were lower than they should have been. Such occurrences should be addressed, but they cannot through the grade appeals system. Appeals based on such arguments will end in failure and a student who has spent hours preparing an appeal will feel frustrated as a result.

A grade will not be raised because a faculty member graded tests very severely, *providing the faculty member applied the same rigorous standards to all students*. Nor will proof that a faculty member has been antagonistic toward you be sufficient to raise a grade unless evidence exists that such antagonism did in fact result in a lower grade.

These comments are not meant to discourage you from making an appeal. Rather, they are intended to remind you that the grounds for appeal are limited. If you are not certain whether you have grounds for appeal, we suggest that you discuss your case with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or with someone on the staff of the [Office of the Dean of Students](#).

#### What are the steps to take in the grade appeal process?

The grade appeals procedure requires that you try to resolve the dispute at the lowest possible level. The following points should help you:

1. Talk to the faculty member. When you do, listen to the faculty member's side of the story and make your arguments objective ones. Many grade errors are unintentional. Most faculty members are anxious to initiate a grade change in such circumstances. However, faculty members are human and may resist a belligerent student bent on forcing them to change a grade.
2. Talk to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (ADAA). Procedures make take several days, so be sure that you have notified the ADAA and JMHC Grade Appeals Committee if you intend to appeal your grade.
3. File a formal appeal with the JMHC Grade Appeals Committee.

#### Preparing a Written Appeal

The outcome of your case may depend on how well you prepare your appeal. It need not be long. In fact, extraneous material is likely to confuse the issues and hurt your case. The following points should help you:

1. Explicitly state the basis for the appeal, i.e., whether you believe there was prejudice on the part of the faculty member, a mechanical error, inconsistent grading practices, or alleged scholastic dishonesty.
2. State the evidence in support of your appeal. Stick to the facts. Name calling, hyperbole, and exaggerated claims will not help your case.
3. Include any physical evidence that you have, such as your personal records or tests, comparisons of

your score and grade with scores of other students and their grades, and so forth. You may not have the physical evidence needed to support your case because it consists of class records. This need not concern you. Such evidence must be made available to the JMHC Grade Appeals Committee by the faculty member.

4. After preparing a rough draft of your appeal, have someone critique it and suggest improvements. This should be done by an impartial individual who has had some experience with grade appeals. Staff members in the [Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), academic advisors, and professors are appropriate for this task.

### **Further Appeal**

After a hearing, if deemed warranted by the JMHC Grade Appeals Committee, you will be notified of the result and the vote of the committee. You will also receive a statement of the reasons for the committee's decision. The same notice will be sent to the faculty member and either may appeal to the University Grade Appeals Committee. Before you appeal a decision, remember that reasonable people weighed the evidence and made the best decision they could make on the basis of the evidence. If the decision went against you, you are likely to feel that it is wrong. (Both parties to an appeal think they are right, or they wouldn't be in the appeal process.) However, the question to be considered before requesting an appeal is, "Did I receive a fair hearing?"

### **An appeal of a college decision will be granted only on the following grounds:**

1. Substantial procedural irregularities or inequities existed in the college hearing.
2. Substantial new evidence has been uncovered.
3. The appellant [petitioner] substantiates that the college decision may have been erroneous or unfair.

You should understand that the appeals are not granted because of some *possibility* that irregularities or inequities existed or that new evidence *might* be uncovered. The appellant must present evidence in support of such contentions.

If a request for appeal is filed, it must be carefully prepared. The decision to grant an appeal will be made *solely on the basis of the written statement and the records of the college hearing*. There is no in-person component to the University Grade Appeals Committee hearing process.

### **When it is all over**

There are no "victories" or "defeats" in the grade appeals process. Its purpose is to arbitrate differences over grades that could not be solved on a personal basis because both parties to the appeal believed they were right. Based on the evidence at hand, a disinterested group of faculty members and students does its best to render a fair judgment and right any wrongs that might have been done.