

TYPE:	Academic
TITLE:	Grade Appeals
NO.:	ACAD-111
RESPONSIBILITY:	Vice-President, Academic
APPROVED BY:	Durham College Leadership Team
EFFECTIVE DATE:	April 2017
REVISED DATE(S):	
REVIEW DATE:	April 2020

1. Introduction

Grades represent the level of student mastery of course requirements. From time to time, a student may believe that an error or misapplication of a grade has been assigned. The existence and impartial operation of a grade appeals process affords recourse to students regarding assessment of their academic performance.

2. Purpose

This policy and procedure outlines the structure within which students and employees can address academic appeals related to grading.

3. Definitions

Refer to [Durham College's Standard Definitions](#).

4. Policy statements

- 4.1. Grades shall be assigned by faculty uniformly and impartially, in keeping with stated evaluation criteria noted in the published course outline.
- 4.2. A grade is any aspect of assessment of course-work (including tests and quizzes), co-op placements, assignments, clinical placements, field placements, or examinations.
- 4.3. Students have the option to appeal a decision that affects their grade in a particular course.
- 4.4. Grades are presumed accurate and appropriate. It is a student's responsibility to demonstrate otherwise.
- 4.5. Appeals shall be based on an error or misapplication of a grade in a course or College policies.
- 4.6. All grade appeals shall be considered individually.
- 4.7. The grade appeal process shall be phased, and expeditiously administered using prescribed timelines with opportunities for resolution.
- 4.8. It is a student's responsibility to initiate each phase of the appeal process.

4.9. A separate grade appeal must be completed for each grade being appealed.

5. Procedure

5.1. School-Level Academic Appeal

This portion of the grades appeal process is related to grading of course-work, co-op placements, assignments, clinical placements, field placements, examinations and/or final course grades. All issues involving grades must be dealt with directly by the School that delivered the course through the process outlined below. There is no further right of appeal of a grade once the school has completed Step 2 and made a decision.

5.1.1. Step 1 – Informal

1. A student who wishes to appeal a grade, will first speak to the faculty member within 5 business days of the release of the grade on the College learning management system (LMS) or MyCampus.
2. The faculty member will review the concern outlined by the student.
3. The faculty member and student will explore ways to resolve the concern.
4. If the resolution involves a grade change;
 - a. within the semester, the faculty member will update the LMS or
 - b. after the final grades have been submitted, the faculty member will submit a Grade Change Form.

5.1.2. Step 2 - Formal

This portion of the process is initiated if the faculty member and student are unable to resolve the issue from Step 1 and

- to grades worth at least 20 per cent of a final grade; or
 - to cases where a student has failed the assessment worth at least 10 per cent and believes there is a major discrepancy of at least 10 per cent between the grade they earned and the grade they feel they should have earned; or
 - to courses with pass/fail final grades/assignments.
1. Once Step 1 has been completed a student may begin a School-Level Academic Appeal.
 2. To commence a School-Level Academic Appeal, the student will provide a signed written appeal (Form A: School-Level Academic Appeal) to their school administrator within 10 business days of the release of the grade on the College LMS or MyCampus along with the following information:

- a. A description of the basis for the grade appeal clearly describing the perceived error in grading or misapplication of the grade;
 - b. Actions taken to date, including details in Step 1 of the procedure, along with all supporting documentation (may include but are not limited to: medical notes for self or dependents, death notification, accident report, police report, court documents, Access and Support Centre (ASC) documentation); and
 - c. The outcome being sought (e.g. grade change, etc.).
3. The school's administrator will review the grade appeal and seek clarification from all parties involved, as necessary.
4. The school's administrator will provide a decision in writing to the faculty member and student within 10 business days of receiving the Step 2 grade appeal.
5. If the resolution involves a grade change;
 - a. within the semester, the faculty member will update the LMS or
 - b. after the final grades have been submitted, the faculty member will submit a grade change form.
6. The outcome of Step 2 will be retained in the school office where the grade appeal was initiated.
7. A separate grade appeal must be completed for each grade being appealed.
8. There is no further option of appeal of the grade once the school administrator has completed Step 2 of this procedure and made a final decision.
9. Students awaiting the outcome of a grade appeal may register in the next semester of their program and enroll in all regular courses. Where a grade appeal involves academic performance in a work integrated learning opportunity, that includes but is not limited to field placement or practicum or clinical or lab or co-op, the student will not be permitted to enroll in the subsequent field placement course while awaiting the decision from Step 2.
10. In the event that the grade being appealed is upheld, resulting in the student failing a prerequisite course, the student will be withdrawn from all courses to which that prerequisite course applies.

11. If the result of the grade appeal leads to withdraw from a program, then the case can be referred by the student to the College-Level Academic Appeals.
12. If the complaint is deemed to be false, frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith, the relevant senior administrator will meet with the student to discuss the motivation for the grade appeal and may refer the matter for review under the Durham College Student Conduct policy and procedure (ADMIN-248).

The assignment of grades is a School-Level decision and a student may not appeal the resulting grade to the College-Level Academic Appeal Committee except for reasons relating to breach of policy or procedure in the handling of the School-Level Academic Appeal. A breach of policy or procedure can include failure to adhere to the correct timelines as stated in the Step 1 or Step 2 of this procedure. In such cases, the College-Level Academic Appeal must be filed by the student within 5 business days of the student's receipt of the decision of the School-Level Academic Appeal from Step 2.

5.2. College-Level Academic Appeal

The Academic Appeals Committee reviews course-work, co-ops placements, assignments, clinical placements, field placements, examinations and/or final course grades in which a breach in process from the School-Level academic appeal has taken place or academic appeals relating to an academic decision pertaining to academic withdrawal.

5.2.1. Commencement of a College-Level Academic Appeal

1. To commence a College-Level Academic Appeal, the student will provide a signed written appeal (FORM B: College-Level Academic Appeal) to the Associate Vice-President, Academic within 5 business days of the School-Level Academic Appeal decision along with the following supporting documents (This documentation will be referred to as the student appeal package):
 - a. A letter of explanation outlining the grounds for the appeal clearly describing the perceived error in or misapplication of College policies, or procedures;
 - b. A copy of the written decision by the school's administrator from Step 2 of the School-Level Academic Appeal;
 - c. All supporting documentation (may include but not limited to: medical notes for self or dependents, death notification, accident report, police report, court documents, ASC documentation); and
 - d. The outcome being sought.

2. The Associate Vice-President, Academic will
 - a. notify the school's administrator of the pending appeal, who will then notify the faculty member(s) involved; and
 - b. request any documentation relating to the student grade appeal (This documentation will be referred to as the school appeal package)
3. The Associate Vice-President, Academic will forward the student and school appeal packages to the Academic Appeals Committee chair within 5 business days.
4. The Academic Appeals Committee chair will establish the Committee and set a hearing within 10 business days from the receipt of the school and student appeal packages.

5.2.2. Composition of the Academic Appeals Committee

1. The Academic Appeals Committee will be composed of:
 - An Executive Dean/Dean/Director or designate from another School (this individual will not be from the same school as the student who has initiated the grade appeal);
 - A faculty member from another School (this individual will not be from the same school as the student who has initiated the grade appeal) and;
 - A Durham College student (this individual will not be from the same school as the student who has initiated the grade appeal).
2. The appointment of the Academic Appeals Committee chair and faculty member are the responsibility of the Associate Vice-President, Academic and these roles will have a term of two academic years.
3. While the composition of the Academic Appeals Committee is not open to appeal, in selecting the committee, the Academic Appeals Committee chair will avoid conflict or appearances of bias or a conflict of interest with the appealing students.
4. Any concerns of the student regarding the Academic Appeals Committee composition must be addressed prior to the start of the Academic Appeals hearing, in writing, to the Associate Vice-President, Academic.

5.2.3. The Academic Appeals Hearing

1. The Academic Appeals hearing will be heard within 10 business days of the receipt of the appeal package. Any change to this requirement requires the consent of both parties, and the Academic Appeals Committee chair, and consent will not be withheld arbitrarily.
2. The student who filed the appeal package may be represented by an advisor. (An advisor can be a peer, guardian, friend, classmate, lawyer, etc.) If the student selects a lawyer as their advisor, then the student must notify the Academic Appeals Committee chair at least 2 business days in advance of the hearing. The advisor must be identified at the beginning of the Academic Appeals Hearing, and cannot be changed during the appeal except under unusual circumstances. The advisor may provide advice or make the presentation on behalf of the student, provided that only one person, the advisor or the student speaks.
3. If a student engages legal counsel during this process, the student will be responsible for their legal costs incurred.
4. The advisor may call upon the student they are representing to provide testimony.
5. The process to be followed in the hearing will be outlined by the Academic Appeals Committee chair at the commencement of the hearing.
6. If the student is absent from the hearing, the hearing will be postponed to enable the Academic Appeals Committee chair to evaluate the reasons for the absence. The Academic Appeals Committee chair has discretion to then either reschedule the hearing, or cancel the appeal.
7. Following introductions by the Academic Appeals Committee chair, the hearing will commence and include:
 - An opportunity for the student who filed the student appeal package to outline the reason for the appeal by elaborating on any new evidence or perceived procedural irregularity;
 - An opportunity for the faculty or designate to outline the grade assigned (this can be done in person during the hearing or by written submission);
 - An opportunity for the Academic Appeals Committee to clarify any issues raised by directing questions to the student through the Academic Appeals Committee chair; and

- Such other practices and procedures deemed appropriate at the discretion of the Academic Appeals Committee chair.

5.2.4. Disposition

The Academic Appeals Committee may order:

- Retesting or the opportunity to complete work/assignments; or
- Alteration or additions to imposed penalties; or
- Reversal of academic decision that was under appeal; or
- Upholding of academic decision that was under appeal.

Note: The requirements of accreditation or regulatory bodies, when applicable, will be used as a guide for the disposition, as the decision must align with accreditation or regulatory requirements.

5.2.5. The Decision

1. The Academic Appeals Committee will render its decision with reasons in writing within 10 business days of the completion of the hearing.
2. The written decision will be provided by the Academic Appeals Committee chair to the Associate Vice-President, Academic, the school's administrator, the faculty member(s) and the student.
3. If the resolution involves a grade change;
 - i. within the semester, the faculty member will update the LMS or
 - ii. after the final grades have been submitted, the faculty member will update the LMS and submit a grade change form.
4. The decision is final and binding on all parties, with no further appeal allowed.

A student may withdraw their request for a College-Level Academic Appeal prior to the scheduled hearing date.

6. Roles and responsibilities

- 6.1. It is the responsibility of the Vice-President, Academic to ensure that the Grade Appeals policy and procedure is fully implemented.
- 6.2. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate the School-Level and College-Level Academic Appeals process within the established timelines.
- 6.3. It is the responsibility of the school's administrator to provide the student with a written decision from the School-Level Academic Appeal within the established timelines.
- 6.4. It is the responsibility of the Academic Appeal Committee chair to craft and provide a written decision to the student, faculty member(s), Associate Vice-President, Academic and school administrator of the outcome of their College-Level Academic Appeal within the established timelines.
- 6.5. It is the responsibility of the Office of the Associate Vice-President, Academic to establish and train an Academic Appeals Committee.

7. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act considerations

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) standards have been considered in the development of this policy and procedure and it adheres to the principles outlined in the College's commitment to accessibility as demonstrated by the Accessibility Plan (ADMIN-203).

8. Non-compliance implications

Failure to comply with this policy may affect the integrity of the grade appeal process and the final disposition of the student's academic grade.

9. Communications plan

- A message will be posted on ICE alerting employees when new or revised policies and procedures are added to ICE.
- A message will be posted on MyCampus alerting students when new or revised policies and procedures are added.

10. Related forms, legislation or external resources

- Minister's Binding Policy Directive on Frameworks for Programs of Instruction