

TYPE:	Academic
TITLE:	Grade Appeals
NO.:	ACAD-111
RESPONSIBILITY:	Executive Vice-President, Academic & Associate Vice-President, Academic (Administration)
APPROVED BY:	Durham College Leadership Team
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1. Introduction

Grades represent the level of student mastery of course requirements. Should a student 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 the assessment of their academic performance.

2. Purpose

This policy and procedure outline the framework through which appeals related to grading are addressed.

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. Grades are presumed accurate and appropriate. It is a student's responsibility to demonstrate otherwise.
- 4.3. Students may have the option to appeal a decision that affects their grade in a particular course.
- 4.4. The grade appeal process shall be phased, and expeditiously administered using prescribed timelines with opportunities for resolution.
- 4.5. This policy does not address student concerns in instances where a more appropriate college policy or procedure, grievance or appeal process exists, including but not limited to: discrimination and harassment; sexual violence; refunds; and student conduct.
- 4.6. It is a student's responsibility to initiate each step in the grade appeal process.

- 4.7. Eligible school-level grade appeals shall be based on a clerical or calculation error, the misapplication of a grading scheme in a course or the perception that the grade does not accurately reflect student performance.
- 4.8. College-level grade appeals shall be based on the misapplication of College policies pertaining to grades or an unsuccessful school-level grade appeal resulting in a student being involuntarily withdrawn from a program.
- 4.9. Students awaiting the outcome of a grade appeal may register in the next semester of their programs.
- 4.10. All grade appeals shall be considered individually.
- 4.11. A separate grade appeal must be completed for each grade being appealed.
- 4.12. Students remain accountable for all academic obligations during the grade appeal process, including but not limited to attending classes/shops/labs and meeting deadlines for the submission of assessments.
- 4.13. Students will engage in the grade appeals process in good faith, and can do so without fear of retaliation, sanction or reprisal.
- 4.14. Student complaints deemed to be false, frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith will be addressed through the Student Conduct policy.

5. Procedure

5.1. School-Level Grade Appeal Process

Step 1 – Informal Resolution of Grade Appeals

- 5.1.1. A student who wishes to appeal a grade on a specific assessment will first discuss the matter with the faculty member who assigned the grade within five (5) business days of the release of the grade on the College learning management system (LMS).
- 5.1.2. The faculty member will respond to the grade complaint outlined by the student within five (5) business days. If there is no faculty response within five (5) days, the student may proceed to Step 2.
- 5.1.3. The faculty member and student will explore ways to resolve the grade appeal.
- 5.1.4. If the resolution involves a grade change within the semester, the faculty member will update the LMS. If the resolution involves a grade change after the submission of final grades, the faculty member will submit a Grade Change Form to the school office.

Step 2 - Formal Resolution of Grade Appeals

- 5.1.5. Students are eligible to pursue a formal grade appeal if the faculty member and student are unable to resolve a grade appeal from Step 1 and at least one (1) of the following conditions are met:
- the grade is worth at least 20 per cent of a final grade; or
 - the assessment has a non-numeric grading scheme; or
 - the student has failed an assessment worth at least 10 per cent and believes there is a discrepancy of at least 10 per cent between the grade they were awarded and the grade they believe they should have been awarded.
- 5.1.6. To initiate a formal School-Level Academic Appeal, a student will complete the School-Level Academic Appeal – Form A and submit it to the appropriate school office no later than five (5) business days after receipt of the faculty response or the expiration of time for a faculty response.
- 5.1.7. The Executive Dean/Dean/Associate Dean or designate will review the grade appeal documentation and seek clarification, as necessary.
- 5.1.8. The Executive Dean/Dean/Associate Dean or designate will provide a decision in writing to the faculty member and student within ten (10) business days of receiving the Step 2 grade appeal documentation.
- 5.1.9. If the resolution involves a grade change within the semester, the faculty member will update the LMS. If the resolution involves a grade change after the submission of final grades, the faculty member will submit a Grade Change Form to the school office.
- 5.1.10. All documentation pertaining to a formal grade appeal will be retained by the school office where the grade appeal was initiated.
- 5.1.11. If the grade being appealed is upheld and results in a student failing a prerequisite course, the student will be withdrawn from all courses for which that prerequisite course is required.
- 5.2. College-Level Grade Appeal
- 5.2.1. College-level grade appeals shall be based on the misapplication of College policies and procedures pertaining to grades or an unsuccessful school-level grade appeal resulting in a student being involuntarily withdrawn from a program. No additional information may be submitted beyond what was included as part of the school-level grade appeal, unless the information was unavailable at the time of the Step 2 appeals.

- 5.2.2. A student who is eligible to appeal a school-level grade appeal decision must complete the College-Level Grade Appeal Form B and submit it to the Associate Vice-President, Academic Administration within five (5) business days of receipt of the School-Level Formal Academic Appeal decision.
- 5.2.3. The Associate Vice-President, Academic Administration will notify the relevant school's administrator of the pending appeal, who will then notify the faculty member involved.
- 5.2.4. The Associate Vice-President, Academic Administration will forward the student's Form B and its attachments to the Academic Appeals Committee within three (3) business days.
- 5.3. Composition of the Academic Appeals Committee
- 5.3.1. The Academic Appeals Committee will consist of the following members, none of whom may be from the same school as the student who initiated the grade appeal:
- One Executive Dean/Dean (chair of the committee);
 - One faculty member; and
 - One Durham College student.
- 5.3.2. The appointment of the Academic Appeals Committee chair and faculty member are the responsibility of the Associate Vice-President, Academic Administration and these roles will have a term of two (2) academic years.
- 5.3.3. The composition of the Academic Appeals Committee is not open to appeal. In selecting the committee, the Associate Vice-President, Academic Administration will avoid conflict or appearances of bias or a conflict of interest with the appealing student.
- 5.3.4. Any concerns by the student appealing the grade regarding the composition of the Academic Appeals Committee must be addressed prior to the start of the Academic Appeals hearing, in writing, to the Associate Vice-President, Academic Administration.
- 5.3.5. The Academic Appeals Committee chair will convene a hearing within ten (10) business days from the receipt of the student's Form B and its attachments. Changes to this deadline will be considered only in exceptional circumstances and must be agreed to by all parties.

5.3.6. A student may withdraw their request for a College-Level Academic Appeal prior to the scheduled hearing date. If a student does not attend on the hearing date, the Academic Appeals Chair may consider the appeal abandoned.

5.4. Student Advocates

5.4.1. The student who filed the grade appeal may choose to be represented by one advocate at the hearing. If the student chooses a lawyer or paralegal as their advocate, the student must notify the Academic Appeals Committee chair of such at least two (2) business days in advance of the hearing.

5.4.2. Advocates must be identified at the beginning of the academic appeals hearing and cannot be substituted during the appeal hearing except under exceptional circumstances. Only the advocate or the student may speak during the hearing, although advocates may call upon the student they are representing to provide testimony.

5.4.3. If a student engages legal representation of any kind during the appeals process, the student will be responsible for costs incurred.

5.5. The Academic Appeals Hearing

5.5.1. The process to be followed in the hearing will be outlined by the Academic Appeals Committee chair at the commencement of the hearing. Following introductions, the Academic Appeals Committee chair, will:

- provide an opportunity for the student or the student's advocate to outline the procedural reason for the appeal;
- provide an opportunity for the Executive Dean/Dean to outline the process followed in hearing and ruling on the school-level appeal; and
- provide an opportunity for the Academic Appeals Committee members to clarify any issues raised by directing their questions to any party, through the Academic Appeals Committee chair.

5.5.2. The Academic Appeals Committee chair has the discretion to utilize other practices or procedures deemed appropriate.

5.6. Disposition

5.6.1. The Academic Appeals Committee may:

- identify procedural errors of the School-Level process and refer the appeal back to the school Executive Dean/Dean to repeat the Step 2 process; or
- uphold the school-level outcome that was under appeal.

5.7. The Decision

5.7.1. The Academic Appeals Committee will render its decision with reasons, in writing, within three (3) business days of the completion of the hearing.

5.7.2. The written decision will be provided by the Academic Appeals Committee chair to the Academic Appeals Committee, the Associate Vice-President, Academic Administration, the school's Executive Dean/Dean, the faculty and the student.

6. Roles and responsibilities

- 6.1. It is the responsibility of the Executive Vice-President, Academic to ensure that the Grade Appeals policy and procedure is fully implemented.
- 6.2. It is the responsibility of the Associate Vice-President, Academic Administration to receive and distribute grade complaint documentation to the Academic Appeals Committee, to appoint members of the Academic Appeals Committee and to address student complaints regarding the composition of the Academic Appeals Committee, within established timelines.
- 6.3. It is the responsibility of school Executive Dean/Dean/Associate Dean or designates to consider and provide a student with a written decision from Step 2 of the School-Level Academic Appeal, within the established timelines.
- 6.4. It is the responsibility of the Academic Appeal Committee chair to draft and provide a written decision to the student, Associate Vice-President, Academic Administration and school Executive Dean/Dean of the outcome of the College-Level Academic Appeal, within the established timelines.
- 6.5. It is the responsibility of faculty members to review informal grade complaints and explore options for resolution with the student initiating the appeal, within established timelines.
- 6.6. It is the responsibility of the student to initiate the School-Level and College-Level Academic Appeals processes within established timelines.

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 fair determination of student grades.

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
- School-Level Academic Appeal – Form A
- College-Level Academic Appeal – Form B