

Tulsa Community College Course Grade Appeal Procedures

The Tulsa Community College Course Grade Appeal Procedures are based on the following principles:

- A student has a right to appeal a grade that the student believes was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was assigned on some basis other than performance in the course, by using standards different from those applied by the same instructor to other students in the same course, or used different standards than what is listed on the syllabus of record.
- A student's grade should reflect the student's mastery of the subject matter of the course.
- Students are entitled to a fair and impartial evaluation of their work.
- Students and faculty should communicate regularly and openly about course requirements, assignments, tests, grading procedures, and grades.
- The college faculty is responsible for creating the curriculum and establishing the standards by which students will be evaluated in each course.
- Faculty members are entitled to the presumption that the grades they assign are an accurate reflection of the performance of the students in their courses.
- A course grade may only be changed by the course instructor or by the final recommendation of the Grade Appeal Board. College administrators may not alter any students' grades.

Both students and faculty members have rights and responsibilities in the grading process:

- Students who wish to appeal a final grade are responsible for demonstrating that the grade they received was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was assigned on some basis other than performance in the course, by using standards different from those applied by the same instructor to other students in the same course, or used different standards than what is listed on the syllabus of record. The following questions outline reasons for an appeal:
 1. Were errors were made in calculating the final grade?
 2. Was the student clearly informed of the process the instructor used to determine the final grade?
 3. Did instructor consistently and fairly apply the grading system to all students?
 4. Did the instructor change the grading system during the semester in a way that put the student at a serious disadvantage or without adequately communicating the change to the students in the class?
 5. Were all students given a chance to improve their grades when grade adjustment opportunities were made available during the course of the semester?
 6. Did the instructor single the student out for discriminatory or random treatment?
- Faculty members have a responsibility to provide their students with syllabi that clearly explain how student grades will be assigned.
- Faculty members are responsible for providing their students with timely feedback on their performance on tests, papers, projects, and other graded assignments.

- Faculty members are responsible for keeping course records, final exams, and other materials on which grades are based (that have not been returned to students) for one long semester.
- Faculty members have a right to have the grades they assign upheld unless it is clearly demonstrated that a grade was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was assigned on some basis other than performance in the course, by using standards different from those applied by the same instructor to other students in the same course, or used different standards than what is listed on the syllabus of record.
- Both faculty members and students have a right to have grade appeals resolved in a timely fashion (as prescribed in the timelines given in this document).
- Both faculty members and students have a responsibility to attempt to resolve grade disputes informally.

Grading Disputes during a Semester

Faculty members and students should communicate regularly and openly about all grading issues. A student who is dissatisfied with an instructor's grading decision during a semester should first discuss the issue with the instructor and attempt to resolve the matter informally. A student who believes that a grading issue has not been satisfactorily resolved should speak with the instructor's department chair or program director¹ about the matter. The department chair should work with both the student and the instructor to address the issue.

Students may not file a formal course grade appeal during the semester. Grading issues that remain unresolved during the semester may become the basis for a formal course grade appeal once the semester has ended and a final course grade has been assigned. The formal process may be used only for grading issues that impact the final course grade. For example, if a student disagrees with a grade given on a particular assignment but changing the grade on that particular assignment will not affect the student's final course grade, then the issue is not appropriate for a formal appeal. In this situation, the student may submit a student concern form about the instructor's grading practices to the department chair but may not file a formal course grade appeal.

Disputes about Final Course Grades

Disputes about final course grades may reflect either disagreements that have carried over from the semester or new issues that have arisen as the result of a late-semester project or test or the final exam. A student who is dissatisfied with a grading decision should attempt to resolve the matter by contacting the instructor. The student may contact the department chair to facilitate communication between the student and the instructor and to help resolve the dispute.

The student must present clear documentation that a grade was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was assigned on some basis other than performance in the course, by using standards different from those applied by the same instructor to other students in the same course, or used different standards than what is listed on the syllabus of record.

The following questions outline reasons for an appeal:

1. Were errors made in calculating the final grade?

¹ For the remainder of this document, the term "department chair" may also refer to program directors within workforce development departments.

2. Was the student clearly informed of the process the instructor used to determine the final grade?
3. Did instructor consistently and fairly apply the grading system to all students?
4. Did the instructor change the grading system during the semester in a way that put the student at a serious disadvantage or without adequately communicating the change to the students in the class?
5. Were all students given a chance to improve their grades when grade adjustment opportunities were made available during the course of the semester?
6. Did the instructor single the student out for discriminatory or random treatment?

The instructor's grade stands unless the Grade Appeal Board determines by the preponderance of the evidence that the grade was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was assigned on some basis other than performance in the course, by using standards different from those applied by the same instructor to other students in the same course, or used different standards than what is listed on the syllabus of record.

Grounds for a Formal Course Grade Appeal

A student may file a formal course grade appeal if the following conditions are met:

- The student has attempted to resolve the dispute informally.
- The grading issues at stake impact the final course grade. (A course grade appeal may not be filed until the term has ended and a final course grade has been assigned.)
- The student believes that his or her final course grade was assigned contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was assigned on some basis other than performance in the course, by using standards different from those applied by the same instructor to other students in the same course, or used different standards than what is listed on the syllabus of record.
- The formal course grade appeal is filed no later than four weeks after the start of the subsequent semester (whether fall, spring, or summer). Students who fail to file a grade appeal within the time limit may ask the department chair for an exception, but the exception must be based on extraordinary circumstances.

Filing the Formal Course Grade Appeal

1. A student can file a formal course grade appeal by completing the *Course Grade Appeal Form* and submitting it to the main office of the appropriate school either in person or via TCC e-mail (for example, to the office of the School of Business and Information Technology) or to the Academic and Campus Services Office on any campus. The school or ACS office will route the appeal form to the appropriate department chair. The form asks the student to provide a written statement that clearly and specifically states the grounds on which the grade appeal is based. The student must explain why he or she believes that the assigned grade was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was assigned on some basis other than performance in the course, by using standards different from those applied by the same instructor to other students in the same course, or used different standards than what is listed on the syllabus of record or address any of the following questions that pertain to the appeal:
 - Were errors were made in calculating the final grade?

- Was the student clearly informed of the process the instructor used to determine the final grade?
- Did instructor consistently and fairly apply the grading system to all students?
- Did the instructor change the grading system during the semester in a way that put the student at a serious disadvantage or without adequately communicating the change to the students in the class?
- Were all students given a chance to improve their grades when grade adjustment opportunities were made available during the course of the semester?
- Did the instructor single the student out for discriminatory or random treatment?

The student must attach supporting documentation to the form, such as the following:

- a copy of the course syllabus
- a copy of the graded assignment on which the formal course grade appeal is based (if available)
- examples of the student's other graded work from the course, including papers, projects, homework, tests, and other assignments (if available)
- any other documents the student believes are relevant to the resolution of the course grade appeal, including email correspondence between the student and instructor. Communications from other students will only be allowed in rare instances when it directly pertains to the grade and are allowable at the discretion of the Grade Appeal Board.

The burden of providing documentation resides with the student who files the course grade appeal. Without documentation attached to the *Course Grade Appeal Form*, the Grade Appeal Board may decline to review the appeal.

Informal Resolution

Upon receipt of a *Course Grade Appeal Form*, the department chair should contact both the student and the instructor involved to attempt to resolve the dispute informally. If the instructor is no longer with the college or is unavailable, the department chair shall appoint another instructor to represent faculty interests in the appeal.

The faculty member representing the absent instructor shall act as a good faith representative of the faculty whose goal is to resolve the grading dispute fairly. The instructor may agree to resolve the dispute informally if he or she believes it is appropriate. For example, if the dispute involves a computational or clerical error and the instructor representing the absent faculty member agrees with the student, he or she may simply sign the *Change of Grade Form* to change the grade rather than force a Faculty Grade Appeal Panel to resolve the issue. The department chair will inform the student of the status of the appeal. The results of the informal resolution will be documented on the grade appeal form.

Instructor Response

When informal resolution is not successful, the department chair shall give the instructor a copy of the *Course Grade Appeal Form* submitted by the student and ask the instructor involved to prepare a

written response to the appeal. The instructor's response should be submitted to the department chair within fourteen (14) working days and should include the following:

- a copy of the course syllabus
- a copy of the class grade book for the student
- a copy of any relevant graded assignments that had not been returned to the student
- a written statement responding to the issues raised by the student
- any other documents that are relevant to the resolution of the course grade appeal including emails and/ or address any of the following questions that pertain to the appeal:
 - Were errors were made in calculating the final grade?
 - Was the student clearly informed of the process the instructor used to determine the final grade?
 - Did instructor consistently and fairly apply the grading system to all students?
 - Did the instructor change the grading system during the semester in a way that put the student at a serious disadvantage or without adequately communicating the change to the students in the class?
 - Were all students given a chance to improve their grades when grade adjustment opportunities were made available during the course of the semester?
 - Did the instructor single the student out for discriminatory or random treatment?

The department chair should continue to pursue an informal resolution to the dispute if he or she believes that a resolution is possible. The chair may share the instructor's response with the student in hopes of finding common ground between the two. If appropriate, the chair may wish to give the student the opportunity to address issues raised in the instructor's response that the student has not previously addressed. Upon receipt of the instructor's response, the department chair will inform the student as to the status of the appeal.

The Grade Appeal Board

If attempts at informal resolution of the grading dispute fail, the department chair shall send all relevant documentation to the chair of the Grade Appeal Board for review at its next scheduled meeting. The board shall be comprised of faculty members, a representative from Student Affairs, and a representative from the Student Government Association, whose appointments and terms are described below.

The Chair

The deans of the academic schools shall chair the Grade Appeal Board on a rotating basis and will serve a two-year term as a non-voting member. Should a grade appeal case come before the board from that dean's school during his or her term as chair, the incoming dean shall chair the board during the review of the case to ensure the grade appeal process is fair and impartial.

Terms of Office

The following order of terms was selected at random for service as chair of the Grade Appeal Board:

<u>School</u>	<u>Term (calendar years)</u>
Child Development and Education	2016-2018
Science and Mathematics	2018- 2020
Liberal Arts and Communications	2020-2022
Engineering and Applied Technology	2022-2024
Health Sciences	2024-2026
Business and Information Technology	2026-2028
Visual and Performing Arts	2028-2030

The Membership

The following appointments and lengths of terms shall determine the composition of the Grade Appeal Board. Annual training will be provided and documented in consultation with general counsel.

Faculty

One faculty member from among the full-time faculty of each academic school shall be selected to serve on the Grade Appeal Board for the initial length of term identified below. After the initial appointment, all subsequent appointments will be for three-year terms.

<u>School</u>	<u>Length of Initial Term</u>
Business and Information Technology	3 years
Child Development and Education	2 years
Engineering and Applied Technology	3 years
Health Sciences	2 years
Liberal Arts and Communications	3 years
Science and Mathematics	2 years
Visual and Performing Arts	3 years

Student Affairs

The Senior Student Affairs Officer or her designee shall appoint one director from Student Affairs to serve as the Student Affairs representative to the Grade Appeal Board for a three-year term. Two other directors shall be named as substitute members should the appointee be unavailable to attend a meeting of the board.

Student Government Association

The Student Government Associations, through consultation, shall appoint one student representative to the Grade Appeal Board for a one-year renewable term. Two other students shall be named as substitute members should the appointee be unavailable to attend a meeting of the board.

Quorum

The Grade Appeal Board must have a quorum of five voting members in order to meet and conduct business. The quorum must consist of three faculty members representing Academic Affairs, one director representing Student Affairs, and one student representing Student Government Association. Regular meetings will be scheduled but held only when grade appeals have been submitted to the board for review.

Responsibilities and Procedures

The chair of the Grade Appeal Board is responsible for ensuring that the grade appeal process is completed in a timely fashion. Exceptional circumstances to this timeline may be determined by the chair. The chair also is responsible for ensuring that the instructor has at least a week to prepare a response to the grade appeal.

The Grade Appeal Board is responsible for determining the facts in the dispute and making a judgment on the merits of the course grade appeal. The board shall review the materials submitted both by the student and the instructor. The board may request any other information it deems necessary, including additional instructor records and input from third parties.

The board will conduct its review based on the written materials supplied by the parties and whatever other information the board may request. The board's deliberations shall take place in private. Documents generated by the Grade Appeal Board will be filed and kept confidential following the conclusion of the board's review.

Once the members of the Grade Appeal Board have determined that they have sufficient information to make a decision, they will vote either to grant or reject the grade appeal. A simple majority is sufficient to decide the issue. If the board grants the appeal, it determines the appropriate course grade for the student. The chair shall prepare a written report stating the board's decision and the justification for that decision. This report is the only written decision from the board concerning the grade appeal case and should reflect the majority opinion of the Grade Appeal Board. Copies of the report must be conveyed to the student, the instructor, the department chair, and the dean or associate dean of the respective school from which the appeal was filed. If the board determines that the student's grade shall be changed, the chair of the Grade Appeal Board will prepare a *Grade Change Form* and submit it to the department chair for processing with the board report attached. The stated reason for the change of grade will be "the determination of the Grade Appeal Board." The chair will sign the form instead of the course instructor, and the department chair will notify the student of the outcome of the appeal.

Sometimes a course grade appeal raises issues that go beyond the resolution of grading issues. These issues could include questions about compliance with ADA guidelines, concerns about an instructor following departmental or college procedures, or questions of a student's academic integrity. At its discretion, the Grade Appeal Board may prepare a supplementary report addressing those issues and present it to the department chair, copied to the dean or associate dean.

Appealing the Board's Decision

The decision of the Grade Appeal Board is final.