

FACULTY OF ARTS

GRADE APPEAL PROCEDURES

Approved Faculty of Arts Council November 23, 2017

INTRODUCTION

The determination of the final grades in a course is the initial responsibility of the instructor(s), or the persons expressly authorized by the Department Chair to determine the final grade. Arts Faculty Council has the ultimate authority to determine the final examination grades and final grades in courses offered under its auspices.

Arts Faculty Council believes that the instructors are incontestably in the best possible position to assess the performance of their students and that Departments (through the Chair) are the custodians of acceptable standards of grading practices within the Department.

Appeal situations are usually avoidable and the Faculty of Arts advocates early and informal resolution of concerns. Students are therefore encouraged to resolve their concerns first through the Faculty's informal Grade Appeal procedures.

In the event that informal resolution is not reached, this document sets out the Faculty's regulations governing informal Grade Appeal procedures and formal appeals. The Faculty recommends that students consult with the [Student Ombuds](#) for advice in formulating appeals and to act as advisors at Appeal Hearings (780-492-4689, ombuds@ualberta.ca).

DEFINITIONS

Advisor: An individual selected by the student or the Associate Dean (Student Programs) to advise the student or Associate Dean during the appeal process.

Appeal: A request to overturn a grade-point judgment in a course offered by the Faculty of Arts, whether it is undergraduate or graduate.

Appellant: A student appealing a final examination grade or a final grade in a course offered by the Faculty of Arts, regardless of the program or Faculty in which the student is registered.

Calendar Days is defined as follows: From May 1 to August 31, a day begins at 8:00 AM and ends at 3:00 PM. From September 1 to April 30, a day begins at 8:30 AM and ends at 3:30 PM. Calendar Days are counted as follows: Day one is counted as the first full day after deemed receipt. If the final day falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or statutory holiday, the next working day will be the deadline.

Chair: The Chair of the *Faculty of Arts Academic & Grade Appeals Committee*.

Committee: Formal Grade Appeals are heard by the *Faculty of Arts Academic & Grade Appeals Committee*.

Department: The Department or program in the Faculty of Arts which offered the course in which the final grade or final examination grade is being appealed.

Grade: A grade point reflecting a judgment of a student's achievement made by the instructor(s) based on absolute achievement and/or relative performance in a class.

Formal Appeal: Appeal submitted to the Faculty of Arts Academic & Grade Appeals Committee once all other means of appeal have been exhausted.

Hearing: The opportunity for the appellant and the respondent to present the case in person to the *Academic and Grade Appeal Committee*.

In Camera: in private

Informal Appeal: Consultation about a grade with the instructor, the Chair (or designate) of the department in which the course was taught, or the Associate Dean (Student Programs) of Arts.

Reappraisal: A remarking of a final examination (only) arranged through the Registrar's Office, for which there is a charge.

Resource: The Committee may request a resource person to answer questions related to the appeal (e.g. a Student Advisor who may be able to answer questions about an appellant's outstanding program requirements).

Respondent: The Associate Dean (Student Programs), who may invite a department representative to act as an advisor or witness, or designate a department representative in their place.

Working Day is defined as a day on which University administrative offices are open.

REAPPRAISAL OF EXAMS

1. If a final grade is disputed in whole or in part because of the grade for the final examination, the student should apply for a formal reappraisal of the exam.
2. To have an examination reappraised, the student should apply in writing to the Department offering the course. The application must include a statement of whether the objective is to raise or lower the grade. The deadlines for reappraisal are **February 1** for Fall-term courses; **June 22** for Winter-term or Full-term courses; and within **thirty days** of publication of grades for Spring/Summer term (i.e., thirty days after grades are posted on Bear Tracks).

The number of reappraisals is limited to: **two** examinations in **each** of Fall and Winter terms; and **two** examinations in Spring and Summer terms combined. For each reappraisal, there is a fee, which will be refunded only if the reappraisal results in a higher final grade. The reappraised grade is the final official grade, whether it is higher or lower than the original grade.

Note that the only portion of the course reappraised is the final exam. A change in the grade for the final exam may result in the final grade for the course being raised or lowered. Other aspects of the grade are not considered in this particular process and if the dispute is related to any portion of the grade other than the final exam, reappraisal does not apply.

FACULTY OF ARTS INFORMAL APPEALS

1. While a student is entitled to an explanation of why any grade was awarded, the following do **not** constitute grounds for an appeal:

- Disliking the instructor's marking scheme
- Coming close to the instructor's cut-off point for a higher grade
- Disagreeing with the instructor's judgment about the quality of submitted work

Only the following may constitute grounds for an appeal:

- Errors in calculation
- Procedural errors
- Failure to consider all relevant factors
- Bias and/or discrimination

2. The Grade Appeal route for problems involving a final grade is as follows:

- a) The instructor(s) of the course;
- b) The Department Chair or designate

3. Students must initiate Grade Appeals with the instructor by the following deadlines:

- a) No later than February 1 for courses taught during the immediately preceding Fall-term;
- b) No later than June 25 for Winter-term or full-year courses taught during the immediately preceding Fall/Winter term;
- c) No later than thirty Calendar Days after the posting of final grades on Bear Tracks for courses taught in Spring/Summer terms (e.g. 30 days after grades are posted on Bear Tracks).

4. Most concerns are resolved by the Department or program responsible for the course. If, after consulting the instructor(s) and Department Chair, or designate, the concerns have not been resolved, the student may submit an informal Grade Appeal, **in writing**, to the Associate Dean (Student Programs). The Associate Dean will review the informal Grade Appeal, consulting with the instructor and Department Chair, or designate. The deadlines to submit an Informal Grade Appeal to the Associate Dean are:

- a) March 1 for Fall-term course grades
- b) July 25 for Winter term or full-year course grades,
- c) Within sixty Calendar Days after posting of final grades on Bear Tracks for Spring/Summer term course grades.

Students will be informed by electronic communication to their University of Alberta email accounts of decisions of the Associate Dean, normally within 21 Calendar Days of receipt of the Informal Grade Appeal. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that it is possible for him/her to receive, access, read and act upon all email from the Faculty in a timely fashion.

Electronic communications sent by the Faculty of Arts will be deemed received by the next University business day after the day the email was sent, regardless of any error, failure notice, internet service provider problem, virus, or auto-reply related to the student's email, unless the error or problem originated with the University. ([see Electronic Communication Policy for Students and Applicants](#)).

In the event that the Associate Dean upholds the original decision of the Department, the student may submit a formal Grade Appeal to the *Faculty of Arts Academic & Grade Appeals Committee*.

Students wishing to pursue a formal Grade Appeal must do so within 21 Calendar Days of the deemed receipt of the decision of the Associate Dean.

Refer to point 6 below for details regarding the procedure for initiating a formal appeal.

5. The Associate Dean will consider an appeal from a specific appellant for the final grade in the same course only once.

FACULTY OF ARTS FORMAL GRADE APPEALS

1. A formal appeal involving a final examination grade or a final grade may be heard if the informal appeal route failed to resolve the problem and if the grounds for appeal include one or more of the following:

- a) Errors in calculation
- b) A procedural error
- c) Failure to consider all factors relevant to the decision being appealed
- d) Bias and/or discrimination

2. The Faculty of Arts Academic & Grade Appeals Committee, acting on delegated authority from Arts Faculty Council, shall hear the appeal.

3. Composition and Terms of Office

- 3.1 The Academic & Grade Appeals Committee consists of one Chair (appointed by the Arts Faculty Executive Committee), three faculty members elected by Faculty Council for a term of three years and three continuing Faculty of Arts undergraduate students. A graduate student will also be selected by the Graduate Students' Association specifically to serve in the event that an Appeal Hearing is required to hear an appeal related to a Graduate level course.
- 3.2 The undergraduate student representative(s) will be chosen by the Faculty of Arts students' association and confirmed in the same year by Arts Faculty Council. Term of Office will be for one year, May 01 to April 30. In the event that the Faculty of Arts students' association is unable to meet its obligations, the appropriate body in the Students' Union will act in lieu.
- 3.3 The GSA representative will be chosen by the Graduate Students' Association and confirmed in the same year by Arts Faculty Council. Term of Office will be for one year, May 01 to April 30.

- 3.4 The Chair shall have the authority to make ad hoc appointments of an Arts student and/or faculty members to the Committee in the event that members of the Committee are absent from campus and a timely Hearing cannot be arranged otherwise.
- 3.5 It is incumbent on any member of the Committee to declare any possible conflict of interest prior to the Hearing (e.g. a faculty member may have instructed the course in question, a student member may be a friend of the appellant) and excuse themselves from the proceedings. See 3.8 below for process to temporarily replace the Chair in these, and other, circumstances.
- 3.6 Quorum of the Committee shall be the Chair and at least three other members, one of whom will be a student. In the event that quorum is not met the appellant, after discussing the situation with their advisor, may request that the appeal Hearing continue regardless. If the Chair agrees, the Hearing will continue. If the student does not ask to continue or if the Chair does not agree to a request to continue, the Hearing will be rescheduled.
- 3.7 The function of the Chair shall be to ensure the impartiality of the Committee, and to oversee the appeal procedures. The Chair does not participate in the discussion or in the Committee's deliberations and does not vote, except to cast a deciding vote in the case of a tie.
- 3.8 In the event that the Chair steps down for a specific hearing, or on a specific date due to conflict of interest, illness, or other emergency circumstances, the remaining members of the Committee will meet in advance of the hearing to determine which member will be selected to be "Acting Chair". Once an Acting Chair has been selected, normal quorum requirements apply.

4. Jurisdiction

- 4.1 The Committee shall have jurisdiction to hear a Grade Appeal only if the appellant has exhausted all informal Grade Appeal procedures available within the Department/Program and Faculty.
- 4.2 The Committee may only hear a Grade Appeal under the conditions described in 1. above as constituting grounds for an appeal.
- 4.3 The Committee shall hear only one appeal per course per appellant.

5. Powers of the Committee

- 5.1 The decision of the Committee shall be either:
 - a) To uphold the appeal and to direct the relevant parties as to further action, or
 - b) To deny the appeal.
- 5.2 The Committee may also report to the Dean or designate in relation to matters applicable across the Faculty and may recommend changes to Faculty policy and/or procedure.

5.3 The decision of the Committee shall be final.

6. Procedures for Hearing Grade Appeals

- 6.1
- a) A formal appeal to the Faculty of Arts Academic & Grade Appeal Committee shall be initiated by delivery of a written appeal signed by the appellant, to the Arts Appeals Coordinator (in person to 1-17 Humanities or by email to arts.undergrad@ualberta.ca) within **21 Calendar Days** following deemed receipt of the Associate Dean's response to the informal appeal. If information, not previously provided at any level of the appeal process to date, is provided during the course of the hearing, the Committee members may agree to adjourn the hearing to allow further investigation.
 - b) The appeal must provide a description of the nature of the appeal, including any available supporting documentation; the relief being sought; and the steps the appellant has taken within the informal route.
 - c) All grounds for the appeal must be listed and explained in the appeal.
 - d) The Appeals Coordinator will forward the appeal to the Academic Appeals Committee, and set a date for the Hearing in consultation with the Chair, the appellant and the respondent. A minimum of **14 Calendar Days** advance notice is required, but may be waived with the unanimous consent of the appellant, respondent and committee.
 - e) Appeal hearing dates will normally be set to occur within **60 Calendar Days** of the receipt of the appeal. Reasonable delays are allowed, but should either party feel that an unreasonable time has passed without the date of the hearing being set, either party may appeal to the Academic and Grade Appeals Committee Chair, through the Appeals Coordinator, for a ruling as to whether the delay is reasonable. If the AGAC Chair decides the delay is unreasonably long, then the AGAC Chair shall, within **14 Calendar Days** of such a decision, set the appeal hearing date, which must occur within 21 Calendar Days of the Chair's decision. The decision of the AGAC Chair will be made without a hearing and is final and binding.
- 6.2
- a) Once the appeal documentation has been circulated to the Committee, it has the option to request an additional resource person(s) to be available at the meeting to answer questions related to the appeal (e.g., a program advisor to answer questions about outstanding program requirements).
 - b) The appellant and respondent have the option to appear before the Committee and may bring one advisor or resource person each. If the appellant or respondent chooses not to appear before the committee, the Hearing will go ahead as scheduled.
 - c) Should witnesses be called by either the appellant or the respondent, they will make their statements one at a time and will be present at the Hearing only when they are giving their statements and being questioned.

- 6.3
- a) The function of the Academic and Grade Appeals Committee is to review the written and oral statements brought forward by the appellant and the respondent and on the basis of such information arrive at its decision. The Committee is not bound by rules of evidence or procedure applicable to courts of law. It shall avoid the development of adversarial situations between itself, the appellant and the respondent. None of the parties to an appeal shall bring legal counsel to the Hearing.
 - b) The Hearings of the Committee shall be governed by Procedural Guidelines which may be revised from time to time, subject to the following:
 - i. Decisions of the Committee shall be by majority vote.
 - ii. Hearings of the Committee shall be held *in camera*. Updated Procedural Guidelines shall be provided to the Committee members, the appellant and the respondent by the Appeals Coordinator prior to the Hearing.

6.4 Summary of Appeals and Decision

- a) Within **Seven Calendar Days**, the Chair shall communicate to the appellant and respondent in writing a summary of the appeal and brief reasons for the decision. The decision of the Committee will be sent by email to the student's ualberta email account.
- b) The decision of the Committee is final; there is no further recourse to appeal.
- c) Regardless of whether the appeal is denied or upheld, the Chair will collect the appeal material from Committee members and return it to the Appeals Coordinator for secure disposal. The Chair will keep a copy of the appeal material until appeal deadlines have passed, at which time, the Chair will return all notes and appeal material to the Appeals Coordinator. The Chair's material is kept on the student's file in the Faculty. This file will be securely destroyed two years after the student's last attendance.
- d) The written summary prepared by the Chair is the official record of the appeal Hearing. The final version will be signed by the Chair, on behalf of, and with the full authority of, the Committee.

Companion Documents:

Academic Appeal Procedure

Procedural Guidelines for Hearings of the Faculty of Arts Academic & Grade Appeal Committee