Graduate School Academic Regulations

General
Minors
Master's
Specialist's
Doctoral
Concurrent Degrees
Calendar
Conduct
Grade Appeal
Services

Academic Grade Appeal Policy and Procedure

The grade appeal policy and procedure is designed to provide an undergraduate or graduate student at the University of Mississippi with a clearly defined avenue for appealing the assignment of a course grade, following the posting of final grades, that he/she believes was based on prejudice, discrimination, arbitrary or capricious action, or other reasons not related to academic performance. The student's request for a grade appeal must be taken successively to the instructor, the chair of the department (or director of the program) in which the grade was given, and the dean of the school or college to which the department belongs, with a possible resolution of the conflict at any stage. Either the student or the instructor may appeal a decision made at the dean's level. This formal grade appeal will be reviewed by the Academic Appeals Committee and by the vice chancellor for academic affairs.

A final grade is the instructor's evaluation of the student's work and achievement throughout a semester's participation in a course. Factors upon which the final grade may be based include attendance; recitation and class participation; written, oral, and online quizzes; reports; papers; final examinations; and other class activities. There is a presumption that the instructor who has conducted the course is professionally competent to judge the student's work, and in the absence of convincing evidence to the contrary, has evaluated it fairly. In all cases, the complaining student shall have the burden of proof with regard to all allegations in his/her complaint and in his/her request for review or hearing. If a party fails to pursue any step of the grade appeal procedure within its allotted time, the disposition of the case made in the last previous step shall be final. All correspondence and records shall be retained in the office in which the complaint is finally resolved.

A grade appeal cannot be based upon differences in grade assignments between multisection courses, whether or not the course sections are taught by the same instructor.

This policy and procedure below applies to students and courses taught on the main campus, off-campus centers, and online. In the following outline, time periods in Steps 1 and 2 are in calendar days, and the time periods apply to intersession and summer terms, as well as fall and spring semesters. Written appeals may be transmitted electronically. Individual schools may utilize different versions of Steps 1 and 2 (e.g., if there are no department chairs within the school), but Steps 3-5 should be followed. If a graduate student wishes to appeal the results received on his/her comprehensive examination, he/she should contact the dean of the Graduate School for the appropriate policy.

The grade initially assigned by an instructor remains in effect, until and unless a change is determined by the appeal process.

Outline of Grade Appeal Procedure and Time Schedules

Step 1. Informal Consultation with Faculty Member.

This must be initiated within 30 calendar days of the posting of the course grade for viewing by students. The instructor's decision, whether a denial of the appeal or other resolution, must be completed within 15 days of receiving the appeal.

Step 2. Appeal to the Department Chair.

If a student wishes to appeal a grade further, he or she must submit a written appeal to the chair of the department (or director of the program) in which the course is being appealed, with a copy submitted to the chair of the department in which the student is majoring (if different), within seven days following the end of Step 1. The course-controlling department chair has 15 calendar days from receipt of the appeal to achieve resolution of the appeal.

Step 3. Appeal to the Dean.

If a student wishes to appeal a grade further, he or she must submit a written request to the dean of the school or college in which the course was offered, with copies to the chair (or director) of the department and to the chair of the department in which the student is majoring (if different), within seven days following the end of the 15-day time period in Step 2. (In the case of a graduate student, this written appeal must be sent to the dean of the Graduate School.) The dean will then take action to have a Grade Appeal function appear within the student's (and instructor's, chair's, and dean's) myOleMiss portal. An email will be sent to all parties, explaining that they are able to enter or upload the basis for the appeal/denial, including attaching pertinent correspondence and materials. The department chair must enter copies of correspondence and other pertinent material within five days of receiving this email. The dean must render a written decision within 15 days of receipt of the appeal.

Step 4. Appeal to Academic Appeals Committee.

Either the student or the instructor may request a review by the Academic Appeals Committee. A written request, including the student's name, ID, the course/section, and instructor, must be submitted to the vice chancellor for academic affairs (provost) via the myOleMiss Grade Appeal function within 15 days of the receipt of the dean's decision. The Academic Appeals Committee will then review the information provided to reach a recommendation.

Step 5. Review by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

The vice chancellor for academic affairs (provost) will review the recommendation by the Academic Appeals Committee and shall render a final decision

on the appeal. The decision of the vice chancellor cannot be further appealed.

Explanation of the Steps in a Grade Appeal

Step 1. Informal Consultation.

The student shall first consult with the instructor in an effort to reach a satisfactory resolution of his or her appeal. It is a part of the professional obligation of members of the university faculty to meet with students who wish to avail themselves of this academic grade appeal procedure for the purpose of reviewing the grade assigned and attempting to resolve the matter. In the event that the student cannot schedule a face-to-face meeting with the faculty member, the student may attempt to consult with the instructor by email or phone, or the student may ask the department chair to schedule the meeting between the student and the faculty member. Informal consultation is a required first step, and no further grade appeal is permitted unless informal consultation is first attempted. The only exception to this procedure is when the faculty member no longer is employed by the university or is otherwise unavailable so that it is impossible to complete Step 1. In this case, the student may proceed directly to Step 2.

Step 2. Appeal to Department Chair.

If the matter is not resolved in Step 1, the student may present an appeal in writing to the chair of the department (or director of the program) in which the course was offered.

The department chair shall attempt to resolve the appeal in consultation with the faculty member and the student within 15 calendar days of receipt of the written appeal. The department chair may consult with other faculty members of the department about the matter. (In any appeal to a chair/director, the student should send a copy of the appeal to the chair of the department of his or her major.)

Step 3. Appeal to the Dean.

If the appeal cannot be resolved at the level of Step 2 within the 15-day prescribed time period, the student, within seven calendar days following the end of such period, may request in writing an appeal to the dean. Upon receiving a request for an appeal to Step 3, the dean will initiate an electronic record of the appeal using the myOleMiss portal. The student, instructor, and chair will be informed as to how to enter information, including the text of an appeal, correspondence records, and evidence, into an online system. The chair is responsible for entering the correspondence and evidence in his possession within five days. The student may enter the basis for his or her appeal, along with any evidence he or she wishes to present. Components of this written appeal, evidence, and correspondence will be made viewable to the student, chair, instructor, and dean. (In the case of a graduate student, the written appeal should be made to the dean of the Graduate School.) The dean may use any resource available to the dean's office to resolve the grade conflict within a 15-day period following receipt of the appeal. The dean shall communicate his/her decision to the student, faculty member, and department chair. (If the student is majoring in a different school/college, the electronic records will be viewable by the latter dean and chair/director of the program in which the student is majoring.)

Step 4. Appeal to the Academic Appeals Committee.

Either the student or the instructor may appeal the decision made under Step 3 within 15 days by submitting a written request, via the myOleMiss portal, to the vice chancellor for academic affairs, asking for a review by the Academic Appeals Committee. The request for a review by an Academic Appeals Committee should state the factual basis for the appeal of the dean's decision. This request for appeal is the primary document setting forth the contention of either the student or instructor that the decision made by the dean should be reversed. Therefore, this request for appeal should be carefully drawn and supported by attachments of all relevant documentary material.

Upon receiving a request for review of a grade appeal, the vice chancellor for academic affairs shall call to action the Academic Appeals Committee. This is a standing committee comprising four faculty members and three students, one of whom is at the graduate or professional level. The committee is chaired by an associate vice chancellor for academic affairs, serving in a non-voting capacity. Ordinarily, the faculty members serve three-year, staggered terms and are appointed by the Faculty Senate from among the tenured or tenure-track faculty members. The students are appointed by the Associated Student Body (2) and Graduate Student Council (1) and may serve terms that last up to three years. Alternates will be identified for both the faculty and student committee members, for replacement of the primary members who are unavailable for various reasons, including declared conflict of interest with parties in a case.

The chair of the Academic Appeals Committee shall appoint a subcommittee that shall review all written material for an appeal to determine if a formal hearing is warranted. If, in the opinion of the subcommittee, a formal hearing is not warranted, a decision on the appeal shall be made by the Academic Appeals Committee based upon written evidence submitted by the student and the faculty member. If the subcommittee finds that the student's or the instructor's request merits a hearing, the chair of the Academic Appeals Committee shall notify all parties (student, instructor, chair, and dean) in writing of the time and location of the hearing.

The purpose of the hearing is to elicit information on which the committee may base a recommendation to the vice chancellor for action. It is not to be construed as a trial in a court of law. The hearing before the committee shall be closed and shall be limited to only the student, instructor, chair/director, and dean, as well as any witnesses who receive prior approval by the committee to attend. Both student and instructor may provide any additional written materials they desire, and the committee may request additional material if it deems such necessary. Both the student and instructor concerned shall be afforded the right to present witnesses or other evidence, question opposing witnesses, and make a concluding statement. No attorneys shall be permitted to represent participants in Academic Appeals Committee hearings. The Academic Appeals Committee shall audio record all hearings and preserve these audio files until all further avenues of appeal shall have expired. At the student's or faculty member's request, copies of the audio file shall be made available. When the committee has reviewed all documents and heard such testimony as it considers necessary to reach a conclusion, it shall adopt by majority vote a recommendation to be made to the vice chancellor for academic affairs. The recommendation should be either to sustain the action taken at the dean's level (Step 3) or to take some other action with respect to the grade that is being appealed. The committee may (1) recommend that the grade remain as it was originally assigned by the instructor, or (2) report that in the judgment of the committee the original grade was arbitrarily or capriciously assigned and recommend that another designated grade be given.

The recommendation of the committee should be logged into the electronic record of the appeal and should be transmitted to the vice chancellor for academic affairs. The recommendation of the committee should contain as explicitly as the nature of the case will allow the grounds on which the recommendation of the committee is based. The chair of the committee shall transmit copies of the committee's recommendation to the student, instructor, department chair/director, dean associated with the course, and department chair and dean associated with the student's major.

Step 5. Final Decision by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

The vice chancellor for academic affairs shall make the final decision, utilizing any resources to assist in deciding the appeal. The vice chancellor shall have the right to allow the assigned grade to stand or to raise or lower the assigned grade. He/she shall inform all parties involved, including the Academic Appeals Committee, of his/her final decision on the matter.

Retention of Records

As part of the university's grade appeal procedure, faculty members are required to keep grade-related materials until the completion of the next regular (spring or fall) semester. Material that applies to an ongoing grade appeal process must be retained for six months following completion of the grade appeal process. Grade-related material refers to examinations, projects, term papers, records on grades, attendance records, electronic files, and other material that is used in the grading process and is not returned to the student. If materials are returned to the student, a student desiring to appeal must present any tests, examinations, term papers, or other graded material that form the basis for his or her appeal.

The University of Mississippi is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award certificates and baccalaureate, master's, specialist, and doctoral degrees. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097, call 404-679-4500, or visit online at www.sacscoc.org for questions about the accreditation.