

FACULTY OF ARTS

GRADE APPEAL PROCEDURES

Approved by Arts Faculty Council May 18, 2023

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 [Office of the Student Ombuds](#) for advice in formulating appeals and to act as advisors at Appeal Hearings.

DEFINITIONS

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

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

Appellant: An undergraduate or graduate student appealing 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: 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 of the document or communication in question (see "Deemed Receipt" below). If the final day of a nominal deadline falls on a Saturday, Sunday, or statutory holiday, the next Working Day shall be the deadline.

Chair: The Chair of the Academic and Grade Appeals Committee.

Committee: The Faculty of Arts Academic and Grade Appeals Committee.

Deemed Receipt: The day by which deadlines are calculated for the next stage in the appeal process. Delivery to a student of any appeal material is governed by Section 1.5.3 in the GFC Academic Appeals Policy. In all cases, the Arts Appeals Coordinator will decide which method of delivery will be used. In accordance with the “Electronic Communication Policy for Students and Applicants” in the *University Calendar*, electronic communications sent by the University will be deemed received on the next University working day after the day the e-mail was sent.

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

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

Formal Appeal: Appeal submitted to the Academic and Grade Appeals Committee after all other means of appeal have been exhausted.

Hearing: The opportunity for the appellant and the respondent to present the case in person or via video conference to the Academic and Grade Appeals 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 (Undergraduate or Graduate) of Arts.

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

Resource Person: The Committee may request a resource person to answer questions related to the appeal, such as a Student Advisor.

Respondent: The Associate Dean (Undergraduate or Graduate) or their delegate.

Working Day: Any 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 Reappraisal of the exam.
2. To have an examination reappraised, the student should apply in writing to the Department offering the course. The deadlines for reappraisal are **February 1** for Fall-term courses; **June 22** for Winter-term or Full-year courses; and within **thirty days** of publication of grades for Spring/Summer-term courses (i.e., thirty days after grades are posted on Bear Tracks).

Students are allowed a limited number of Reappraisals of final examinations: **two** in **each** of Fall and Winter terms; and **two** in Spring and Summer terms combined. A fee

will be charged for each Reappraisal, which will be refunded only if the Reappraisal results in a higher Grade. The Grade after Reappraisal is the final Grade, whether it is higher or lower than the original Grade. The privilege of Reappraisal applies only to final examinations.

I. FACULTY OF ARTS INFORMAL APPEALS

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

- disliking the instructor's marking scheme;
- coming close to (but failing to meet) 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 Appeals 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 with 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 (Undergraduate or Graduate). 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 of decisions of the Associate Dean by electronic communication to their University of Alberta e-mail accounts, normally within 21 Calendar Days of receipt of the Informal Grade Appeal. In accordance with the "Electronic Communication Policy for Students and Applicants" in the *University Calendar*, it is the student's responsibility to access, read, and

act upon all electronic communications from the University in a timely fashion. Electronic communications sent by the Faculty of Arts will be deemed received on the first Working Day after the day the email was sent, regardless of any error, failure notice, internet service provider problem, virus, or auto-reply, or other issue impacting the student's ability to receive e-mails, unless the error or problem originated with the University.

In the event that the Associate Dean upholds the original decision of the Department, the student may submit a Formal Grade Appeal to the Academic and 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. See Section II.6 for details regarding the procedure for initiating a Formal Appeal.

5. The Associate Dean will consider an Appeal from the same Appellant for the final Grade in the same course only once.

II. FACULTY OF ARTS FORMAL GRADE APPEALS

1. A Formal Appeal involving a final grade may be heard if the Informal Appeal 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 Academic and 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 and Grade Appeals Committee consists of five Arts faculty members of AFC elected for a term of three years, three continuing Arts undergraduate students selected by the Faculty of Arts undergraduate students' association, and one graduate student selected by the Graduate Students' Association to serve during graduate student grade appeals. The Arts Committee on the Learning Environment (ACLE) elects substitute members for ad hoc panels if additional members are required. The Chair and Vice-Chair are faculty members of the Committee elected by the Committee.
- 3.2 The undergraduate student representatives will be chosen by the Faculty of Arts students' association and confirmed in the same year by Arts Faculty Council. The Term of Office will be for one year, June 1 to May 31. In the event that the Faculty of Arts students' association is unable to select representatives, 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. The Term of Office will be for one year, June 1 to May 31.

- 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 four 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 Vice-Chair will serve. If the Vice-Chair is unable to serve, 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 Section II.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 policies and/or procedures.

5.3 The decision of the Committee shall be final.

6. Procedures for Hearing Grade Appeals

- 6.1
- a) A formal Appeal to the Academic and Grade Appeals Committee shall be initiated by delivery of a written Appeal to Arts Undergraduate Student Services (see website for contact information) within **21 Calendar Days** following Deemed Receipt of the Associate Dean's response to the Informal Appeal.
 - 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 Appeal route. If information not previously provided at any step of the Appeal process is provided during the course of a Formal Grade Appeal Hearing, the Committee members may agree to adjourn the Hearing to allow time for further investigation.
 - 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 and Grade 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 scheduling delays may occur from time to time. However, should either party feel that an unreasonable time has passed without a Hearing date 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 unreasonable, the AGAC Chair shall, within **14 Calendar Days** of such a decision, set an 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 meeting by the Committee and without a Hearing, and is final and binding.
- 6.2
- a) Once the Appeal documentation has been circulated to the Committee, the Committee has the option to request an additional Resource Person(s) to be available at the meeting to answer questions related to the appeal.
 - 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 role of the Academic and Grade Appeals Committee is to review the statement brought forward (in writing as well as orally during the Hearing) 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. Hearings of the Committee are closed and all materials related to the hearings are confidential (see also Section 6.4.c).
 - b) A quorum of the Committee shall be the Chair (or Acting Chair) and at least four other members, one of whom will be a student.
 - c) 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*.
Procedural Guidelines shall be provided to the Committee members, the Appellant, and the Respondent by the Appeals Coordinator prior to the Hearing.

7. Summary of Appeal and Decision:

- a) Within **Seven Calendar Days**, the Chair shall communicate to the Appellant and Respondent a written summary of the Appeal, the decision, and reasons for the decision. The decision of the Committee will be sent by e-mail to the student's University of Alberta e-mail account.
- b) The decision of the Committee is final.
- c) Following a Hearing and decision, the Chair will collect all Appeal materials from Committee members and return them to the Appeals Coordinator for secure disposal. If Appeal materials were distributed to the Committee electronically, Committee members will permanently delete any copies of these materials they may have kept on their computers, laptops, tablets, cloud storage locations, or other devices and locations. The Chair will keep a copy of the Appeal materials until all Appeal deadlines have passed. The Chair may also keep Appeal materials for the purpose of summarizing the Committee's work in its annual report to AFC. At that time, the Chair will return all notes and Appeal materials to the Appeals Coordinator, and/or permanently delete any electronic copies of the Appeal materials. Appeal materials are kept in the student's file in the Faculty of Arts. This file will be securely destroyed two years after the student's last attendance.
- d) The written summary prepared by the Chair and sent to the Appellant and Respondent 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. The Chair may distribute, via e-mail, draft versions of these summaries to the Committee. Committee members shall permanently delete these draft summaries from their devices once they have had the opportunity to review them.

Companion Documents:
Academic Appeal Procedures
Procedural Guidelines for Hearings of the Academic and Grade Appeals Committee

Approved by Arts Faculty Council – effective May 20, 2010 immediately; March 22, 2016 effective immediately; November 23, 2017 effective immediately; May 18, 2023 effective immediately)