

GRADE APPEALS AND COURSE OR INSTRUCTOR COMPLAINTS

Note to Parents

Requests for consideration of a complaint about an instructor or a course should always be initiated by the student. We acknowledge that while parents have considerable interest in the academic success of their student, it is the role of the student (as noted in the Academic Integrity Policy) to communicate concerns to the appropriate contacts. Because the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (also known as FERPA) guarantees certain rights for students and eligible parents regarding access to, confidentiality of, and correction of the student's education records we are unable to discuss grades and routine academic transactions without the written consent of the student. For your convenience, additional information about these policies and written consent forms can be accessed [here](#).

Expectations of faculty and students

At the beginning of the semester, students may expect that instructors will clearly communicate the requirements of the course and the procedure used for calculating grades. Throughout the course, students may expect that their work will be evaluated fairly and that they will be treated with respect and consideration. If you have concerns about the way in which your work is evaluated, about the way you are treated by the instructor, or about the conduct of the class, your first step should be to discuss those concerns with the instructor. Frequently, misunderstandings or miscommunication are at the root of instructor or course complaints. Speaking directly with instructors allows students to resolve concerns.

Advice for meeting with an instructor to resolve a complaint:

- Plan to meet with your instructor during stated office hours or schedule an appointment at a mutually agreeable time. This is not a conversation that should take place in the classroom before or after class, nor should it be conducted via email.
- Prior to your meeting, compose your concerns in writing. Writing your concerns serves two important purposes: first, it demands that you think clearly and objectively about your concerns; secondly, it provides a written record of your concerns in your own voice.
- Be sure to bring any documents that pertain to your concern e.g. the course syllabus, written assignments, papers, etc. to the meeting.
- Do your part to keep the tone of the meeting respectful and responsible. The goal of your meeting is to resolve your concern. Your meeting will be more successful if you stay calm, focus on communicating your concern rather than assigning blame, listen to your instructor carefully, and take responsibility for your own actions.

A. Grade appeals

If you believe that your grade in a course was incorrectly or unfairly determined, and a discussion with your instructor does not resolve the matter, you may file a grade appeal. The University's grade appeal policy is described [here](#); make sure you understand the grounds on which you can appeal a grade and

that one or more of those applies in your case. Put your appeal in writing and follow the steps below. In each case, provide contact information and explain why you believe the explanations you have already received for denying your appeal are unsatisfactory:

1. Send the appeal to the head of the department or program in which the course is listed. If your instructor is the department head, send your appeal to the Dean of the College, Room 105 Foust Building.
2. If the department head denies your appeal, you may send it to the Director of [College of Arts & Sciences Advising](#) (CASA), Room 25 Foust Building, who has the authority to act on the Dean's behalf in these matters.
3. If the College (whether CASA or the Dean) denies your appeal, you may send it to the Office of the Provost, 201 Mossman Building. The decision of the Provost in grade appeals is final. At any point in the process you may also request a face-to-face meeting.

B. Course or instructor complaints

You may have a concern or complaint about a matter other than the grade you received in a course. If a discussion with the instructor does not resolve your concern, follow the steps described above for a grade appeal. If you are uncomfortable discussing your concern directly with your instructor, you may contact CASA or the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) for advice. It is often best to put your concern in writing but if you prefer, you may request a meeting with the appropriate next person to address your concern (see steps above). To the extent permitted by University policies, you may request that your complaint be kept confidential, although this might limit the actions that can be taken to resolve it.