

Policy to Appeal a Final Failing Grade

Preamble

Instructors are responsible for clearly articulating the basis for determining students' grades. Sharing the basis for grades is essential to ensure fair and equitable treatment of students and their work. A student has the right to be informed in a timely and clear manner of the basis for the evaluation of the academic performance in a course, and a student is entitled to fair, equitable treatment in academic relationships with members of the faculty. In most, if not all instances, the College expects any misunderstanding regarding grading will be resolved informally, either in writing or in discussions, between a student and an instructor. The following appeal process is only for final failing grades.

Appeal Process

A student who believes that there is grounds for a legitimate grievance that the coursework has been evaluated in a prejudicial or capricious manner in the calculation of their final failing grade should first make a request in writing to the faculty member involved to confirm that no computational or clerical error has been made. The student must make this request not later than two weeks after the start of the following semester. The instructor must respond to the student in writing within two weeks of receipt of the request. Ideally, the student and faculty member should then meet to discuss the final grade in question. If the communication between the instructor and student results in the instructor requesting to change a grade, then the instructor must submit a petition to change the grade to the Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs), and the petition must be brought before the Committee on Academic Standing (CAS) for consideration. If the student is studying away from Skidmore College in the following semester, or if the faculty member is on leave in the following semester, the request for an explanation still must be filed within two weeks after the start of that semester. But, if the student or the faculty member makes the request, the appeal process may be deferred by the Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs) until the student returns to studies on campus or the faculty member returns from leave.

If the student is not satisfied with the instructor's explanation, or if a meeting with the faculty member was not possible or not advised, or if the instructor did not respond within two weeks of receipt of the student's request, then the student may report the grievance in writing with supporting documentation to the appropriate department chair (in the case of an ID course, to the chair of the faculty member who has assigned the grade) or program director and submit a copy of the report to the Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs). If the instructor is the department chair or program director, the request may be addressed to the Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs. The student must make this request within four weeks after having sent the initial request for an explanation from the instructor. The student's supporting documentation must provide evidence of prejudicial or capricious grading. In particular, the student must provide evidence of one or more of the following conditions:

- a. The instructor used inappropriate criteria in determining a final failing grade.
- b. The instructor assigned a grade on some basis other than performance in the course.
- c. The instructor did not adhere to stated procedures or grading standards.

The appropriate department chair or program director must respond to the student in writing within two weeks of receipt of the request. The department chair or program director will contact the

instructor to obtain an explanation of the criteria and standards used in evaluating the student's course work. If, after consultation with the faculty member (when possible) and after a review of the written evidence, the appropriate department chair or program director finds legitimate cause for the complaint, the department chair or program director will try to work toward an equitable solution with the student and faculty member. If the solution results in the instructor requesting to change a grade, then the instructor must submit a petition to change the grade with the Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs) and the petition must be brought before the CAS for consideration.

If the appropriate department chair or program director concludes there is no cause for the complaint, or if there is a disagreement between the appropriate department chair or program director and the faculty member, the student may request in writing a review by the Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs), the faculty member, and the appropriate department chair or program director. The request must be submitted to the Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs) by the end of the semester following the semester in which the grade was awarded.

The written request must include a full account of the incident or circumstances giving rise to the complaint of prejudicial or capricious grading. If the Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs) conclude there is no cause for complaint, the Dean of Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs will inform the student, the instructor, and the appropriate department chair or program director in writing that the appeal has been denied. If, however, the review results in the instructor requesting to change a grade, then the instructor must submit a petition to change the grade with the Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs) and the petition must be brought before the CAS for consideration.

If the Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs) recommend changing the final failing grade to a passing letter grade, and if the faculty member who gave the original grade objects to changing the final failing grade to a passing letter grade, then the Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs) and the department chair or program director, may recommend to the faculty member changing the grade to Satisfactory.

If the faculty member rejects the recommendation of the Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs, Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs), and the appropriate department chair or program director, to change the final failing grade to a passing grade or to Satisfactory, the Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs, with the Associate Dean of the Faculty (student academic affairs), may submit a petition to change the grade to the CAS for consideration. Only the faculty representatives on CAS have the authority to change the final failing grade to Satisfactory, and only following a vote where the majority of those faculty representatives on CAS approves the change.

A student's failure to meet time limits will result in denial of the student's appeal. If the faculty member, department chair, program director or dean fails to meet a deadline, the appeal will move to the next level.