



College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources

Process and Procedures for Student Grade Appeals

This document outlines the process and procedures for student grade appeals in the College of Agriculture, Life Sciences, and Natural Resources (CALSNR).

The College follows the procedures outlined by University Regulation 2-121 Change of Grades <https://www.uwyo.edu/regs-policies/files/docs/regulations-2020/uw-reg-2-121-approved-6-10-20.pdf>:

Philosophy

This grade appeal policy aims to provide a clear and fair process for students to dispute a course grade. While students have the right to thoughtful and unbiased grading, universities accommodate diverse grading standards and individual approaches. Syllabi should clearly outline grading policies, as specified in UW Regulation 2-117.

The College encourages resolving academic concerns through respectful discussion between the student and the instructor. This document outlines that process, as well as procedures for cases where an appeal to the College level is necessary.

For an appeal to be successful, the student must demonstrate capricious evaluation or treatment in a way that is evident to reasonable committee members outside the course's field of study. The burden of proof rests on the student.

Grade appeals are a serious matter, and students should carefully consider their ability to substantiate claims of capricious grading before proceeding. Unsubstantiated appeals are strongly discouraged, as they require significant time and effort from all parties involved.

Informal Grade Appeal Process

Outlined below are the steps expected to occur before requesting a college grade appeal hearing:

1. Grade appeals must start with a discussion between the student and the instructor. Requests for a grade change must be made in writing **within 30 days** of the final grade being posted, and must include the student's reason for the request, including any documentation that supports

this request. A meeting to discuss the grade appeal may also be requested by either the student or the instructor.

2. The instructor will reply, in writing, **within 15 business days** of the student's written request or of a meeting between the student and the instructor (whichever is later), with their decision regarding the student's grade appeal.
 - a. If the instructor determines they made an error, they will follow UW regulation 2-121 to correct the error.
 - b. If the instructor determines there is basis for reconsideration of the grade and determines a different final grade is warranted, the instructor will follow UW regulation 2-121 to work with the Office of the Registrar to change the student's final grade.
 - c. If the instructor determines there was no error made and no basis for reconsideration of the grade, the instructor will include with their decision a brief summary of how the grade was determined based on the policies outlined in the syllabus.
3. If satisfactory resolution is not reached with the instructor, the student may then request **within 10 business days** of the instructor's decision, a meeting with the instructor's Department Head. The request should include a brief summary of the student's attempt to resolve the matter with the instructor.
4. The Department Head will schedule a meeting with the student and the instructor to allow both an opportunity to present relevant information. The student will be expected to present the reason they are requesting a reconsideration of their grade and supporting documentation, and the instructor will be expected to present supporting documentation for their decision to deny the reconsideration request.
5. The Department Head will then work with the instructor to resolve the grade dispute.
 - a. If the Department Head and the instructor reach an agreement, the Department Head will reply, in writing, of the decision (either to deny or grant the grade change).
 - b. If the Department Head and the instructor cannot reach agreement, the Department Head and instructor will work with the Associate Dean of Academic and Student Programs (or designee) to resolve the grade dispute.
 - i. If an agreement is reached, the Department Head will reply, in writing, of the decision (either to deny or grant the grade change).
 - c. If the Department Head, instructor and Associate Dean of Academic and Student Programs (or designee) cannot agree on a resolution to the grade dispute, the Department Head will notify the student that the informal grade appeal process is complete but has not achieved a resolution, and therefore the student may initiate the formal grade appeal process.

Formal Grade Appeal Initiation

If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached through the informal grade appeal process, the student may request in writing a formal College appeal.

1. All formal grade appeals must be submitted in writing **within 15 business days** after the student has been notified by the Department Head of the outcome of the informal grade appeal process to the College Dean (or designee).
2. The following conditions are the only bases for a formal appeal:
 - a. *Prejudice*: adverse, preconceived judgment about the student based on personal characteristics or group membership.
 - b. *Capricious or arbitrary academic evaluation*: applying different standards of evaluation to members of the same course without legitimate reason; or grading assignments or assigning course grades in a manner inconsistent with the articulated standards of evaluation for the assignment or course.
 - c. *Capricious or arbitrary treatment*: unpredictable or inconsistent actions that affect the student in an adverse way.
3. Written appeals must include:
 - a. The basis for the appeal.
 - b. A step-by-step description of the factual matters of the case.
 - c. Documentation of the informal appeals process steps and results.
 - d. A copy of the course syllabus with any amendments.
 - e. Copies of all relevant grading rubrics (if any).
 - f. The specific outcome requested.
4. After receiving a formal grade appeal request, the Dean (or designee) will notify the instructor and Department Head. The instructor will have **10 business days** to provide any written information if they choose to do so.
5. Once all written materials have been received (or after the allotted time has elapsed), the Dean (or designee), in consultation with the Associate Dean, will determine either:
 - a. there is sufficient evidence to close the case and deliver a decision, or
 - b. a hearing is warranted.
6. The student, instructor and Department Head will be notified in writing of the Dean's decision.

Grade Appeal Prehearing Procedures

1. If a hearing is deemed necessary, the Associate Dean (or designee) will select one faculty member, one department head, and one staff member, all external to the course's department, to serve as the Hearing Committee.
2. The Associate Dean (or designee) will schedule the hearing and inform the student, instructor, and the Hearing Committee of the date, time and place of the hearing.
 - a. Either the student or the instructor may request a Hearing Committee member be disqualified for just cause. A written request, providing just cause, must be submitted to the Associate Dean **at least 5 business days** before the scheduled hearing. The decision to grant or deny the request will be made by the Dean.

3. The Associate Dean (or designee) will disseminate all materials to the Hearing Committee for review **at least 5 business days** prior to the hearing.
4. Hearings are not open to the public and matters discussed are to remain confidential to those parties involved in the process.
5. Either party wishing to be accompanied at the hearing by an advisor must notify the Associate Dean (or designee) in writing **at least 5 business days** prior to the hearing. This notification must include who the advisor will be and whether the advisor is an attorney. The role of the advisor is only to consult with the student/instructor, not to represent or speak for the student/instructor.
6. The parties may present a witness if relevant. A list of witnesses (if any) must be provided to the Associate Dean (or designee) **at least 2 business days** prior to the hearing. Written statements by witnesses may also be admissible as determined by the Associate Dean (or designee). Witnesses will only be present during the hearing while giving statements and answering questions.

Grade Appeal Hearing Procedures

1. The Associate Dean (or designee) will preside over the hearing, setting time limits for each portion of the hearing and ensuring all parties have reasonable time to make their statements.
2. The order of the proceedings will be:
 - a. Student presents their case, including any witnesses
 - b. Instructor presents their case, including any witnesses
 - c. Hearing Committee asks questions of both parties
 - d. Student makes final comments
 - e. Instructor makes final comments
 - f. Instructor and student are excused
 - g. Hearing Committee goes into executive session with the Associate Dean (or designee)
3. The student has the burden of proof by substantial evidence that the decision or action was based on prejudice, capricious or arbitrary academic evaluation, or capricious or arbitrary treatment.
4. Hearings shall not be adversarial in tone or fact but instead conducted in a professional manner with respect for all parties involved.
5. During the executive session, the Hearing Committee will discuss the case and, by majority vote, render a decision. The Hearing Committee may:
 - a. Decide the student met their burden of proof and recommend granting the requested grade change,
 - b. Decide the student failed to meet their burden of proof and recommend that the grade remain unchanged, or
 - c. Identify another solution and recommend that this solution be implemented.

6. The Associate Dean (or designee) will prepare a report that includes the Hearing Committee's recommendation, a summary of findings, and supporting materials and submit it to the Dean **within 5 business days** after the recommendation is reached.

Implementation of the Decision

1. The Dean will review the report provided by the Associate Dean (or designee).
2. The Dean will make a decision regarding the case and will notify the parties of that decision in writing **within 10 business days** of receipt of the report.

Further Appeal

If the student desires to appeal the College's decision, they must file an appeal with the Office of Academic Affairs within 30 business days of the receipt of the Dean of the College's decision. The student must follow the procedure and meet the criteria outlined by Academic Affairs:

<https://www.uwyo.edu/studentcomplaint/files/academic-affairs-appeals/policy-for-ug-appeals-to-aa.pdf>