



Course Grade Appeals

3.17.5

Part 1. Policy Statement

Lake Superior College recognizes the long-standing and widely accepted practice that the individual classroom instructor is the authority in evaluating student performance in his/her courses. Also recognized is the fact that this right brings with it a responsibility to provide students with a clear statement of course grading policies and to fairly and consistently apply these policies. Additionally, it is the student's right to receive from an instructor an explanation of any grade received.

While recognizing the rights and responsibilities of the instructor, in extraordinary circumstances, students have the right to appeal for a grade review in instances where they believe that a final course grade was assigned unfairly or in a manner inconsistent with the stated course grading policy. To be precise, the following three categories are the only legitimate basis for a grade appeal at Lake Superior College:

Arbitrariness: The course grade awarded represents such a substantial departure from accepted academic norms as to demonstrate that the instructor did not actually exercise professional judgment.

Bias: The grade awarded was motivated by ill will and is not indicative of the student's academic performance in the course.

Error: The instructor made a mistake in fact (e.g., a calculation error or omission)

Part 2. Procedures

In cases where a student believes that a grade has been assigned incorrectly based on one or more of the grounds stated above, it is expected that the student will seek to resolve any concerns informally by speaking directly with the course instructor before beginning a formal appeal process. The formal appeal process should not be undertaken lightly, nor should it be undertaken merely because a student is unhappy with the grade received in a course.

Subpart A. Informal Appeal Process

The objective of this procedure is to resolve the student's concern as quickly and efficiently as possible at the level closest to his/her concern (i.e., the instructor who assigned the grade in question). The student must contact the instructor either in person or via email within 2 weeks from the date grades are posted. The instructor shall provide a response to the student via email within two weeks of being contacted by the student. If the student has not been contacted by the instructor within two weeks, s/he should contact the academic dean. The instructor should process an official grade change if deemed appropriate.

Subpart B. Formal Appeal Process – Step 1

If, after consultation with the instructor in a good-faith effort to resolve a grade dispute, a student still believes that his/her course grade was assigned in a way that is arbitrary, biased, in error or that the instructor failed to notify or adhere to grading policies, the student may make a formal grade appeal no later than two weeks after receiving a response from the instructor through the informal process.

Grade appeals will proceed according to the following steps:

Step 1. A written appeal will be submitted by the student to the instructor of the class. The appeal is a formal request to the course instructor that the student's specific concerns about the grade be completely addressed. The student must complete the Step 1 Grade Appeal Form, which requests the following:

- 1-A.** Identification of the course, section, instructor's name, and grade received.
- 1-B.** A statement verifying that the student has sought an informal remedy by speaking with or otherwise contacting the instructor.
- 1-C.** A justification for the request review; i.e., a statement of reasons as to why the student believes his/her grade was improperly assigned.
- 1-D.** Relevant information and documentation that supports the appeal (e.g., course papers, syllabus, class notes, etc., that support the justification).
- 1-E.** Any additional items that the student deems relevant to his/her appeal.
- 1-F.** The remedy sought.

The Step 1 Appeal is submitted to the instructor. The student should retain a copy of these materials for his/her records. Within two weeks, unless the instructor speaks to his/her dean or VP of Academic Affairs and requests additional time for response, the instructor will respond to the student in writing. The instructor's response must include:

- A reply to the justification given by the student in his/her formal grade appeal.
- A reply to the student's desired remedy, including a summary statement indicating (a) that the instructor has determined that a grade change is not warranted, (b) that the instructor has determined that a grade change is warranted, with a statement of the new grade to be assigned to the student followed by submission of an official grade change, or (c) an alternative proposed remedy.

The instructor shall submit a copy of the Step 1 appeal and response to the Academic Affairs office where an appeals log will be maintained.

Subpart C. Formal Appeal Process – Step 2

If the student is not satisfied with the response to his/her Step 1 formal appeal, s/he submit Step 2 appeal to the faculty member’s dean to include the following:

- 2-A. Identification of the course, section, instructor’s name, and grade received.
- 2-B. Copies of all materials submitted to the instructor in Step 1.
- 2-C. A justification for the requested review; i.e., a statement of reasons as to why the student believes the instructor’s reply to the Step 1 Appeal is incorrect.
- 2-D. Relevant information and documentation that supports the appeal.
- 2-E. The remedy sought.

The Dean will meet with the faculty member for discussion of the student’s complaint and will, within two weeks, notify the student (and copy the faculty member) about the faculty member’s decision regarding the Step 2 appeal and discussion.

Subpart D. Formal Appeal Process – Step 3

The student may, if he/she still believes that a grade has been inappropriately given, file a Step 3 appeal with the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Upon receipt of a Step 3 appeal, the Vice President of Academic Affairs shall convene a Faculty Advisory Panel which shall consist of three administrators and/or supervisors appointed by the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Panel will review the materials submitted by the student to include the instructor’s response to the Step 1 appeal, and, if deemed appropriate, the student. The Panel will then meet with the faculty member and will discuss the issues as presented by the student and all documented material. Upon receiving the advice of the panel members the faculty member whose grading has been challenged will determine whether or not to make the grade change and will communicate that final decision to the student, to his/her dean and to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

Date Proposed: April, 2008

Date Implementation: November, 2008

Signature of College President

Date