

Academic Grade Appeals Policy

Category:	Students
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Responsible Office:	Office of the Registrar
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PURPOSE

The Grade Appeal Policy, together with its associated Procedures, governs the process followed at Algoma University to ensure the fair and consistent management of grade appeals initiated by Students.

SCOPE

The Policy applies to an appeal by a student of an evaluation of the student's academic performance in the context of a course and as expressed in a grade. A grade appeal may relate to a grade received on an element of coursework, on a final examination, or on an entire course.

DEFINITIONS

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The Appeals and Academic Standards Committee

A Committee of the Algoma University Senate charged with considering undergraduate and graduate student appeals with respect to grades, including examinations, term assignments and tests, academic integrity, and the general conduct of the course involved.

Appeal

Appeal refers to the expression, verbal or written, of a student’s concern or dissatisfaction with the result(s) of an academic or not-for-credit assessment(s), when there is grounds for appeal (see below).

Faculty Member

Any and all instructors delivering instruction whether it be credit, non-credit, professional and personal interest courses, seminars, tutorials etc. to Algoma University Students.

Student

Student refers to full-time, part-time, and non-degree undergraduate students as well as full-time and part-time graduate students who are currently registered at Algoma University; and former students registered at the time of the incident, which is giving rise to the complaint.

Faculty Deans

Senior members of the University’s administration, who are selected by the Senate and provide oversight of the academic programming, promote faculty, provide leadership in education, leadership to faculty within a given Faculty and leadership in the University Community.

Office of the Faculty Dean

Refers to those administrative members who support the mandates of the Faculty Dean.

Records

Descriptions of informal contacts made can include, but not limited to, emails, text messages or notes taken during or after a live conversation.

POLICY

The University is a community that values and promotes respect, integrity, inclusion, diversity and accountability among all members of the university. These values can only be achieved in

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an environment that supports its members and matters of concern are dealt with in a manner that is fair, inclusive, open and effective.

Algonia University strives to provide Students with a learning environment where criteria for academic success are transparent. Expectations and assessments should be clearly communicated, and interactions with Faculty Members should be reasonably fair and equitable. Algonia University believes that all Students have the right to freely seek and receive clarification and timely feedback from Faculty Members in a respectful manner. This policy exists to support Students in the high-quality learning environment that Algonia University works to maintain, as well as to assist Students in finding timely resolutions to concerns.

Grounds for a Grade Appeal

A student may appeal, on valid grounds, a grade that the student believes to have been incorrectly or inappropriately assigned to the student's work in a course.

Valid grounds for a grade appeal include, but are not limited to, the following:

- A grade or a combination of grades was miscalculated.
- A course assignment or an examination was graded incorrectly (e.g., the course instructor missed seeing or misread part of what the student submitted).
- A grade was not based on the assessment methods specified in information as provided at the outset of an assignment, examination or course, as appropriate, or as changed with reasonable notice.
- Instructions for an assignment were excessively unclear and/or contradictory.
- Student work submitted by a stated due date and time, and eligible for grading, was not graded at all.
- Course instructor feedback on relevant earlier coursework was not obtained within a reasonable time to assist a student with the graded work in question that depended upon it (as reasonably applicable).
- Incorrect advice was offered by a course instructor (e.g., about the content of the examination or approval of a due date extension for an assignment).
- The process for determining a final grade was unfair to, or inequitable across, students in the course.
- Illness shall not normally be a valid ground for the appeal of a grade on student work or an examination submitted for evaluation. A student who is ill is expected to request an extension of an assignment due date before the original due date or to not write or not

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submit an examination for evaluation. Medical documentation of illness is required for each such instance.

- A concern about a grade received with reference to prohibited grounds of discrimination under the Ontario Human Rights Code is not addressed by this Policy and shall be instead directed to the Department of People and Culture.
- Only a Grade Appeal Committee shall formally decide whether other grounds presented for a grade appeal, beyond the aforementioned grounds, will be considered valid.
- If an appeal is determined not to be upon valid grounds by a Grade Appeal Committee, the appeal will not proceed.

Faculty shall not retaliate in any way against Students who have initiated appeals of grades in current or previous courses.

Retaliation means suffering a hostile, hurtful, adversarial, argumentative, harassing or potentially harmful reaction from the other party. Forms of retaliation can include the following:

- Refusing to answer course related questions from the student or ignoring / shunning them
- Refusing to provide any feedback or marks on tests or assignments
- Threatening students whether in a “joking” or aggressive manner
- Putting a spotlight on them or their work in class, in a way that is meant to demean or humiliate them
- Marking assignments “zero” or below a pass, without explanation.”
- Harassing or demeaning email responses
- Bullying or violent behaviour outside of the classroom
- Refusal to accommodate University approved accommodations
- Making frivolous or malicious accusations against students.

The fact that appeals of grades (successful or not) have been made by Students shall not be used as a reason for any punitive measures against faculty.

Students shall not use this appeals process frivolously or maliciously.

Students are permitted to bring one person who may act in a supportive or advisory capacity during an appeal. Student union representatives or the AUSU Ombudsperson may act in this role. No Algoma University employees (including staff, faculty or administrators), except

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Student employees, may act in this capacity. Additional supportive roles for the student can be included in the process or meetings, such as an Elder (for Indigenous students), Accessibility Officer, and/or translator (for international students).

All steps of the resolution process shall be kept confidential between the parties who participate in the process. Any personal information disclosed by any of the parties, including the student, shall be considered as private and confidential. Should any information be shared with an outside party, it would only be done so with the express written consent of the affected party (ies)

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PROCEDURES

Table 1. An overview of the grade appeal procedure for undergraduate/graduate Students. Please refer to corresponding steps for further instructions.

Is the appeal under consideration relevant to grade errors for one course? If yes, move to Step One.	Informal Resolution	Formal Resolution
	Step One	Step Two
	Please write a formal statement about one or a few course component(s) in question and explain your concerns related to the mark received at any time before, or within 15 days after the posting of official grades. A meeting with the Professor involved is normally required at this stage.	If the meeting with the Faculty Member did not result in a mutually satisfactory resolution, please complete a formal written appeal and send it to the Appeals and Academic Standards Committee within 10 days of the meeting with the faculty member. The committee will consider evidence from both sides and may ask for additional materials. The committee will arrive at a final decision and report it to the Faculty Dean. The Faculty Dean will implement the decision.

Initiating an Appeal

A Student may initiate an appeal of a grade at any time before, or within 15 days after, the posting of official grades. In all cases, final grades become official on the Senate-approved term deadline date to submit grades -- grades submitted earlier will remain unofficial until the term deadline date to submit final grades. In the case of incomplete grades, these grades will

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become official on the date in which the Office of the Registrar is in receipt of the revised grade.

Resolution Procedures

Strict adherence to the following steps is mandatory.

Step One

A student who wishes to appeal a grade (on a specific test or assignment, or the final grade for a course) must first contact the faculty member teaching the course in question. The student and the faculty member should meet to review the grading procedures and the student’s grades on individual assignments, essays and exams.

If a student requests that the faculty member re-grade an assignment, essay, or exam, the faculty member should solicit a written statement from the student explaining why the student believes that a different grade is appropriate for the work in question. The student should be informed that re-grading the assignment can result in a grade that is lower, the same as, or higher than the grade initially assigned.

It is recommended that both the student and the faculty member keep records of the informal contacts made.

If such a meeting is not feasible, or is unacceptable to either party, the student may proceed directly to Step Two.

Step Two

If the student and the faculty member cannot come to a satisfactory solution after a meeting has taken place or if the student is unable to obtain a meeting with the faculty member, the student may submit a formal appeal to the Appeals and Academic Standards Committee (appeals@algomau.ca) within ten days of the meeting between the student and the faculty member. If a meeting did not occur due to the unwillingness of the faculty member to meet, the student has 10 days from the receipt of the message from the faculty member to submit a formal appeal to the Appeals and Academic Standards Committee.

A formal appeal comprises a written statement by the student detailing the grounds for the appeal and what would constitute a satisfactory outcome from their point of view, and any supporting documentation or evidence that the student wishes to be considered. In the case of an appeal of a grade on an assignment, essay, or test that has been returned to the

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student, the student must provide the original work in question.

APPEALS COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

The Appeals and Academic Standards Committee has the right to do whatever is reasonable and fair, including interpreting and applying this policy. The appeals process is an informal, internal mechanism that relies on the cooperation of all parties concerned. It is not, and is not meant to be a legal process.

The Appeals and Academic Standards Committee shall at all times perform its duties in an equitable and fair manner.

An Appeals and Academic Standards Committee member who has a conflict of interest with, or bias for or against either the student or the faculty member in an appeal shall identify such conflict at the first reasonable opportunity and shall remove him/herself from further proceedings connected with the appeal. Both the student and the faculty member shall be made aware of the members of the Committee, and shall be given the opportunity to identify any real or perceived conflict of interest or bias on the part of any Committee member.

In response to a formal appeal forwarded to the Chair of the Appeals and Academic Standards Committee by the Student, the Committee will meet and:

1. will ensure that step one has been completed; if it has not, the appeal will be suspended until step one has been completed, unless it cannot be completed due to the unwillingness of the faculty member to meet with the student
2. will ensure that both parties have a copy of these procedures
3. will examine the formal statement of the Student and satisfy itself that it falls within the guidelines and timeframe as indicated above and that it is not frivolous
4. will provide the Faculty Member with a copy of the written appeal statement of the student
5. will invite the Faculty Member to submit a written response to the student’s appeal statement, and any additional documentation or evidence that the faculty member wishes to be considered
6. may request that the Faculty Member provide a copy of the course outline for the class in question, and/or copies of the instructions for the assignment(s) or questions for the test(s) that are subject of the appeal
7. may request that the Instructor provide comparative materials from other students in the same class, and/or utilize external examiners as required, at the discretion of the Committee

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8. may request additional materials or information as deemed necessary
9. in the case of a disputed grade, the Appeals and Academic Standards Committee will refer to the regulations provided in the Academic Calendar and to the course requirements specified in the Course Outline for the class in question
10. If deemed necessary, may hold a meeting with the Student and the Faculty Member. A student is allowed to bring one representative to this meeting as defined above, as an observer. The Committee will:
 - a. provide the Student with a copy of the Faculty Member's written response before this meeting takes place
 - b. allow the Student and Faculty Member to address each other's arguments
 - c. deliberate after this meeting is over and reach a final decision based on fair evidentiary grounds
11. will arrive at a final decision (with a detailed explanation for it) and report it to the Faculty Dean. The Faculty Dean will share the decision (with explanation) with the Student and the Faculty member within five days of receiving it, implement the decision, and may report to the Senate concerning the case, keeping the names of the parties involved confidential.
12. may make general recommendations intended to prevent future appeals.
13. after completing an appeal, the records will be kept for as long as is required by Senate.
14. The decision of the Appeals and Academic Standards Committee is final and binding.

Parts of this policy were adapted from a similar policy at Laurentian University.

Algoma University Senate, Revised June 2, 2023

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