

## Grade Appeals (Undergraduate Catalog – Academic Policies)

(<http://kennesaw.catalog.acalog.com/>)

Students' rights to grade appeals are defined in the university catalog. A key element in the grade appeal procedure is the faculty member's responsibility to publish a specific grading policy for each of his/her classes. Specifically, the grade appeal procedure states: "Each faculty member must specify his/her grading policy, at the first of the semester. He/she may change his/her grading policy for cause after that time, but he/she must do so uniformly, with ample notification to students, if at all possible."

Note that failure to publish the grading policy would mean that a faculty member would have great difficulty in sustaining his/her assigned grade if a student appealed with anything but a frivolous or irresponsible basis for his/her charge. The grading policy should be quite specific and should be distributed to each class in written form. Some departments may also require faculty members to file grading policy statements in the departmental office. Because the student has 60 days to appeal a grade, it is strongly recommended that instructors retain any student papers, tests, projects, or other materials not returned to the student for 70 days after the end of a semester or if an appeal is filed until the appeal is resolved. Refer to the following section for specific grade appeal procedures.

### Grade Appeal Procedure

Kennesaw State University is committed to treating students fairly in the grading process. Students may appeal a final grade that they receive in a course, but interim grades or grades on specific assignments are not appealable. Any such appeal must be based on an allegation that the faculty member has violated his/her stated grading policy or that the grade was a result of discrimination or retaliation. The student has the burden of proving these allegations. All formal appeals under these procedures will be based only on the written record.

- A. **Informal:** Students are encouraged to discuss concerns and disputes over final course grades with the faculty member, prior to filing a formal grade appeal, in an effort to understand the basis of his/her grade. Faculty are encouraged to be available to students for such discussion regarding grades so that if possible, grade disputes can be resolved informally. The Office of the University Ombuds can provide assistance to students and faculty with resolving disputes informally in an effort to bring resolution to the matter prior to the initiation of a formal complaint. If the student has evidence of discrimination or retaliation, the student may bring his/her concerns directly to the Ombuds Office without first reviewing the matter with the faculty member.
- B. **Formal:** In situations where such informal resolution does not occur or is not successful, the student may appeal the final course grade to the Department Chair. The appeal must be in writing and describe the precise basis for the appeal. Any pertinent information must be submitted with the appeal in order to be considered in this or subsequent appeals. The appeal must be submitted within 20 business days after the first day of classes of the next academic term (fall, spring, summer[or any other term]) after the academic term in which the final grade was awarded to the student. The Chair will invite the faculty member whose grade is appealed to provide a written response to the student's appeal statement. The Department Chair (or the Chair's designee) will review the allegations and conduct any additional fact finding as needed and will provide a decision in writing to the student, within 20 business days of the receipt of the complaint in the Department. The Chair's written decision will specifically address the relevant issues raised by the student. In preparing the written decision, the Chair shall consult with the EEO officer or the Chief Diversity Officer if there is an allegation by the student that discrimination or retaliation had an impact on the grade that was awarded.
- C. The student may appeal the Department Chair's decision within 20 business days of being notified of the Chair's decision. Such appeal will be made, in writing, to the Dean of the College in which the Department is located. At the Dean's discretion, the Dean can appoint an advisory panel, consisting of two (2) faculty members from outside the department where the grade was awarded and one (1) student to review the written documentation and make a recommendation to the Dean. The advisory panel may invite the student and the faculty member who awarded the grade to meet with the panel to share each party's position on the grade dispute. The panel will provide a written recommendation to the Dean within ten (10) business days of the receipt of the appeal. The Dean will issue a decision to the student, in writing, within ten (10) business days of the receipt of the report from the advisory panel or within twenty (20) business days of the receipt of the written complaint from the student if no panel was appointed.
- D. The student may appeal the Dean's decision to the Provost, in writing, within twenty (20) business days of being notified of the Dean's decision. [However, if it is a graduate course, the student will direct this written appeal to the Graduate Dean, and the Graduate Dean will issue a decision to the student, in writing, within twenty (20) business days of receiving the appeal. Within twenty (20) days of that decision, the student may then appeal to the Provost as is described in this section]. The Provost, will issue a decision to the student, in writing within twenty (20) business days of receiving the appeal.
- E. The Provost's decision is final, and decisions regarding grades may not be appealed to the Board of Regents (BOR Policy 407.01).
- F. Nothing in this grade appeals process prohibits the parties from settling this matter at any stage with the assistance of mediation through the Ombuds office. However, any attempt to settle the matter through mediation does not affect time deadlines for this grade appeals process.