

Grade Appeals Process

Faculty are expected to evaluate student performance honestly and professionally, based solely on academic considerations and not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. Students are responsible for meeting the academic standards and requirements of each course in which they are enrolled. It is the prerogative and responsibility of each member of the faculty to determine the final course grade for each student according to criteria clearly defined and explained in the syllabus, course rubrics, etc. Individual assignment grades may not be appealed, except as part of a final course grade appeal.

Grounds for Non-Academic Appeal

If a student believes that a final course grade was assigned based on non-academic considerations, they should make an appeal to the Office of Equity and Inclusion. Such an appeal may be made when a student believes that a final course grade was assigned on non-academic criteria including, without limitation, race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, national origin, age, disability, or veteran status.

Grounds for Academic Appeal

A student may appeal a final course grade on academic grounds using the following appeal procedures whenever they believe that the grade was assigned inappropriately. Grounds for an academic appeal exist when documentary evidence is presented that a final course grade was assigned in:

- (1) an unfair manner; or
- (2) an arbitrary manner; or
- (3) a malicious manner.

Appeals that do not clearly allege, with supporting documentary evidence, that a final course grade was assigned in one or more of the three above-noted improper ways, will not be considered.

Note that grade appeals should never be based upon a student's individual needs or circumstances; students do not have the right to appeal a grade because of their health, anxiety, family circumstances or other such circumstances. Ultimately, grades must be based only upon student performance.

In addition, the following guidelines apply:

1. The burden of proof in an appeal lies with the student. If requested, instructors shall make copies of all relevant documents in their possession and available to the student, following FERPA guidelines. In any instance in which the student fails to appear at a meeting related to the appeals process requested by the student or at a grade appeals committee hearing without sufficient cause, the grade appeal will be denied and cannot be refiled.
2. Though grade appeals may be warranted in the case of deviations from the syllabus, this constraint shall not be interpreted to mean that instructors cannot change grading criteria during the course of the semester, as long as all students in the class are notified of these changes in a timely manner. Events may necessitate such changes.
3. Instructors have a right to set standards for a course consistent with department parameters including the number and types of exams, amount of outside work required, attendance policies, class discussion requirements, exam time limits or any other grading criteria. It is the responsibility of the instructor to clearly outline these standards in the syllabus. Students may not use the issue of an instructor's standards (e.g., "an instructor was too hard") as the basis for a grade appeal.

4. Students may not use the grade appeal procedure as a bargaining mechanism. Grade change recommendations will be based on already completed course work.
5. Student claims of unjust assignment of grades based upon the perception that an instructor did not like or was biased against the student must still stand the burden of objective proof. If proof can be provided that the instructor was biased or disliked a student, then the possibility of arbitrary or capricious assignment of grades may result in a successful appeal.

Procedure for Academic Appeal

Final course grades are typically made available through the student information system (SIS) in the week after the conclusion of the university's final exam period. The grade appeal timeline begins on the day that final course grades are made available (Day 0).

1. *Student and Faculty Member*

If a student believes their grade was assigned in such a way that it violates the standards outlined in the "Grounds for Academic Appeal" section, they must email the faculty member within two (2) business days (by 5pm current Eastern Time [ET] on Day 2). In the email, the student should explain their concern and ask for clarification about how their grade was determined. Within two (2) business days from the student's initial email regarding their grade, the student and the faculty member should have a respectful and honest conversation about the final course grade, as it pertains to the stated course expectations and the student's completed work. The student may request to view any graded work that has not been previously returned by the faculty member; the faculty member should provide those materials for review. The student may also request an explanation for how the final course grade was determined, consistent with the criteria clearly defined and explained in the syllabus; the faculty member should produce such an explanation. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with the course syllabus and to maintain all course materials which were previously returned by the faculty member.

If the student's grade concern is not resolved at this level, or if the faculty member is not available, the student may initiate a grade appeal by completing the Undergraduate Grade Appeal form ([link here](#)) after two (2) business days from the student's initial email to the faculty member. The Undergraduate Grade Appeal form must be submitted no later than 5pm ET on Day 5.

2. *Student and Department Head*

Upon submission, the Undergraduate Grade Appeal form is sent to the head of the department in which the faculty member serves and to the faculty member.

The head of the department in which the faculty member serves must acknowledge receipt of the Undergraduate Grade Appeal form within two (2) business days and immediately contact the student to collect information about the nature of their appeal. If the department head believes that the appeal addresses the criteria listed above under "Grounds for Academic Appeal", they should separately contact the faculty member and likewise collect information about the student's work in the course. The department head should review the student's appeal, the available documentary evidence (both from the student and the faculty member), and the course syllabus.

The department head should provide a written finding to the student and the faculty member within four (4) business days of receiving the Undergraduate Grade Appeal form (no later than 5pm ET on Day 9).

- If the department head's finding supports the student's appeal, then the faculty member may reconsider the final grade assigned in the course.
 - i. If the faculty member chooses to change the final grade assigned in the course, and if the student no longer wishes to pursue the appeal after the final course grade is changed, then the case will

- be considered satisfactorily resolved by all parties. If this path to resolution is used, the faculty member must initiate a Grade Change (link to form) no later than 5pm ET on Day 10.
- ii. If the faculty member does not choose to change the final grade assigned in the course, the department head will submit the student's Undergraduate Grade Appeal form and accompanying materials to the dean of the college (or designee) no later than 5pm ET on Day 11.
 - If the department head's finding does not support the student's appeal and the student still wishes to further appeal their grade, the student must notify the department head by email no later than 5pm ET on Day 10. Subsequently, the department head will submit the student's Undergraduate Grade Appeal form and accompanying materials to the dean of the college (or designee) no later than 5pm ET on Day 11.

If the department head is not available, the Office of the University Registrar will forward the grade appeal to the dean of the college in which the faculty member serves. It is the dean's responsibility to either put the department head in contact with the student or to serve in the role of the department head as described above if the department head is not available.

3. Grade Appeals Committee

Immediately upon receipt of an Undergraduate Grade Appeal Form (within one [1] business day and no later than 5pm on Day 12), the dean of the college (or designee) will contact the current chair of the Grade Appeals Committee of the UTC Faculty Senate to arrange an appeal hearing with the committee as described in the UTC Faculty Senate Bylaws. The chair of the Grade Appeals Committee will schedule a hearing to occur within four (4) business days (no later than Day 16). At the time of scheduling the hearing the dean will provide copies of the relevant grade appeal materials to the Grade Appeal Committee members, the faculty member, and the student.

Grade Appeal Hearing Composition

A grade appeal hearing requires the attendance of the student who is appealing their grade. It also requires a quorum of the Grade Appeals Committee, which is defined as three (3) members and the chair (the composition of the Faculty Grade Appeals Committee is described in the UTC Faculty Senate Bylaws, found here: <https://www.utc.edu/sites/default/files/2021-05/SenateBylaws.pdf>). In addition, two (2) faculty members shall be selected by the head of the department (or dean of the appropriate college) in which the appealed course is offered to serve as observers at the hearing and as informational resources for the grade appeals committee attendees. These faculty are invited to answer questions asked of them by the committee, but otherwise are observers only, and will be excused before deliberations begin. The student may also invite up to two observers, but they are to be observers only. The faculty member whose grade is being appealed is invited, but not required, to attend and participate in a grade appeal hearing.

Grade Appeal Hearing Procedure

The grade appeal hearing will be convened by the dean of the college, or designee ("Convener"), but the committee chair shall run the hearing. Should the dean be the course professor involved in the appeal, the Provost will serve in place of the dean. During the hearing, the student and the faculty member will each have an opportunity to speak, briefly. The party who appealed to the Grade Appeal Committee shall speak first. The other party shall have an equal opportunity to respond. At the conclusion of the remarks by the student and the faculty member, the committee members may ask either party (or both parties) questions to seek additional information or clarification about the case. During this period, the committee members may also ask the non-voting departmental faculty observers questions to help guide their inquiry.

When the committee members have no further questions for the student or the faculty member, those two parties and any associated observers will be dismissed, and the committee will hold its deliberations in private. The committee must issue a finding, supported by a majority of the voting committee members (including the chair), that sets forth the rationale for the committee's finding. While the Convener will be present at the meeting, they will not be a voting member of the committee. However, if a tie vote of the committee occurs, the Convener will serve to break the tie.

At the end of the hearing, a report on the finding shall be produced by the Convener within one (1) business day. The report will be sent to the student, the faculty member, the associated department head, and the Provost no later than 5pm ET on Day 17.

- If the committee's finding supports the student's appeal, then the faculty member may reconsider the final grade assigned in the course, based on the recommendation of the committee.
 - i. If the faculty member chooses to change the final grade assigned in the course, then the case will be considered satisfactorily resolved by all parties. If this path to resolution is used, the faculty member must initiate a Grade Change (link to form) no later than 5pm on Day 18.
 - ii. If the faculty member does not choose to change the final grade assigned in the course, they must appeal the finding to the Provost, in writing, within two (2) business days.
- If the committee's finding does not support the student's appeal, or if the final course grade is changed by the faculty member and the student still wishes to further appeal that grade, then they may appeal the finding to the Provost, in writing, within two (2) business days.

4. *Provost Consideration*

Provided the appeal moves beyond the Grade Appeals Committee, in any manner described above, the Provost (or their designee) should review all available information. To inform the Provost's (or designee's) decision, they have the prerogative to interview the student, the faculty member, the department head, the dean, or any of the faculty members present at the hearing.

The decision of the Provost (or designee) is final. Should that decision require a change to the student's final course grade in the SIS, the Provost (or designee) will instruct the Registrar to make that change. Any change thus made shall be documented by a formal memorandum from the Provost (or designee) laying out the rationale for the change, and that memorandum shall be available in the student's records.

Note: In all cases pertaining to an Academic Grade Appeal, if a student appeals a grade assigned by an administrator in the chain of review (department head or dean or Provost), the review skips that administrative level. If the student appeals a grade for a course in which the Provost is the instructor, the Chancellor shall serve as the final level of review.

Timeline for Academic Appeal

*insert attached image here.