

**POLICY****GRADE APPEAL**

Ridgewater College recognizes the long-standing and widely accepted practice that the individual classroom instructor is the final 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 or fairly and consistently applying these policies. A corollary to this 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 Ridgewater 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.

**Prejudice:** 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) or failed to give students enrolled in the course adequate notice of grading policies.

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.

A student who has questions regarding his/her course grade must speak with the instructor within two weeks from the date grades are posted online. If, after speaking 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, prejudicial, or in error according to the categories listed above, the student may make a formal grade appeal no later than two weeks after speaking with the instructor.\* **If no formal appeal is made by the end of these two weeks, then the student in general will have no rights to formally appeal the course grade.**

**Formal Grade Appeal**

Grade appeals will proceed according to the following steps:

**POLICY****GRADE APPEAL, continued**

**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 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, the instructor will respond to the student in writing.\*\* The instructor's response should include:

- A statement of the grading policy for the course.
- An explanation of how the student's grade was assigned in the course according to this policy.
- 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, or (c) an alternative proposed remedy.

If the student is not satisfied with the response provided by the instructor, he/she may proceed to Step 2.

**Step 2.** A written appeal will be submitted by the student to the Dean of Instruction. The appeal is a formal request to the Dean that the student's specific concerns about the grade be completely addressed. The student must complete the Grade Appeal Form, which requests the following:

- 2-A.** Copies of all materials submitted to the instructor in Step 1.
- 2-B.** 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.

**POLICY****GRADE APPEAL, continued**

- 2-C. Relevant information and documentation that supports the appeal.
- 2-D. Any additional items that the student deems relevant to his/her appeal.
- 2-E. The remedy sought.

The Step 2 Appeal is submitted to the Dean of Instruction, with a copy sent to the course instructor. The student should retain a copy of these materials for his/her records. The Dean will review the materials submitted by the student. This review may include a conference with the student and/or the course instructor and may include a joint meeting with both in order to reach a mutually agreeable resolution.

In cases in which a mutually agreeable solution is not reached, the Dean's Office will, within two weeks, issue a written opinion to the student and the course instructor.

It should be well-noted that there is no presumption or requirements that instructors will accept the Dean's recommendation.

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\* In cases in which the instructor is unavailable during this time, the student must speak with the instructor as soon as the instructor is available.

\*\* In cases where this is not possible (e.g., due to travel or other appropriate reasons), the instructor will respond to the student as soon as possible past the two-week limit.

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*History:*  
*01.27.03 Adopted*