

**GRADE APPEAL**

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**POLICY**

Ridgewater College recognizes the long-standing and widely accepted practice that the individual classroom instructor is the final authority in evaluating student performance in their 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 bias 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.

**Informal Process**

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 through direct discussion with the course instructor. Students needing support or more information about the process should visit with a college counselor.

A student who has questions regarding their course grade must discuss their concerns with the instructor within two weeks from the date grades are posted online. If the student has difficulty contacting the instructor, they should contact a counselor or the appropriate academic dean who will assist in contacting the instructor. If, after discussion with the instructor in a good-faith effort to resolve a grade dispute, a student still believes that their 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 discussion with the instructor.\* **If no formal appeal is made by the end of these two weeks, then the student will have no rights to formally appeal the course grade.**

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**Formal Process**

Formal 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 Grade Appeal Form, which requests the following:

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

The student should retain a copy of these materials for their 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 their 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, they may proceed to Step 2.

**Step 2.** A written appeal will be submitted by the student to the appropriate Dean of Instruction, with a copy sent to the course instructor. 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:

- a. Copies of all materials submitted to the instructor in Step 1.
- 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.

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- c. Relevant information and documentation that supports the appeal.
- d. Any additional items that the student deems relevant to their appeal.
- e. The remedy sought.

The student should retain a copy of these materials for their 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.

Each Academic Dean is responsible for maintaining original grade appeal paperwork by instructor in their office. Copies should be scanned to the student's file by student services staff. All parties involved in the grade appeal process are charged with maintaining confidentiality.

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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*

*02.20.2021 Proposed – Reviewed and Revised for Equity Compliance*

*11.17.2021 Revised*