

<b>Section:</b>	II.3.25	
<b>Title:</b>	Grade Appeals	
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<b>Approved By:</b>	Provost	
<b>Responsible Unit:</b>	Academic Affairs (609) 771-3080; academic@tcnj.edu	
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3.0	July 6, 2022	Revised
2.0	January 7, 2022	Revised
1.0	February 13, 2015	New Policy; Initial Release

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

This document outlines the procedure for appeals of course grades.

## **II. DEFINITIONS**

Course Grade - the final grade assigned at the completion of a course (or non-completion of a course within the applicable time period).

## **III. POLICY**

A complaint against an instructor involving allegations of sexual harassment or discrimination on the basis of a protected category is to be handled under and in accordance with the Policy Prohibiting Discrimination in the Workplace/Educational Environment and/or the Sexual Harassment, Misconduct, & Discrimination Policy (collectively, the “Discrimination Policies”). Independent determinations regarding the substantiation of such allegations are not within the jurisdiction of those rendering decisions on appeals under this Grade Appeals Policy. However, allegations substantiated under the Discrimination Policies may be considered by those decision makers.

The grade appeal policy applies to course grades for both undergraduate and graduate level courses offered in any term and in any modality. It is recognized that appeals of a course grade may rest on concerns (see below) regarding one or more specific graded assignments. This policy provides for a procedure to address such concerns within the framework of the grievance process. Any grade appeal process must be initiated only after the final grade has been posted for

the relevant course. Students who are concerned about a grade awarded on a specific assignment in a course are encouraged to communicate with the instructor immediately after receiving the grade for the assignment.

## Resolution with Instructor

Undergraduate or graduate students who wish to dispute a course grade must first attempt to resolve this matter through communication with the course instructor.

## First Level Appeal

If the student and instructor are unable to reach a resolution regarding a disputed grade, or if the student was unable to establish contact with the instructor, the student may initiate a first level appeal by filing a written appeal with the chair of the department in which the course was offered. A student who wishes to file a first level appeal must inform the department chair within a period of fifteen calendar days after meeting with and/or receiving a reply from the instructor of the course. In cases where the student was unable to establish contact with the instructor, a written appeal must be filed with the applicable department chair within thirty calendar days after the end of the semester in which the grade was posted. For the purposes of grade appeals, "end of the semester" is defined as the last day that grades are due in a given term. This date can be found on the TCNJ academic calendar. In cases where grades are submitted after the official deadline, a student may file a grievance up to thirty days after the grade is posted. It is the responsibility of the student to provide evidence that indicates that the grade was submitted after the official deadline (such as through documentation from the Office of Records and Registration). In cases where the chair was the instructor of the course in which the grade is being disputed, or if the chair feels it necessary to recuse him or herself, the dean of the school in which the course was taken shall appoint a tenured faculty member from the given school, preferably from the same department, to consider the first level appeal. First level appeals may be handled individually by the chair or by the chair's (or dean's, as applicable) designee or by an ad-hoc committee convened to review an individual student's specific grievance. Some departments may have a standing committee that addresses grade appeals as they arise.

It is the responsibility of the student to submit a written statement to the department chair or chair's (or dean's, as applicable) designee outlining the basis and grounds of the complaint. Valid reasons for disputing a grade include, but are not limited to the following: an error was made in calculating the grade; the instructor failed to notify students clearly and promptly of the criteria for grade determination; a grade was assigned based on reasons other than announced

criteria and standards; a grade was assigned based on factors other than academic achievement; published course policies were not followed properly. Appropriate documentation must be submitted as necessary to support the appeal. The department chair (or designee in the case of recusal) is responsible for responding to the student with a notification of the appeal decision (that the grade will be upheld or of the replacement grade that has been assigned) or a request for additional information within a period of thirty calendar days of the start of the academic semester (fall or spring) following the academic term in which the grade appeal was submitted. For example, a grade appeal submitted in the spring semester would need to be resolved within thirty days of the beginning of the next fall semester. It is the responsibility of the department chair (or designee) to evaluate relevant information and make a fair and informed decision.

### Second level appeal

Upon receipt of the first level appeal decision, a student may initiate a second level appeal with the Dean's Office of the school in which the course was offered by filing a written appeal (with appropriate documentation) within thirty calendar days after receiving the first level appeal decision. In cases where a dean must recuse him or herself, the Office of Academic Affairs shall appoint another dean at the College to consider the grade appeal.

Upon receipt of a student's official second level appeal, the dean shall determine the best protocol to handle the grievance. As such, the second level appeal may be addressed individually by the dean, by an appropriate designee from the dean's or school, or by a special committee convened to address the given second level appeal. The applicable dean shall respond with a decision on a second level appeal within thirty calendar days of the start of the academic semester (fall or spring) following the academic term in which the second level appeal was submitted to the dean; for example, a grade appeal submitted to the dean in the spring semester would need to be resolved within thirty days of the beginning of the next fall semester.

### Third level appeal

A student may appeal the second level appeal decision by initiating a third level appeal with the Office of Academic Affairs (the Provost or a Provost designee). However, the basis of this third level appeal cannot simply be dissatisfaction with the decision of the second level appeal. Rather, the basis for such an appeal may only occur on the grounds that the dean, or her/his designee(s), did not follow established College policy. Students who wish to file a third level appeal must do so within thirty calendar days after receiving the second level appeal decision, and must specifically outline how appropriate College policies were not

followed during the previous appeal processes. The Office of Academic Affairs has the authority to decide if the student's appeal has merit, in which case it may choose to review the matter further and then present a final decision regarding the grade in question. The decision of the Office of Academic Affairs (i.e., the third level appeal decision) is final and not subject to appeal. If the Office of Academic Affairs denies the basis of the student's appeal, then the second level appeal decision is final.

In each instance of an appeal process, whether first level, second level or third level, the following procedures will apply: The individual(s) conducting the appeal (i.e., the Department Chair, Dean, Provost or applicable designee) will gather relevant information. The individual(s) conducting the appeal will communicate separately with the student appealing the grade, the instructor, and any others the individual(s) conducting that appeal deem to have information relevant to the appeal, such as the Director of the Accessibility Resource Center.