



Academic Appeals Administrative Procedure

Applicability: This procedure is applicable to any appeal based on final grades, excluding grades resulting from dismissal from an academic program. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, or designee, is responsible for the academic appeals process. Violations of Non-academic standards shall be processed through the Student Code of Conduct process. The Vice President of Student Services will oversee processing violations of Non-academic Standards.

Final Grade– Challenges of a final course grade may be initiated by a student if it is believed that the grade represents an arbitrary or prejudiced evaluation or discriminates on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, or national origin. Students must follow the Grade Appeal Procedure, including the “W” grade.

Procedure:

The student must complete an Academic Appeals form that is included in all supporting documentation.¹

Step I: Scheduling a Faculty-Student Conference.

1. A student wishing to appeal a grade shall first confer face-to-face with the instructor of record (hereafter referred to as instructor) who assigned that grade.
2. The instructor-student conference shall take place within the first 10 business days of the regular semester immediately following the semester in which the disputed grade was assigned (summer sessions are not considered to be regular semesters).
3. At the request of the student or instructor, the Division Chair shall assign another division faculty member to witness the conference.
4. The reasons for questioning the grade shall be explained by the student, and the reasons for assigning the grade shall be explained by the instructor.
5. In a case where the instructor is not available for this conference (non-reappointment, retirement, death, extended absence from the area, or other debilitating circumstances), the instructor's Program Director shall act as the instructor of record.
6. An outcome of the conference between instructor and student is determined.
7. If the instructor finds that no grade change is justified, the student shall be so notified at the end of the conference.
8. If the instructor does decide to change the grade, the instructor shall complete a Change of Grade form and file it with the Registrar Office within five class days of the time that the conference occurs.

Step 2: The Student Appeals to the Program Coordinator or Division Chair

1. Following the instructor-student conference, a student receiving an unfavorable decision may file an appeal with the instructor's Division Chair. In the case of allied health programs, the student will appeal to the Program Director.
2. The appeal to the Division Chair/Program Director must be in writing and filed within five business days of the instructor-student conference.

¹ Adapted from Blue Ridge CTC Student Handbook,
<http://catalog.blueridgectc.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=233>

3. If the student fails to contact the Division Chair/Program Director within five business days after the faculty decision, the instructor's grade award shall be considered final.
4. The student's grade appeal to the Division Chair/Program Director must include the Grade Appeal form and supporting documentation, including but not limited to all completed assignments that have been returned to the student.
5. The Division Chair/Program Director will request the instructor submit a written justification for the assigned grade with supporting documentation that includes any assignments that have not been returned to the student.
6. In order to make an equitable decision, the Division Chair/Program Director may hold a hearing between the instructor and the student desiring a grade change.
7. If the instructor is the Program Director and the appeal is denied, the student may request the appeal proceed to the Division Chair and repeat Step 2 of the process steps 1-6.
8. Within 10 business days of receiving the student's appeal, the Division Chair shall provide both the student and the instructor with a written notice of the decision.
9. The written notice should give the reasons for the decision and may be given to the parties directly or mailed by certified mail.
10. Following notification of the Division Chair's decision to all parties, the Division Chair shall forward the original grade appeal file to the Vice President of Academic Affairs.
 1. The file should include a copy of the decision and all written materials including notes from oral investigations that were used for reaching the decision.
 2. The Division Chair/Program Director shall retain a copy of these files for five years.
11. Both the student and the instructor have the right to appeal the Program Director's decision to the Academic Appeal Committee.

Step 3: Appeal to the WVNCC Academic Appeal Committee.

1. The final step in the grade appeal process is the WVNCC Academic Appeal Committee. A student or an instructor may appeal the decision of a Division Chair to the Academic Appeal Committee by filing a written statement to the Vice President of Academic Affairs within five business days of receiving the Division Chair's report.
2. Within five business days of receiving the written appeal, the VPAA shall notify the Division Chair and the non-appealing party (instructor or student) that an appeal has been filed.
3. Within five business days of receiving an appeal, the VPAA shall notify the Academic Appeal Committee members of the pending appeal and request three faculty and two students to serve on the committee per the committee guidelines.
4. The WVNCC Academic Appeal Committee may consider all materials in the appeal file constructed by the Division Chair, i.e., the student's original appeal, the faculty member's written justification, the Program Director's written report, the student's written work for the course, and all other items the Division Chair may have used in reaching the decision. (In the event that the appeal relates to a Division Chair's grade, the VPAA should compile the appeal file.)
5. The student and the instructor shall each be entitled to submit additional written statements for consideration by the Academic Appeal Committee.

6. The Academic Appeal Committee shall hold a formal hearing including all parties having standing (see above):²

a) Conducting the Hearing:

- i) Once convened, the Academic Appeals Committee shall consider the facts and circumstances of the grade appeal. The student and the faculty member will provide validation of the specifics of the appeal and will only be present during the period of testimony. The Chair may set a time limit for oral presentations.
- ii) Student's Case: The student shall present his/her case without interruption, including the presentation of factual evidence.
- iii) Faculty Member's Case: The faculty member shall present his/her case without interruption, including the presentation of factual evidence providing validation of the specifics of the appeal.
- iv) Committee Questioning: Members of the Academic Appeals Committee shall have the right to ask direct questions to either party or to request additional information.
- v) The remaining discussion of the committee will held in private and confidence without any other participants.

7. The Academic Appeal Committee shall reach a decision within three business days of the hearing.

8. Within three days following the decision, the student, the instructor, the Program Director and the Division Chair shall be given written notice of the Committee's decision.

9. If the Academic Appeal Committee decides that a grade change is justified, and with the instructor's agreement, the instructor shall complete and submit a Change of Grade form to the Enrollment Management Office within five class (or business) days following the decision.

10. If the Academic Appeal Committee decides that a change in grade is warranted, but the instructor does not consent to the change, the Academic Appeal Committee will meet in discussion with the instructor with regard to its decision. If the instructor, again, will not consent to the grade change, the Academic Appeal Committee will instruct the Registrar's Office to make the appropriate grade change.

12. A decision of the Academic Appeal Committee may be appealed to the President of WVNCC, whose decision will be regarded as final.

Unusual Circumstance in Processing Grade Appeals

1. Some grade appeal cases may present practical obstacles for pursuing the procedures precisely as outlined above.
2. An instructor may be absent from campus during the applicable appeal period or the student may have an overwhelmingly compelling reason for a rapid decision.
3. Qualification for graduation may depend upon the outcome of a currently received grade.
4. In such circumstances, the VPAA has the discretion to modify the procedures as little as possible, to accommodate the special requirements of the situation.
5. In exercising this discretion, however, the VPAA should attempt to adhere to the spirit of the regular procedures.

² Adapted from Bridge Valley CTC, Operating Policy D-OP-20-14

6. The VPAA shall commit to writing and distributing these exceptional rules to parties having standing.
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