

Dickinson State University Grade Grievance Procedure

Adapted from the *Student Code of Conduct*: March 2017

For concerns related to Academic Misconduct consult the Student Code of Conduct section X within Student Services.

Students have the opportunity to resolve any academic grading concern through an informal resolution process and, if that fails to resolve the concern, a formal resolution process.

Informal Resolution Process

A. Instructor Level

If a student believes a grade received in a particular course is unwarranted, the student should first contact the instructor and arrange for a clarification/resolution conference. This is the first level of the appeal, and the informal level at which the University attempts to resolve these issues.

The academic appeal (either oral or written) must be filed with the instructor, within ten University business days after the incident or, when the appeal involves final course grades, within ten University business days after the start of the next semester (fall, spring, or summer). When the appeal timeline falls outside the fall or spring semesters, the instructor must respond within 10 University business days of the start of the following semester (fall, spring, or summer).

At the student/instructor level, the instructor explains the reasons for awarding a specific grade to the student in an informal conference and follows up in writing within one day of the conference. The instructor may choose to allow the grade to stand or to be changed.

B. Chair Level

If the student is not satisfied with the clarification or action resulting from the instructor conference, the student then has the option to carry the appeal to the department chair (according to the organizational structure). This is the second level of the appeal within the informal resolution process. The student must notify the department chair either verbally or in writing that the student requests further review of the appeal within ten University business days after the instructor conference.

At this level, the department chair acts as a mediator between the instructor and the student and tries to resolve the dispute through compromise. The chair will follow the steps outlined below:

1. The chair first examines pertinent documents in order to become familiar with the substantive issues of the appeal.
2. The chair then interviews both the student and the instructor. This may be done in a joint session but most often is accomplished in separate sessions.
3. The chair then makes a written recommendation for resolving the appeal. The recommendation must be forthcoming within ten University business days after receiving a request for review of the appeal from the appellant.
4. The written recommendation is forwarded to the instructor, the student, and the Dean of the college involved.
5. The recommendation is not binding on either the instructor or the student. The instructor still has the vested authority to allow a previously posted grade that has been appealed to stand. However, the weight of the chair's recommendation would indicate one course of action over the other.
6. If not satisfied with the recommendation, the student may carry the appeal to the formal level through a written appeal to the Dean of the college in which the academic department is located.
7. The written appeal must state specific reasons why the initial appeal was submitted and refer to previous attempts at the instructor and chair level to resolve the issue informally.
8. The college Dean will determine whether the request for formal resolution is valid or not. If determined that the appeal is not valid, the Dean will inform the student and cite specific reasons. The appeal will not go forward to the formal phase, and the decision will be considered final.

Formal Resolution Process

The third level of the appeal process is triggered when a student submits a written request on an official appeal form. The outcome of the third level of the appeal is binding, when the Dean invokes the formal resolution process. The third level is invoked only after the informal actions of clarification and mediation have not resolved the issue. The written request for a formal review of the appeal must be submitted to the appropriate Dean within ten University business days after the conclusion of the informal resolution phase.

The grade appeal form can be found here: [Grade Appeal Form](#)

Under no circumstances can a formal review of the appeal be initiated more than one semester (fall, spring, or summer) after the grade was posted. The formal appeal resolution must occur in the semester in which the grade was posted or within the semester immediately following the posting. At this level, the Dean acts as an arbitrator who makes a recommendation through a review committee to the Provost/VPAA.

Within ten University business days of the receipt of a written appeal requesting formal resolution, the Dean will convene a review committee, examine the pertinent evidence, and render a written opinion to the Provost/VPAA for concurrence and implementation. The ten University business day timeline may be extended by the Provost/VPAA because of extenuating circumstances.

The review committee will be chaired by the Dean and will include three other individuals, including: a Chair other than from the originating department, a faculty member from a department other than the originating department, and a representative from Student Affairs & Enrollment Management who will serve as an advocate for the appellant to ensure procedure correctness. The committee will follow the steps listed below:

1. The Dean and review committee first examine the recommendation from the Chair and the pertinent documents reviewed by the Chair from an evidential standpoint.
2. The Dean and review committee may interview the department Chair, the instructor, and the appellant.
3. The review committee may gather information from other sources in order to formulate an opinion.
4. After reaching a consensus, the Dean renders a written opinion of what the recommended action should be in the appeal to the Provost/VPAA.

Concurrence/Implementation Phase

Upon examination of the review committee's opinion, the Provost/VPAA may concur or not concur. This action must be taken within ten University business days of the receipt of the written opinion.

1. The VPAA will provide a written rationale for concurrence or non-concurrence. If the Provost/VPAA concurs with the opinion, the appellant, instructor, and review committee chair will be notified in writing of the recommended action from the Provost/VPAA's office.
2. If the Provost/VPAA does not concur with the opinion, this decision is also relayed in writing to the appellant, instructor, and review committee chair. In the case of non-concurrence by the Provost/VPAA where the procedure is perceived as being flawed, the Provost/VPAA may order the appeal reviewed again by another review committee with the chair designated by the Provost/VPAA. Timelines and procedures will be the same as stated above.
3. The decision of the review committee with concurrence by the Provost/VPAA is binding on both parties, and final.
4. The Provost/VPAA will notify all salient University entities of the decision and approve any document changes or actions within ten University business days of the decision.

Further Action

Any further action by either appellant or instructor beyond level three would be outside of the University as an external matter. The President of DSU does not serve as a "court of final appeals" in academic matters; this role is being reserved for the Provost/VPAA in the opinion concurrence/implementation phase of the appeal.

10.3.5 Conflict of Interest

If any of the appeal coordinators (Chair, Dean, Provost/VPAA) have situations involving a student in their own classes, where this process is to be implemented, the coordinator will be replaced by another individual of equal responsibility and rank. This decision will be made by the individual's immediate supervisor who will designate a replacement.