

Westfield State University

Policy Number: AP010 **Effective Date:** 2022-08-15

Grade Appeal Process

1. Purpose and Overview

Westfield State University is committed to the principles of fairness and academic integrity. This policy provides a transparent and equitable process for undergraduate and graduate students to appeal a final course grade that they believe has been awarded in a manner inconsistent with university policies or is the result of factual error or arbitrary and capricious grading. The university recognizes the right of instructors to determine course grades, and this policy is not intended to challenge their professional judgment, but rather to ensure that grades are assigned in a fair and consistent manner.

This document outlines the grounds for a grade appeal, the informal and formal procedures for resolving grade disputes, the timeline for each stage of the process, and the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. The primary objective is to provide a clear and structured pathway for the impartial review of a final grade, ensuring that every student is treated fairly and that the academic standards of the university are upheld.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate students at Westfield State University who are seeking to appeal a final grade in any course. It also applies to all faculty members, instructors, department chairs, deans, and other university officials involved in the grade appeal process. This policy does not apply to grades or academic sanctions resulting from findings of academic dishonesty, which are handled under the university's Academic Integrity Policy (AP007).

3. Grounds for Appeal

A student may appeal a final grade only if there is clear evidence that one or more of the following conditions have been met:

- **Clerical or Factual Error:** There was a demonstrable error in the calculation or recording of the grade.
- **Arbitrary or Capricious Grading:** The grade was assigned in a manner that was not consistent with the standards and criteria outlined in the course syllabus, or was based on factors other than the student's academic performance in the course. This includes assigning a grade that is substantially different from those assigned to other students for work of similar quality without a legitimate academic reason.
- **Violation of University Policy:** The grade was assigned in a manner that violated another university policy.

The burden of proof rests with the student to provide clear and convincing evidence to support their appeal.

4. Procedures for Grade Appeal

The grade appeal process consists of two main stages: an informal resolution process and a formal appeal process. Students are strongly encouraged to pursue an informal resolution before initiating a formal appeal.

4.1. Informal Resolution

1. **Consultation with the Instructor:** Within the first fifteen (15) business days of the semester following the one in which the grade was awarded, the student must first seek to resolve the issue directly with the course instructor. The student should present their concerns and any supporting evidence to the instructor in a professional and respectful manner.
2. **Instructor's Response:** The instructor will review the student's concerns and provide a response, typically within ten (10) business days. If the instructor agrees that a grade change is warranted, they will submit a Grade Change Form to the Office of the University Registrar.

4.2. Formal Appeal Process

If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal resolution, or if the instructor is unresponsive, the student may initiate a formal appeal. The formal appeal must be submitted in writing to the chair of the department in which the course is offered within ten (10) business days of the instructor's decision or the deadline for the instructor's response.

Step 1: Department-Level Appeal

- The student must submit a formal written appeal to the department chair, which includes:
 - A completed Grade Appeal Form.
 - A detailed statement outlining the grounds for the appeal and the specific remedy sought.
 - All relevant supporting documentation, such as the course syllabus, graded assignments, and any correspondence with the instructor.
- The department chair will review the appeal and may meet with the student and the instructor, either separately or together, to discuss the matter. The chair will issue a written decision within fifteen (15) business days.

Step 2: College-Level Appeal

- If the student is not satisfied with the department chair's decision, they may appeal to the dean of the college in which the course is offered. This appeal must be submitted in writing within ten (10) business days of receiving the department chair's decision.
- The dean or their designee will review the appeal and all related documentation. The dean will issue a final written decision within fifteen (15) business days. The dean's decision at the college level is final.

5. Appeal Committee Procedures

In complex cases, the dean may convene a College Grade Appeal Committee to review the appeal. The committee will consist of at least three members, including faculty and at least one student representative. The committee will review all materials, may hold a hearing with the student and instructor, and will make a recommendation to the

dean. The dean will consider the committee’s recommendation in making their final decision.

6. Final Decisions

The decision of the dean of the college is the final step in the grade appeal process. The decision will be communicated in writing to the student, the instructor, the department chair, and the Office of the University Registrar. If a grade change is approved, the Office of the University Registrar will update the student’s academic record accordingly.

7. Related Policies

- AP007: Academic Integrity Policy
- AP012: Student Code of Conduct

8. Contact Information

For questions or assistance with the grade appeal process, please contact:

Office of the University Registrar Westfield State University 123 University Drive
Westfield, ST 12345 (123) 456-7890 registrar@westfield.edu

9. Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes
1.0	2022-08-15	Office of the Provost	Initial version of the policy.
1.1	2023-09-01	University Senate	Updated timeline for informal resolution.
1.2	2024-01-15	Office of the Registrar	Minor clarifications to the grounds for appeal.