

College of Arts and Sciences Grade Dispute Policy

The College of Arts and Sciences and its faculty are dedicated to fair and accurate appraisal of students' coursework. When disagreements arise over final grades assigned for a course, students and faculty are to follow the procedures below for resolving the dispute. This policy does not apply to grade disputes arising over alleged violations of the university's Academic Integrity Policy; such disputes are considered by the Campus Life Committee. Neither does this policy apply to grade disputes arising over alleged violations of university policy by the faculty member; such disputes are considered by the University Dispute Resolution Committee.

Informal Grade Dispute Procedure

The first steps in resolving a grade dispute are informal. A student who disputes a grade should discuss the reason for the grade with the faculty member who assigned the grade prior to initiating any formal grade appeal. If an instructor has a dispute resolution procedure described in the course syllabus, that procedure must be consistent with this policy and should first have been followed. No student should discuss any grade-related complaint with a faculty member's chair or dean without first discussing the complaint with the faculty member who assigned the grade.

Formal Grade Dispute Procedure

No formal grade dispute procedure will be invoked when the magnitude of disagreement is less than one full letter grade (i.e., disagreements over A- versus B will not trigger a formal grade dispute resolution procedure).

A student who has completed informal efforts at resolution, has a disagreement amounting to at least one full letter grade, and wishes to invoke the formal grade dispute procedure should understand that in the course of pursuing the dispute, her or his coursework may, with the faculty member's consent, be referred to qualified external graders, most likely the faculty member's departmental colleagues who teach in the same field. The student should understand that external referral involves an independent grading of the work. As a result, external referral may lead to a recommendation for lowering the grade as well as a recommendation for raising the grade, or to no change at all.

1. It is best if the formal complaint is made as soon as possible, but must be lodged within 28 calendar days after the beginning of the next fall or spring semester after receipt of the disputed grade.
2. The complaint must be in writing with full explanation and supporting materials. If the complaint is not against a chair, it should be sent to the chair of the department to which the instructor belongs. If it is against a chair; it should be sent to the dean.
3. The chair or dean reviews the case, based on all relevant information, and determines whether the complaint involves an alleged violation either of the Academic Integrity Policy or other university policy. If so, the complaint is referred to the Campus Life Committee or the University Dispute Resolution Committee, as appropriate.
4. The chair or dean may refer a blind copy of the student's coursework to one or more qualified external graders. The external grader will report his or her findings to the chair or dean.
5. After reviewing all relevant materials, the chair or dean will submit a written recommendation for the resolution of the dispute to the student and the instructor. This recommendation will be advisory only. The instructor will have no obligation to follow the recommendation, but should inform the student, the chair, and the dean. The instructor's decision about the grade will be final.
6. If questions arise about the application of this policy, the chair or dean may request additional review by the division's chairs' council.