

## *Policy and Procedure for Resolving Grade Disputes*

### **Grade Dispute Policy**

The PLU School of Nursing is dedicated to fair and accurate appraisal of each student's coursework. When disagreements arise over grades assigned in a course, students and faculty should first follow the School's established procedure for informal grade dispute resolution. If the informal procedure is unsuccessful in resolving the dispute, students and faculty will undertake the School's formal grade dispute resolution procedure\*.

#### ***Procedural Steps:***

1. A student considering a grade dispute must first read this document in its entirety and discuss it with their assigned faculty advisor before proceeding to step 2. If the student's advisor is also the faculty member responsible for submitting the disputed grade, the student should contact the School of Nursing admission coordinator to determine an alternative advisor for these proceedings.
2. A student who chooses to dispute a grade should first initiate the **informal grade dispute process** by addressing the matter with the faculty member responsible for submitting the grade in the following manner:
  - a. Submit to the responsible faculty member a written statement, detailing why the grade is being disputed and the grade and/or remedy the student is seeking, and requesting an appointment time to meet with the faculty member.
    - i. The student is responsible for providing a copy of the written statement to the School of Nursing office to be placed in the student's official School of Nursing file.
    - ii. The written statement should be available during the discussion between the student and the responsible faculty member.
  - b. After the initial discussion, the responsible faculty member should provide a written statement detailing the issues discussed, including why or why not the grade will be changed.
    - i. Both the responsible faculty member and the student should sign this written statement; the student should have an opportunity to provide additional written comments.
    - ii. The faculty member is responsible for submitting this statement, along with any additional written comments from the student, to the School of Nursing office to be placed in the student's official School of Nursing file.
3. If the matter is not resolved between the student and the responsible faculty member, the student may request assistance and advocacy from his or her faculty advisor. With regard to written statements, requests for meetings and discussions held between the responsible faculty member, the faculty advisor, and the student, should follow the same procedures and guidelines as outlined in Step #2.
4. If the matter is not resolved after discussion with the faculty member and the faculty advisor, the student may initiate the **formal grade dispute process** by appealing to the Recruitment, Admission, and Progression (RAP) Committee. The RAP committee will make a recommendation to the dean, who will make the final determination. If the dean is the faculty member responsible for submitting the disputed grade and/or is the student's advisor, the student may appeal to the provost. With regard to written statements, requests for an appeal, and discussions held between the responsible faculty member, the faculty advisor, the student and the dean or provost, should follow the same procedures and guidelines as outlined in Step #2.
5. If the student chooses to pursue the matter beyond Step #4, he or she may appeal to the University Dispute Resolution Committee (UDRC). It is expected that the procedure outlined here will be followed in its entirety before an appeal is made to the UDRC. All copies of written statements from the student's official School of Nursing file regarding the grade dispute will be made available to the UDRC upon request.

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\*Some courses required for completion of the nursing major are offered in academic departments other than the School of Nursing. These courses are administered by the respective departments with regard to scheduling, evaluation, grading, etc. Grades earned in such courses cannot be disputed through the School of Nursing process outlined here, and must be addressed with the respective academic department as appropriate.

## Informal Grade Dispute Guidelines

1. Before a student initiates the formal grade dispute process, s/he must complete the informal grade dispute process.
2. 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 formalized grade appeal.
3. No student should discuss any grade-related complaint with the dean or with any other faculty member or committee, except his or her advisor, until the informal grade dispute process has concluded (the completion of step 2b under “Procedural Steps”). If necessary, the student may request the assistance of his or her advisor. If the student’s advisor is the faculty member responsible for submitting the grade, the student should contact the School of Nursing admission coordinator to request that an alternative advisor be assigned to act as his or her advocate.
4. The difference between the disputed grades must be one full letter grade or higher, with the exception of those grades that could result in dismissal from, or delay in, the nursing program. (Examples: A- vs. A, *No dispute*; B vs. A, *Can be disputed*; C- vs. C, *Can be disputed*.)
5. Grounds for grade disputes should arise from documented incidents of discrimination and/or harassment based on race, religion, age, color, creed, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or disability\*\*, and/or arising from non-compliance with established PLU and/or School of Nursing policies and procedures.
6. The grade must be disputed within seven (7) working days after the grade has been officially posted, and prior to beginning the first day of any courses for which the disputed course/grade is prerequisite.
7. 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, his or her coursework may, with the faculty member’s consent, be referred to qualified external graders, most likely the faculty member’s school colleagues who teach in the same area. **The student should understand that external referral may lead to a recommendation for lowering the grade as well as to a recommendation for raising the grade or to no change at all.**
8. If the dispute is not resolved at the informal level, the student may appeal to the Recruitment, Admission, and Progression (RAP) Committee.

## Formal Grade Dispute Guidelines

1. A formal grade complaint must be submitted to the School’s Recruitment, Admissions, and Progression (RAP) committee within the first 10 *working* days after a grade has been officially posted.
2. The RAP committee will consider only those grade disputes arising from documented incidents of discrimination or harassment, or non-compliance as detailed in step #5 of the informal grade dispute procedure.
3. The RAP committee may request a meeting with the student, the responsible faculty member, and/or the student’s faculty advisor.
4. The RAP committee will provide the dean with a written statement summarizing the committee’s findings. The dean may then pass this statement on to the student, the responsible faculty member, and the student’s faculty advisor. The dean may provide the responsible faculty member with a recommendation that supports the original grade, or supports the submission of a grade either higher or lower than the original grade, or supports the implementation of some other remedy, (e.g., additional examinations or assignments). Authority to change a student’s grade will remain with the faculty member responsible for submitting the grade, except in cases of discrimination or harassment as detailed in step #5 of the informal grade dispute procedure.
5. If the dean is the faculty member responsible for submitting the disputed grade and/or is the student’s advisor, the student may appeal to the provost.

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**\*\* Documented, proven discrimination and/or harassment based on disability will not be tolerated. However, certain physical and psychological expectations exist for those students enrolled in nursing courses, per the [Physical And Psychological Expectations Of Nursing Students Preparing For Professional Nursing Practice](#). A student’s inability to fulfill program requirements, due in part or in whole to physical and/or psychological limitations, may affect the student’s grade in a nursing course or courses. Such grades do not necessarily imply discrimination and/or harassment on the part of the faculty member assigning such grades.**

6. All written statements become part of the student's educational record and will be included in the student's official School of Nursing file.
7. As a general guideline, response time from receipt of a written request to a reply to that request should be no longer than ten (10) *working* days. However, time constraints necessitated by the university and/or School of Nursing calendar may prevent this from occurring.

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