

15. Grading Policy

- 15.1 Grades are under the sole control of the faculty member involved and may not be changed by anyone other than the instructor unless the change is the result of an appeal as outlined in the Student Grievance Procedures section in the Undergraduate Bulletin. The relevant section states

A student's appeal of a course grade is handled according to a distinct policy and does not fall under the College-wide Grievance Procedures. In those cases in which a student does not understand, or does not agree with, the grade they have received on an assignment or examination, the student must first seek clarification from the professor who issued the grade. If after meeting with the professor the student remains convinced that the grade is wrong, he or she may have recourse to the following procedure:

Step 1: The student notifies the Academic Dean that he or she either does not understand or does not agree with a grade. The Academic Dean will inquire to make sure that the student has first taken adequate steps to resolve things with the professor before allowing the process to proceed to Step 2. If the professor who issues the contested grade is the Academic Dean, then the Academic Dean's role throughout this process will be taken over by his/her Department Chair

Step 2: The Academic Dean meets with the professor and student together, to witness and help facilitate a conversation about the graded assignment or examination.

Step 3: If the issue still has not been resolved after Steps 1 and 2, the student may file a formal grade appeal with the Academic Dean. This must be done within five business days of the meeting described in Step 2. Formal grade appeals, moreover, may not be filed more than five weeks after an assignment has been returned to the student, or the case of final exams or other end-of-term assignments, they may not be appealed after five weeks have elapsed in the following semester. The formal grade appeal consists simply in notifying the Academic Dean in writing (letter or email) that the student is appealing the grade in question. The Academic Dean will notify the professor that a formal appeal has been filed. The Dean then assumes responsibility for discretely gathering relevant materials and testimony from both the professor and the student. The professor and the student will observe proper respect for the process and the chain of command. The student is not permitted to lobby other administrators, professors, staff, or board members. Neither is the professor.

Step 4: The Academic Dean will consult with the Vice President for Academic Affairs (V.P.A.A.) on the appointment of the grade appeal

committee, which shall consist of four full-time members of the teaching faculty whose expertise and experience most closely correspond to the assignment in question. The Academic Dean may appoint himself or herself as one of the four committee members but is not obliged to do so. If the Academic Dean is on the committee, then he or she is its chair. If not, then the Academic Dean shall appoint the committee's chair. In either case, the Academic Dean will provide whatever materials and testimony he or she has gathered, from the student and the professor, to the committee.

Step 5: The committee then convenes in a timely manner to review the assignment. **All proceedings of the grade appeal committee will be kept strictly confidential and will be guided by the "Instructions for Grade Appeal Committees", which are found in the Faculty Handbook (Appendix 19.6).** The committee can leave the grade unchanged or by a majority vote raise or lower the grade. Once the committee has made its decision, the Academic Dean shall handle all communication with the professor and the student. No explanations, qualifications, or justifications will be communicated to the student. The V.P.A.A. will receive a report from the Academic Dean, so that he or she may certify that there were no procedural violations. If the VPAA determines that there has been a procedural violation, he or she will instruct the Dean to redo the process. Otherwise the committee's decision on the student's grade appeal is final and not subject to further appeal.

Any situation that cannot be covered by the above procedure is to be resolved through discussion between the Academic Dean and the VPAA.

- 15.2 Each faculty member should clearly explain his or her grading policy orally to each class at the beginning of each semester, and should act consistently within the stated policy. Furthermore, the grading policy must be included on the syllabus for each course.
- 15.3 At the end of each semester, all faculty must turn in all grades to the Registrar on the date announced by the Registrar. Undergraduate College Faculty are to use the grading system described in the [Christendom College Undergraduate Bulletin](#) under *Academic Policies*. Note that Christendom College does not admit the use of A-plus or D-minus. Graduate Faculty are to use the grading system described under "Grading Policy" in the [Notre Dame Graduate School of Christendom College Bulletin](#).
Faculty are expected to inform the VPAA of provisions they have made for the possibility they have made in case they are not able to submit final grades.
- 15.4 Faculty are to observe the policy governing Incompletes appearing under "Academic Policies" in the [Christendom College Undergraduate Bulletin](#).

APPENDIX 19.6: Instructions for Grade Appeal Committees

(Adopted by the Faculty Senate, Wed., Sept 19, 2018)

Introduction

It is important that a grade appeal committee have a clear understanding of what precisely they are being asked to do, and of the various strictures that necessarily govern their communications with all parties including those directly concerned. In the first place, it is important to note that the grade appeal process is not a disciplinary process for the professor in question, nor a "teaching moment" for the student, but simply a process for ensuring that grade appeals are handled in an expeditious and confidential manner. In the normal course of events, formal grade appeals should be extremely rare; almost all situations in which a student "disagrees" with a grade can be resolved through normal academic mentoring and communication. Nevertheless, when a formal appeal has been filed and a committee has been formed, the members of the committee are not functioning, *sensu stricto*, as academic mentors either to the student in question or to their colleague. **In this instance, they are functioning simply as an appellate panel.** Hence, the following guidelines will govern grade appeal proceedings:

I. Procedure

- a. The committee of four will be appointed by the Academic Dean, after the Dean has consulted with the VPAA - if the Academic Dean's grade is being appealed, his role throughout the process will be taken by the Academic Dean's department chair.
- b. The Academic Dean will gather all relevant materials and testimony from the appealing student and the professor. He will pass them along to the committee, as described in the bulletin and this Handbook (15.1) .
- c. The committee will review all the material submitted by the Academic Dean. They may leave the grade unchanged, or raise, or lower the grade. The committee chairman (if someone other than the Academic Dean) will communicate their decision to the Academic Dean (**keep in mind that if the vote of the committee is split 2-2, the grade is unchanged**). The Academic Dean will inform the student and the professor of the outcome (but not the vote tally), with no explanations, qualifications, or justifications given to the student (see below for instructions on communicating with the professor). The decision to change or not change the grade is final, and not subject to further appeal except on procedural grounds.

II. Criteria for changing a grade.

- a. The role of the appeal committee is not to grade the artifact *de novo*. They are simply charged with determining whether the original grade is "in the ballpark," or nowhere near, on the basis of the artifact and all relevant supporting material (e.g. syllabus, assignment sheet, etc.). The committee must recognize that on any faculty there is diversity in grading rigor; a certain spectrum of rigor among professors on a college faculty is the inevitable byproduct of legitimate academic freedom, diversity in training and professional experience, and differences in expertise.
- b. "In the ballpark" is defined as being within one full letter grade inclusive, in either

direction, of the grade that was given. If a majority (3/4) of the committee vote that the contested grade is *nowhere near* "the ballpark" (i.e. it is clearly *more than* a full letter grade off), then the grade will be changed (raised or lowered). The new grade must also be approved by a 3/4 majority

III. Confidentiality and Communications

- a. **The proceedings of the committee must be recognized as strictly confidential.** After a formal appeal has been filed and the committee empaneled, communication with the appealing student and the professor shall be handled exclusively by the Academic Dean, and shall be limited to 1) assisting the student and professor to understand the nature and rules of the process, 2) conveying the unadorned result, and 3) if necessary, emphasizing the finality of the decision. Other members of the committee are forbidden from engaging in back-channel communication with the student or the professor.
- b. The Academic Dean is responsible for making a report to the VPAA on the process and its result. If the VPAA determines that there were gross procedural violations, he/she may order the Academic Dean to re-do the process.
- c. The Academic Dean is the one tasked with notifying the professor if the committee votes to change the grade. After the VPAA has been briefed on the results, he and the Academic Dean may, at their discretion, sit down with the professor and help them understand the committee's reasoning.