

Del Mar College Final Grade Appeal Procedure

Grounds for Grade Appeal

The evaluation or assessment of student performance leading to the assignment of the final course grade involves the exercise of independent and professional judgment by individual college faculty. Assessment of the student's academic performance is one of the major responsibilities of faculty members. A student who is uncertain about whether a grade should be appealed or who needs additional information about the grade appeals process should contact the office of the Dean of Student Engagement and Retention. The burden of proof is always on the student to prove that a change of grade is appropriate action in his or her case. Students must adhere to the timelines delineated in this policy or lose the right to appeal.

The procedures described in this policy are available only for appeal of a semester or term grade based on one or more of the following reasons:

1. A mathematical error in calculation of the grade or clerical error in recording of the grade that remains uncorrected;
2. The assignment of a grade to a particular student by application of more exacting requirements than were applied to other students in the course;
3. The assignment of a grade to a particular student on some basis other than performance in the course;
4. The assignment of a grade by a substantial departure from the faculty member's previously announced standards;
5. Extenuating circumstances such as illness, incapacity, or absences of the instructor generate uncertainty regarding appropriateness of the grade assigned.

Procedure

Step One

The student must complete, and submit to the instructor, Part A of the Grade Appeal Submission and Tracking (GASAT) form, available from the Office of the Dean of Student Engagement and Retention, no later than the end of the last day of the following next long semester after the final grades have been posted. Materials relevant to the appeal are submitted to the instructor along with the GASAT form. The instructor has ten (10) working days from the date of receipt of the GASAT form Part A to meet with the student, complete Part B, include a written explanation for either decision, and provide a copy to the student. If the student and instructor come to a resolution, the process ends. The instructor will then forward the original packet back to the Dean of Student Engagement and Retention and the matter is resolved.

If the discussion between the instructor and student does not lead to a resolution of the grade dispute and the student wishes to continue the appeal process, the instructor has ten (10) working days from the time of receiving the GASAT form to complete Part B and forward it to the department Chair, along with attached documentary evidence from both the student and the instructor. The instructor will provide a copy to the student and to the Dean of Student Engagement and Retention.

Step Two

The department Chair has ten (10) working days after receipt of the appeal form to review the student's case for appeal as well as the instructor's comments. The Chair or designee must meet with the instructor and the student and attempt to resolve the grade dispute. If the grade dispute is resolved, the process ends at this time. If the dispute is not resolved at this level, the Chair or designee must, within ten (10) working days, complete Part C of the GASAT form, include a written explanation for either decision, and provide the student with the original packet. The Chair will provide a copy to the instructor, the Dean of division and the Dean of Student Engagement and Retention.

If the written explanation is not provided or if the student is not satisfied with this explanation, the student may request a hearing by the Grade Appeal Committee by completing Part D of the original GASAT form, include the attached documentation/packet provided by the department Chair, and returning it to the department Chair within ten (10) working days of receiving a copy of the GASAT form with the Chair's comments.

Grade Appeal Committee

Membership

The department Chair or designee shall serve as Chair of the Appeal Committee in a non-voting capacity. The committee shall consist of five (5) voting members that shall include at least one faculty member from the same department as the student and instructor involved. Selection of the members shall be facilitated by the divisional Dean or designee.

Representation

A grade appeal is an administrative process and neither the faculty member nor the student may be represented by legal counsel; however, each may have a representative to offer private counsel or advice. Such advisors may not address the committee nor question witnesses.

Burden of Proof

The student has the burden of proving that, by a preponderance of the evidence, inappropriate grading procedures have occurred.

Convening

The Appeal Committee shall convene not later than ten (10) working days after submission of the GASAT form to the divisional Dean and both the student and involved instructor(s) must be present. In the event that either the student or the faculty member is absent at the time of the appeal hearing due to illness, resignation, or any other reason found valid by the Grade Appeal Committee, the committee may proceed with the hearing or delay the hearing until a more appropriate time. The instructor whose grade is being appealed and the student may present witnesses, evidence, and testimony. The faculty member and the student shall place all available pertinent grade records and student class work in the hands of the Grade Appeal Committee. The instructor whose grade is being appealed and the student shall have the opportunity to question witnesses. All written correspondence related to the grade appeal shall be presented by the parties. No-one else shall be permitted to attend the deliberations. Minutes and/or an audio-recording of the hearing must be kept and archived in the office of the Dean of Student Engagement and Retention.

One of two outcomes is allowed as a result of the hearing:

1. A minimum of three committee members constitutes a quorum. If a simple majority of those present votes in favor of changing the grade and the divisional Dean certifies the process, the grade shall be changed;
2. In the event the faculty member concerned refuses to participate in the appeals procedure or refuses to provide available materials essential for the appeals procedure, the Grade Appeal Committee may, by simple majority, vote to either sustain the grade or initiate a grade change.

Recommendations

Within ten (10) working days of first convening, the Appeal Committee Chair completes Part E of the GASAT form and submits it with the committee's recommendation to the divisional Dean. The Dean shall review the process, all related materials, and minutes within five (5) working days of receiving all materials. If the Dean certifies that the policy was followed, the grade appeal is completed and submitted to the Registrar's office. If indicated by the Grade Appeal Committee in its findings, a grade change is initiated as indicated on the official grade change form available at the Registrar's office.

If the Dean finds substantive errors in the process that could have reasonably altered the decision reached, reconsideration by a separate Grade Appeal Committee shall be initiated by the Dean. The Dean shall advise all parties of the outcome of the process review. The Dean cannot reverse the decision of the Grade Appeal Committee but, based solely on identifying procedural error, can only send it to a second committee.

Grade Change

If the Grade Appeal Committee rules in favor of a grade change, the Dean shall, by way of official grade change forms available at the Registrar's office, initiate the grade change.

Decisions reached through this process are final and may not be appealed.

Time Requirements

If at any point a deadline is not met by faculty/administrator, the process moves to the next procedural level. If at any point a deadline is not met by the student, the process ends. An extension of time limits, for extenuating circumstances, may be requested in writing by the student or the instructor through the Dean or a designee of the Dean. All parties subsequently affected will be notified of the extension by the Dean or designee.