

**Southern Connecticut State University
Faculty Senate
Grade Appeal Procedure and Form**

Preliminary Information

In accordance with SCSU's educational mission, this policy articulates the procedure and criteria for the appeal of a final course grade. This Grade Appeal Procedure is intended to be fair, equitable and transparent.

Following discussion with the Instructor¹, the Grade Appeals Procedure consists of two parts:

Level 1 – Mediation with Department Chairperson / Program Director (hereafter referred to as 'Chairperson')

Level 2 – University Academic Standing Committee (UASC)

See Section V. below for detailed information about each part of the appeal process.

I. Grounds for Grade Appeals: Palpable Injustice

In the interest of clear communication to Students about University standards and procedures, the following definitions and descriptions of the acceptable grounds for a grade appeal are presented:

The sole acceptable basis for a grade appeal is the demonstrable commission of a "palpable injustice" in the determination of a Student's final grade by the Instructor. Students may use the appeals process when there is evidence to show that:

- A. A mathematical or clerical error resulted in the entry of an incorrect grade; or
- B. A final grade was determined by methods and criteria different from those used for determining the final grades of others in the same class; or
- C. A final grade was assigned arbitrarily, capriciously, or on the basis of bias or prejudice, without reference to grading criteria as established (for instance) in the syllabus, assignment instructions, and/or University catalog.

The University Academic Standing Committee (UASC) shall make its determination in appeals brought before it solely upon the grounds listed above; a grade change is not warranted, for instance, when the Committee simply disagrees with the grade assigned by the Instructor, would have assessed the Student's work differently, would have graded differently, would have rounded off to the next highest grade, or would have preferred a different evaluation procedure.

II. Assumptions

- A. The determination of grades² is the responsibility of the Instructor of the course.
- B. Grade appeal procedures apply only to the change of a grade under conditions specified in section 4.2.2.2 of the faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement. The appeal process may be initiated after a final grade has been submitted or after a request for a late withdrawal has been denied by the Instructor.
- C. All parties work in good faith to arrive at a resolution during all stages of the process.

¹ "Discussion" shall include written as well as oral forms of communication, including, for instance, email exchanges.

² By "grade" is meant any of the grades specified in the University Undergraduate or Graduate Catalogs.

III. General Guidelines

- A. Grade appeals must be initiated on an individual basis by the Student claiming a palpable injustice.
- B. A Student may submit a grade appeal within one of four timeframes:

First - Appeals are reviewed in the fall or spring semester that follows the semester in which the grade was earned, hereafter referred to as Appeal Semester (see V. A-D). This applies to courses taken during summer, winter, or spring break sessions. For courses of an 8-week (or fewer) duration, the grade appeal may be made in either of the next two 8-week course periods directly following the semester in which the grade was earned, or during the summer if applicable. The deadlines for the 8-week courses appear in parentheses after the description of each level of the appeals process in section V of this document.

Second - If a grade earned during the spring semester or a summer term prevents a Student from continuing in the Student's program or major, an appeal may be filed during the summer (see section VI.).

Third - If a Student is appealing an "F" grade for which the origin was an "Incomplete" grade that reverted to "F" after the expiration of the thirty-day period to complete coursework after the beginning of the following semester, the appeal timetable shall begin when the "F" grade becomes available to the Student and shall follow the normal academic-year appeal schedule, adjusted to allow for the same number of weeks.

Fourth - Graduating Students shall typically appeal the grade following the established Grade Appeal Procedure. If, however, a graduating Student is appealing a grade that prevents the Student from graduating, it is recognized that time of graduation may be affected if the established Grade Appeal Procedure is followed. In this case, the Instructor, Department Chairperson, and UASC shall expedite the Student's appeal with all due procedural promptness.

- C. The week of Spring Break shall not be counted when determining how long the grade appeal has been in process.
- D. If the Student's graduation may be delayed due to the appeal process, permission may be given by a Department Chairperson for the Student to take subsequent or required courses within the Department.
- E. All Grade Appeal forms and documents must be typed; no handwritten forms shall be accepted.
- F. For purposes of record-keeping and administrative accounting to governmental regulatory authorities, a copy of the grade appeal form must be filed with the Dean of the Instructor's school or college at each stage of the appeal process. The Chairperson is responsible for forwarding copies to the Dean's office for Level 1 appeals, and UASC is responsible for forwarding copies to the Dean's office for Level 2 appeals.
- G. Students are strongly advised to keep their own copies of all grade appeal forms and supporting documents.

IV. Discussion with Instructor

- A. Initiate Discussion

Deadlines: end of week 1 of the Appeal Semester for Student to initiate discussion of disputed grade with the Instructor; end of week 2 to reach agreement. (8-week courses: same.)

Student initiates discussion with the Instructor. The Student and Instructor attempt to settle the matter in good faith. If an agreement is reached to change the grade, the Instructor shall submit the grade change to the

Registrar's Office within one week. If an agreement has not been reached by the end of week 2, the Student may initiate a Level 1 appeal by submitting the Grade Appeal Form to the Instructor's Chairperson by the end of week 3.

B. Absent Instructor

An Instructor shall be deemed absent when either of the following apply: 1) the Instructor is no longer employed by the university; 2) the Student, with the help of the Instructor's Chairperson, has not succeeded in eliciting from the Instructor a response to his or her queries over a period of two (2) weeks. In this case, the Student may initiate a Level 1 appeal by submitting the Grade Appeal Form to the Instructor's Chairperson by the end of week 3.

V. Appeals

- A. **Level 1:** Deadlines: end of week 3 of the Appeal Semester for Student to submit Grade Appeal Form to Instructor's Chairperson; end of week 5 to reach agreement. (8-week courses, end of week 3 to submit and end of week 4 to reach agreement).

1. Mediation with Instructor's Chairperson

The Student completes the Grade Appeal Form for Level 1 and sends it to the Chairperson by the end of week 3 (8-week courses, end of week 3). The Chairperson shall assist in mediating between the Instructor and the Student in an attempt to settle the matter. Except in the case of an absent instructor (see below), the Chairperson has no adjudicatory role in the appeals process. If an agreement is reached to change the grade, the Instructor shall submit the grade change to the Registrar's Office within one week of the agreement. The Chairperson shall confirm that the grade has been changed within two weeks of the agreement. The record of the appeal and of any agreement shall be filed by the Chairperson with the appropriate Dean. If these parties fail to reach an agreement by the end of week 5 (8-week courses, end of week 4), the Student may go to Level 2 of this grade appeal procedure by submitting the Grade Appeal Form to UASC by the end of week 6 (8-week courses, end of week 5).

If the Instructor is the Chairperson, the Student may appeal the grade directly to UASC (Level 2).

2. Absent Instructor

In the case of an absent Instructor (as defined in IV.B.), the Student completes the Grade Appeal Form for Level 1 and sends it to the Chairperson by the end of week 3 (8-week courses, end of week 3). The Chairperson shall have the authority to adjust or uphold the grade. If an agreement is reached to change the grade, the Chairperson shall submit the grade change to the Registrar's Office within one week of the agreement. The record of the appeal and of any agreement shall be filed by the Chairperson with the appropriate Dean. If these parties fail to reach an agreement by the end of week 5 (8-week courses, end of week 4), the Student may go to Level 2 of this grade appeal procedure by submitting the Grade Appeal Form to UASC by the end of week 6 (8-week courses, end of week 5).

- B. **Level 2:** University Academic Standing Committee (UASC)

Deadlines: end of week 6 of the Appeal Semester for Student to submit grade appeal form to UASC, via the Faculty Senate President; end of week 9 for UASC to render decision. (8-week courses, end of week 5 to submit and end of week 7 to reach decision.)

The Student completes the Grade Appeal Form for Level 2 and sends it, along with any additional explanation and documentation the Student chooses to include, to the President of the University Faculty Senate, who shall forward it to UASC by the end of week 6 (8-week courses, end of week 5). Upon receipt of the Grade Appeal Form, UASC shall forward notice of the appeal to the appropriate Dean. The sole basis for UASC's deliberations and decision concerning a Student's grade appeal shall be the standard of "palpable injustice" as defined by Article I of this document. UASC shall render its decision by the end of week 9 (8-week courses, end of week 7), following a hearing to which Instructor, Student, and others deemed appropriate shall be invited. The Student shall have the right to be accompanied by an advisor or support person, who is a silent non-participant in the hearing. Delays shall not be allowed on the basis of an advisor or support person's scheduling conflicts. The Student, Instructor, Chairperson, and relevant Dean shall be notified in writing of the Committee's decision, which shall include a written rationale. UASC shall notify the Registrar within one week of the decision if a grade change is required.

Method: If a grade change is required, the UASC shall determine the grade adjustment to the assignment(s) according to their knowledge of the assignment(s) as provided by the information in the Grade Appeal and the UASC's assessment of the quality of the Student's response(s) to the assignment(s). The UASC shall be allowed to request additional information from the Instructor and/or the Department Chairperson.

In cases where the assignment(s) is/are too remote from UASC members' disciplinary expertise to allow informed judgment, the UASC shall be allowed to ask for assistance from no more than two (2) faculty in appropriate fields of study but shall not confer with faculty in the Department that offered the course from which the Grade Appeal proceeded. Faculty asked to consult with the UASC shall be selected by the UASC from related department(s) or from a different college or university. No faculty asked to consult with the UASC shall be chosen who has prior knowledge of the grade appeal in progress. In making such queries, the UASC shall exercise due diligence to protect the anonymity of the Student and the Instructor.

On the basis of all available information, the UASC shall assign a new course grade based on the grading proportions described in the course syllabus and shall be allowed to request additional information from the Instructor about such proportions and grade weighting.

Should the UASC need additional assistance to reach a decision, the UASC shall be allowed to consult with the Faculty Senate Executive Committee.

The decision of UASC shall be final.

C. Deadlines and deadline extensions

1. "By the 2nd week" means 2 weeks (14 calendar days) into the semester, starting with the 1st day of classes. Other deadlines are to be interpreted similarly.
2. A Dean of the appropriate school or college may extend any grade appeal deadline, only at the Student's request, and only if the Student provides written evidence that significant extenuating circumstances led to the missed deadline. The request must be made, in writing, no later than the end of the first week of classes following the original grade appeal semester.

- D. For purposes of record-keeping and administrative accounting to governmental regulatory authorities, a copy of the grade appeal form must be filed with the Dean of the Instructor's school or college at each stage of the appeal process. The Chairperson is responsible for forwarding copies to the Dean's office for a level 1 appeal; the President of the Faculty Senate is responsible for forwarding copies to the Dean's office simultaneously with forwarding a Level 2 appeal to UASC; and UASC is responsible for forwarding copies to the Dean's office after a Level 2 appeal has been completed.

- E. Upon receipt of a written grade appeal form the Faculty Senate President will notify UASC Chair. UASC shall designate a grade appeal committee made up of two UASC committee members and UASC Chair. The members of the appeals committee select a Chair from the committee's membership. The appeal committee Chair notifies all interested parties (Dean, Student, Faculty Member, Committee members) of possible dates and times to conduct the appeal. Once all committee members respond, the date of the appeal is set, the appeal is heard, and a determination is made in writing to all interested parties
- F. A grade appeal committee may not include a faculty member from the Student's home department (major or minor) nor from the department that offered the course in which the grade is being appealed. Prospective members of a grade appeal committee must self-identify or be identified by UASC Chair if there is any other conflict of interest (for example, personal acquaintance with the Student; supervisory or professional connection to the Student through a Student organization, internship, employment; etc.) and they may not serve on the grade appeal committee.

VI. Summer Grade Appeal

A. Assumptions/Conditions

If a Student earns a grade in a course in the spring semester that prevents the Student from continuing in a program or major, the Student is eligible to appeal the grade during the summer.

B. Required Procedures

Summer session grade appeals follow the procedures described in Section V, subsections A through D, above, except that the deadlines for each part of process shall be amended as follows:

1. Discussion with Instructor: one week after course grades become available to Students.
2. Level 1—Mediation with Instructor's Chairperson: end of week 2 to submit and end of week 3 to complete mediation.
3. Level 2—UASC: end of week 4 to submit and end of week 6 for UASC to render final decision.

When the timeline established for the summer appeals process by this document would result in a delay of the Student's progress towards degree completion, all parties shall expedite the Student's appeal with all due procedural promptness.

Instructors are strongly encouraged to participate in the Summer Grade Appeal Process either in person or remotely.

C. Faculty Compensation

Insofar as the Summer Grade Appeal would not take place during the Academic/Contract year, the Instructor and the members of UASC, and, if applicable, SCSU faculty asked to consult with the UASC for grade adjustment, shall be compensated for their participation according to the following formula unless they are employed under a full-year contract. The members of UASC shall receive 4 hours of non-teaching credit load for each appeal; the chair of the appeal hearing shall receive 6 hours of non-teaching credit load for each appeal; the Instructor shall receive 2

hours of non-teaching credit load for each appeal. SCSU faculty asked to consult with UASC for grade adjustment shall receive 1 hour of non-teaching credit for each appeal.³

VII. Interpretation

This section may not be invoked with respect to the interpretation of any item of the Collective Bargaining Agreement. If an issue develops concerning interpretation of this document, whether initiated by the Faculty Senate, a Faculty Member, or any member of the Administration, a binding decision on such an issue shall be made:

- A. by agreement between the President of the University and a majority of the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate or, failing to obtain agreement on an issue by this method;
- B. by a committee consisting of one member selected by the Senate Executive Committee, one selected by the President of the University, and one selected by the first two committee members, who, by a two-thirds vote shall decide such an issue.

VIII. Implementation and Amendment

- A. This document shall take effect upon approval by a two-thirds vote of the Faculty Senate with the concurrence of the President of the University.
- B. This document may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the Faculty Senate with the concurrence of the University President.

Grade Appeal Process Timeline

- For academic-year appeals, all events are counted from the first week of the semester following the semester in which the disputed grade was earned ("the Appeal Semester").
- For 8-week courses, all events are counted from the first week of either of the next two 8-week course periods following the semester in which the disputed grade was earned.
- For summer appeals, all events are counted from the time that course grades become available to Students.
- For "F" grades, automatically assigned after expiration of an "I" grade, all events are counted from the time that the "F" grade becomes available to Students and the schedule is modified accordingly.

³ See CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement, article 10.12.1: Duties with No Load Credit. "Bargaining unit duties involving no load credit that are within the University but other than normal assignments may be offered to full-time members up to a total of 135 hours per semester (prorated for intersession or summer session as appropriate). Compensation for each 45 hours of work shall be one load credit at the compensation rates listed in Article 11."

	Spring / Fall	8-Week Course	Summer Appeal
Initiation of Discussion with Instructor	Week 1	Week 1	Week 1
Completion of Discussion with Instructor	Week 2	Week 2	Week 1
Level 1: Initiation of Mediation with Chairperson / Program Director (Grade Appeal Form—Level 1, Part 1)	Week 3	Week 3	Week 2
Level 1: Completion of Mediation with Chairperson / Program Director (Grade Appeal Form—Level 1, Part 2)	Week 5	Week 4	Week 3
Level 2: Appeal to University Academic Standing Committee (Grade Appeal Form—Level 2)	Week 6	Week 5	Week 4
Level 2: Grade Appeal Hearing with University Academic Standing Committee	ASAP	ASAP	ASAP
Level 2: Decision by University Academic Standing Committee	Week 9	Week 7	Week 6

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Grade Appeal Form

LEVEL 1—Part A: Initiating an Appeal

To be completed by the Student and submitted to the Instructor and the Instructor’s Department Chairperson / Program Director after the Student has communicated with the Instructor.

Name: (Last) _____ (First) _____ (M.I.) _____

Student ID: _____

Course Department Code: _____ Course Number: _____ Section: _____

Indicate semester course taken: FALL _____ SPRING _____ WINTER _____ SUMMER _____

Year course taken: _____ Instructor: _____

Explain below, in detail, why you think a palpable injustice has occurred. Refer to the definition of palpable injustice in item I (page 1) of the Grade Appeal Procedure Document. Please also attach any relevant documentation. Use additional sheets if necessary:

STUDENT SIGNATURE* _____

Date: _____

CHAIRPERSON SIGNATURE* _____

Date: _____

*Signatures from both parties signify that the Student and Chairperson / Program Director have met and discussed the grade appeal, and that the Chairperson / Program Director has initiated mediation efforts with the Instructor or rendered a decision in the case of an Absent Instructor. Note: except in the case of an absent instructor, the Chairperson has no adjudicatory role in the appeals process. In cases, where the Chairperson / Program Director is the Instructor of the course, and the Student is moving directly to a Level 2 appeal, no signature from the Chairperson/Program Director is required.

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Grade Appeal Form

LEVEL 1–Part B: Documenting the Outcome of the Appeal

To be completed by the Department Chairperson / Program Director after mediation efforts with the Instructor have been completed or after the Chairperson / Program Director has rendered a decision in the case of an Absent Instructor. The Chairperson / Program Director must return the completed form to the Student and provide copies to the Instructor and the Dean of the Instructor’s school or college.

1. Document Chairperson’s / Program Director’s efforts to mediate the grade dispute (e.g. date or dates of contact and/or discussion, etc.). In the case of an Absent Instructor, indicate this.

2. Was a resolution reached? (Check one) YES NO

3. Provide a summary of grade appeal decision. If resolution not reached, the Student may proceed to Level 2. (Use additional sheets if necessary.)

Grade Prior to Appeal _____

Grade Following Appeal (if changed) _____

STUDENT SIGNATURE* _____

Date: _____

INSTRUCTOR SIGNATURE* _____

Date: _____

CHAIRPERSON SIGNATURE* _____

Date: _____

*Signatures from all three parties signify that the Chairperson’s / Program Director’s mediation efforts have been completed and have culminated either in an agreement by the Instructor to change the grade or in a denial of the appeal. In cases of an Absent Instructor, no Instructor signature is needed. In cases where the Chairperson / Program Director is the Instructor of the course and the Student is moving directly to a Level 2 appeal, no signature from the Chairperson / Program Director is required.

It is the chair’s responsibility to distribute the completed form, sequentially, to the Student and the Instructor for their signatures, and to provide copies of the completed and signed form to the Student, the Instructor, and the Dean of the instructor’s school or college.

NOTE: All parties shall retain copies of this completed form and supporting documentation.

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Grade Appeal Form

LEVEL 2: Appealing to the University Academic Standing Committee

The Student submits this form along with the completed and signed forms for Level 1, Parts A and B, and all supporting documentation to the Faculty Senate President. Students may include additional explanation and documentation of the appeal if they wish. The Faculty Senate President shall forward the entire appeal packet to the University Academic Standing Committee and the Dean of the instructor’s school or college.

(To be completed by Student)

1. Date of grade appeal submission to Faculty Senate President: (dd) ____ / (mm) ____ / (yr) ____

(To be completed by Faculty Senate President)

2. Date grade appeal received from Student: (dd) ____ / (mm) ____ / (yr) ____

3. Date grade appeal forwarded to UASC and to relevant Dean: (dd) ____ / (mm) ____ / (yr) ____

(To be completed by UASC)

4. Provide a written rationale of UASC grade appeal decision. (Use additional sheets if necessary.)

SIGNATURE OF UASC CHAIRPERSON(S) _____

SIGNATURE OF UASC CHAIRPERSON(S) _____

Date of Grade Appeal Final Decision: (dd) ____ / (mm) ____ / (yr) ____

Grade Prior to Appeal: _____ Grade Following Appeal: _____

Date Grade Change Submitted to Registrar (if applicable): (dd) ____ / (mm) ____ / (yr) ____

Date Decision and Written Rationale Sent to Student, Instructor, Department Chairperson / Program Director, and relevant Dean: (dd) ____ / (mm) ____ / (yr) ____

NOTE: All parties shall retain copies of this completed form and supporting documentation.