

Student Grade Appeal Process

This process outlines procedures a student shall follow to challenge the final grade assigned by the person responsible for the academic endeavor, hereafter referred to as the instructor. Confidentiality must be maintained throughout the process.

In order to successfully appeal a final course grade, a student must offer convincing written arguments that good cause exists for mandating a change of grade. If a student fails to appeal a final grade within seven (7) days from the date the grade is posted to the student's record, the student forfeits the right to appeal.

Each of the following reasons, if supported by sufficient written evidence, shall constitute "good cause" for a grade appeal:

- A. Assignment of a grade that is malicious or discriminatory. This is applicable if, in determining the grade, the instructor clearly did not apply the same standards used for grading other members of the class whose work and behavior were similar to those of the appealing student.
- B. Assignment of a grade that is arbitrary or capricious. This is applicable if the instructor apparently had no discernible rationale for arriving at the grade given.
- C. Assignment of a grade that has resulted from innocent human error. The instructor reported an incorrect grade as the consequence of a mistake in computation, recording, or in some other mechanical aspect of the grading process.

None of the following reasons shall constitute "good cause" for the purpose of appealing a grade.

- A. Disagreement with the course requirements established by the instructor.
- B. Disagreement with the grading standards established by the instructor.
- C. Disagreement with the judgment of the instructor in applying grading standards as long as they have made a reasonable effort in good faith to be fair and consistent in exercising that judgment. Good faith on the instructor's part shall be assumed unless the student can offer convincing arguments to the contrary.
- D. The student's desire or "need" for a particular grade. While this sort of reason may seem compelling to the individual on a personal level, it shall not be considered "good cause" for purposes of appeal and shall not be regarded as relevant in consideration of the student's appeal. Examples of the student's need to have a higher grade include but are not limited to, the need to graduate, transfer course credits, gain employment or promotion, or qualify for a more advanced course.

The following steps constitute the established administrative procedures for appealing a final grade. Individuals involved in the process will vary depending on if the grade appeal is regarding a credit or non-credit course. If the appeal concerns a final grade given by a division director/program manager, an administrative substitute (determined by the VPAASS) will be selected to act in their place throughout the process. All paperwork and documentation of Steps 1 through 3 will be kept in the office of the division director (credit courses) or program manager (non-credit courses). If the appeal is filed against the VPAASS/Dean of WSCE, an administrator substitute will be selected by the College President to act in their place.

Step 1 - Initial Appeal

The student must submit a written appeal of the final grade to the course instructor; the “cause” of the appeal needs to be clearly stated. A student email may serve as a written appeal if the student clearly states in their email that the intent of the email is to initiate a grade appeal; only Hagerstown Community College student email addresses can be used for grade appeals initiated through email. This must be done within seven (7) days from the date the grade is posted to the student’s record.

Step 2 - Conference

The instructor/student conference will occur as soon as possible. This conference may take place remotely over the phone, online, or in person. The occurrence and outcome of the meeting will be documented by the instructor who assigned the grade; a copy of the documentation will go to both parties.

Step 3 - Secondary Appeal

If the initial appeal cannot be resolved, the student has seven (7) calendar days after the student/instructor conference to appeal, in writing, to the division director (credit course) or program manager (non-credit courses); the “cause” of the appeal must be clearly stated and match the “cause” in the initial appeal. After reviewing the written materials, the division director (credit)/program manager (non-credit) will schedule a conference with the student within ten (10) work days; this conference can take place in person, online or over the phone. When appropriate and possible, the instructor may participate in this meeting. If the secondary appeal is not resolved, the student has seven (7) work days from the date of the conference to appeal the grade, in writing, to the VPAASS (credit) or Dean of WSCE (non-credit).

Step 4 - Final Appeal

At this stage, the VPAASS/Dean of WSCE will review all written materials submitted by the student/division director/program manager regarding the grade appeal and may conduct further inquiries. The student can request a meeting with the VPAASS/Dean of WSCE in their written Appeal, but a meeting is not required. A decision shall be rendered within fifteen (15) work days after the written appeal is submitted. The decision of the VPAASS/Dean of WSCE shall be final.