



Academic Appeals Administrative Procedure

Applicability: This procedure is applicable to any appeal based on final grades, excluding grades resulting from dismissal from an academic program. The Vice President for Academic Affairs, or designee, is responsible for managing the academic appeals process. Violations of Non-academic standards shall be processed through the Student Code of Conduct process. The Vice President of Student Services will oversee processing violations of Non-academic Standards.

Final Grade– Challenges of a final course grade, including the “W” grade, may be initiated by a student if it is believed that the grade represents an arbitrary or prejudiced evaluation or discrimination on any basis, including by not limited to, race, color, creed, sex, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or national origin.

Procedure:

The student must complete an Academic Appeals form that includes all supporting documentation.¹

Step I: Scheduling a Faculty-Student Conference.

1. A student wishing to appeal a grade shall first confer with the instructor of record (hereafter referred to as instructor) who assigned that grade. The goal of this meeting to allow for a resolution in an information setting.
2. The instructor-student conference shall take place within the first 10 business days of the regular semester immediately following the semester in which the disputed grade was assigned (summer sessions are not considered to be regular semesters). At the request of the student or instructor, the Division Chair shall assign another division faculty member to witness the conference but shall not participate except as a witness the meeting.
3. The reasons for questioning the grade shall be explained by the student, and the reasons for assigning the grade shall be explained by the instructor. Any supporting documentation for either party shall be shared at this meeting. The witness, if present, will not receive any documentation.
4. In a case where the instructor is not available for this conference (non-reappointment, retirement, death, extended absence from the area, or other debilitating circumstances, or Title IX concerns), the instructor's Program Director/Division Chair shall act as the instructor of record.
5. If the instructor finds that no grade change is justified, the student shall be so notified at the end of the conference and in writing on the appeal form via the student's College email.
6. If the instructor agrees to change the grade, the instructor shall complete a Change of Grade form and file it with the Registrar Office within five business days from the date of the conference. A copy of the grade change form shall be forwarded by the instructor to the Chief Academic Officer's office.

Step 2: The Student Appeals to the Allied Health Program Director or Division Chair (non-allied health programs)

¹ Adapted from Blue Ridge CTC Student Handbook,
<http://catalog.blueridgectc.edu/content.php?catoid=11&navoid=233>
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1. Following the instructor-student conference, the decision may be appealed by the student by filing an appeal with the instructor's Division Chair OR in the case of allied health programs, the student must appeal to the Program Director.
2. The appeal to the designated administrator in Step #1 must be provided in writing within five business days of the initial conference for appeal.
3. If the student fails to contact the designated administrator within five business days after the appeal conference, the instructor's decision shall be considered final.
4. The student's grade appeal to the designated administrator must include the Grade Appeal form and supporting documentation, including but not limited to, all completed assignments that have been returned to the student.
5. Immediately upon receipt of the student appeal, the designated administrator will request the instructor submit a written justification for the assigned grade with supporting documentation that includes any assignments that have not been returned to the student within five business days.
6. The designated administrator has ten business days to review the documentation and, if needed, may contact the instructor and the student requesting additional information. The designated administrator will notify both parties of the decision via College email.
7. If the appeal is denied, the student may request in writing and within 3 business days the appeal proceed to the next level administrator. *For allied health programs*, it is the Division Chair. *Non-allied health program* students will proceed to the Office of the Chief Academic Officer (Step 3).
8. The student and faculty member have five business days to submit all supporting documentation to the allied health Division Chair.
9. Within five days of receiving all supporting documentation, the allied health Division Chair shall notify the student and faculty in writing via College email notice of the decision.
10. The written notice shall include the reasons for the decisions and will be sent to the parties involved through College email or certified email.
11. Both the student and the instructor have the right to appeal the Program Director/Division Chair decision to the Academic Appeal Committee.

Step 3: Appeal to the WVNCC Academic Appeal Committee.

1. The final step in the grade appeal process is the WVNCC Academic Appeal Committee. A student or an instructor may appeal the decision from previous step to the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) within five business days of receiving the decision. All supporting documentation must be submitted to the Chief Academic Officer's office within 5 days of the appeal request by the designated administrator in the previous step.
2. Within five business days of receiving the written appeal, the CAO shall notify the Division Chair and the non-appealing party (instructor or student) that an appeal has been filed. The CAO shall also notify the Academic Appeal Committee members of the pending appeal and request three faculty and two students serve on the committee per the committee guidelines. The committee shall meet to review all documentation within ten days of the notification by the CAO.
4. Once convened, the WVNCC Academic Appeal Committee shall consider all materials in the appeal file constructed by final reviewer, i.e., the student's original appeal, the faculty member's written justification, the designated administrator's written report, the student's written work for the course, and all other items used in reaching the decision.
5. The student and the instructor shall each be entitled to submit additional written statements for consideration by the Academic Appeal Committee prior to the scheduled hearing.

6. The Academic Appeal Committee shall hold a formal hearing including all parties having standing (see above):²

a) Conducting the Hearing:

- i) Once convened, the Academic Appeals Committee shall consider the facts and circumstances of the grade appeal. The student and the faculty member will provide validation of the specifics of the appeal and will only be permitted to speak during their presentation of their positions. Each party may designate an advocate to speak on his or her behalf, but only one person may speak during the hearing. The Chair shall set a time limit for oral presentations.
- ii) Student's Case: The student, or designated advocate, shall present his/her case without interruption, including the presentation of factual evidence.
- iii) Faculty Member's Case: The faculty member, or designated advocate, shall present his/her case without interruption, including the presentation of factual evidence.
- iv) Committee Questioning: Members of the Academic Appeals Committee shall have the right to ask direct questions to either party or to request additional information. The Chair will set a deadline for any additional information.
- v) The remaining discussion of the committee will be held in closed session.

7. The Academic Appeal Committee shall reach a decision at the end of the hearing unless further evidence has been requested. In the case of a second meeting, the committee will convene within five business days of the first hearing. The second meeting will only consist of the committee members.

8. Within three days following the decision, the student, the instructor, the Program Director and the Division Chair shall be given written notice of the Committee's decision. Notification will be delivered via college email.

9. If the Academic Appeal Committee determines a grade change is warranted, the Chair will instruct the Registrar's Office to make the appropriate grade change.

Step Four: Appeal to the President

1. Either party may appeal a decision of the Academic Appeal Committee within three business days to the President of WVNCC, whose decision will be regarded as final.

2. Once the President has reached a decision, the student, instructor, and VPAA will be notified of the decision. CAO may notify the program director, division chair, and appeal committee of the final decision.

3. All documentation including the appeal form, supporting documentation, and final decision will be sent to the Registrar's office to be included in the student's records and a copy to the CAO's office.

Unusual Circumstance in Processing Grade Appeals

Some grade appeal cases may present practical obstacles for pursuing the procedures precisely as outlined above. Qualification for graduation may depend upon the outcome of a currently received grade. In such circumstances, the CAO has the discretion to modify the procedures as little as possible, to accommodate the special requirements of the situation. In exercising this discretion, however, the CAO should attempt to adhere to the spirit of the regular procedures.

² Adapted from Bridge Valley CTC, Operating Policy D-OP-20-14

The CAO shall commit to writing and distributing these exceptional rules to parties having standing in the academic appeal.