

Grade Appeal Policy

Effective Winter 2024 and Subsequent Quarters

Approved by School of Education Faculty Council April 13, 2021

Reviewed by School of Education Faculty and Staff on March 02, 2021 | Revised: August 01, 2022

Policy adopted from the UW School of Social Work

Link to Grade Appeal webpage, with instructions and online submission form:

<https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/soe/student-grade-appeal-submission>

PART A- OVERVIEW

The School of Education follows UW Tacoma's and UW's general policy for grade appeals but with more specific guidance. Students who are enrolled across different academic units (e.g., double-majoring/double-minoring, taking elective courses in another program, etc.) will need to follow the home unit's grade appeal policy, which may be different from the UW Tacoma School of Education. Here is a link to UW Tacoma's Grade Appeal Policy:

<https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/uwt/registrar/grading-policy>

Students in the School of Education at UW Tacoma (hereinafter referred to as student or students) who have concerns or questions about course assignments or grades before final grades are posted at the end of each quarter should directly contact the instructor of record to seek clarification. Students should make sure their questions are not answered in Canvas, and in course documents such as assignment handouts, rubrics, or course syllabi. If there is an error in computing your grade, these are matters that are usually resolved with the instructor directly.

Please keep the following in mind before submitting a formal grade appeal:

1. As long as the feedback and grades/points awarded line up with what the instructor laid out in the syllabus, it is unlikely to be overturned at any level. Rare exceptions are made when there is a miscalculation of grades, percentages, points, or equivalents, or unless the student is able to prove the instructor was acting in a manner that was arbitrarily and/or capriciously.
2. Out of respect for faculty academic freedom, which all UW faculty across ranks are entitled to, we do not review grade appeals where a student disagrees with or dislikes an instructor's grading methods as noted in the course syllabus.
3. Only final course grades that are posted at the end of the quarter may be appealed. That is, individual grades earned within a course (e.g., for assignments, participation, etc.) are not appealable. However, a student may reference individually graded assignments when submitting a grade appeal as supporting evidence.
4. Allegations of bias and/or discrimination are generally different from claims made in formal grade appeals. However, a student who believes there is evidence of a direct correlation between such allegations and grading practices that they believe are arbitrary and/or capricious may make a case in their written justification. See the end of this document for how to proceed with these types of allegations outside of the grade appeal process.

PART B- INSTRUCTIONS

A student in the School of Education who believes that an instructor made an error in the assignment of a final course grade; who believe a grade recording error or omission has occurred; or who believes that any grading procedures in the course were conducted in an arbitrary or capricious matter, shall first discuss the matter with the instructor *before the end of the following academic quarter* (note: the timeline does not usually include summer quarter; appeals during this time may be deferred to autumn quarter, although all efforts will be made to resolve them in a timely manner). To avoid delays, we encourage a student who plans on appealing to start the process within the first week of instruction in the subsequent quarter. Using UW e-mail, the student will start the process by submitting the following to the instructor of record, by the timeline noted above:

1. A succinctly written statement describing how the student believes the grade was: made in error, arbitrary, and/or capricious with clear descriptions and examples.
2. As much relevant information and supporting documentation as possible to accompany the written justification. All supporting documents should be clearly labeled as *Appendix 1, Appendix 2, Appendix 3*, etc. and directly connected to your appeal (see Student Grade Appeal Template on website for more instructions and examples for how to structure your written justification). Examples of relevant supporting materials:
 - a. Copy of the course syllabus.
 - b. Copy of assignment handouts, graded assignments, rubrics/grading materials, etc.
 - c. Copies of any relevant communication with the instructor.
 - d. *Documents irrelevant to the situation will not be reviewed.*

If the instructor is willing to change the originally assigned grade, there will be a direct reply to the student with a cc to the academic advisor. The academic advisor will complete the grade change process set forth by the UW Tacoma Office of the Registrar.

If the instructor is not willing to change the originally assigned grade, and the student is satisfied with the answer and/or no longer wishes to pursue next steps in the appeal process, no action is needed.

However, if the student is not satisfied with the instructor's explanation, the student, **no later than ten (10) calendar days** after the final discussion with the instructor, should submit a full appeal online here: <https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/soe/student-grade-appeal-submission>

PART C- PROCEDURES

After receipt of the full grade appeal and supporting document, the student will receive an automatic confirmation that the materials were submitted. Thereafter, the procedures below will be followed:

1. **Within ten (10) calendar days** of receiving the student's appeal, the Faculty Program Director¹ will consult with the instructor of record to ensure that the evaluation of the student's performance was fair and reasonable.

¹ If the Faculty Program Director is the instructor of record, then the matter will be handled by the Dean (replace Faculty Program Director with Dean). If the Dean is the instructor of record, an administrator outside of the School of Education appointed by the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs will handle the appeal (replace Dean with EVCAA or delegate). In such a situation, the student will be notified of the parties involved; however, the same general process will be followed.

- a. If the determination was the grade was fair and reasonable, then the Faculty Program Director will notify the instructor, student, and the student's Academic Advisor with a written explanation of the decision.
 - i. If a student disagrees with the Faculty Program Director's decision because there is still a concern regarding an arbitrary and/or capricious grading practice, and/or a final error, a final appeal may be submitted to the School of Education's Elected Faculty Council **within five (5) calendar days**. The student should send an e-mail to uwted@uw.edu (Subject Line: Request for EFC Grade Appeal Review/Quarter LastName) to request a final review with a cc to the Faculty Program Director.
 1. Please provide a brief request about why you are making this final appeal, including a clear explanation of why you believe the Faculty Program Director did not adequately address your concern(s).
 2. At this point, the School of Education will forward all of your original materials for the EFC's review- you do not need to resubmit.
 - b. If the Faculty Program Director believes the determination of the grade was not accurate, fair, and reasonable, **and** the instructor refuses to change the original grade, then Step 2 and subsequent procedures will be followed.
2. Should the Faculty Program Director believe the instructor's conduct was arbitrary or capricious based on the evidence provided and/or an error was not properly rectified, **and** the instructor of record declines to revise the student's final grade, the Chair of the Elected Faculty Council and Dean will be notified **within five (5) calendar days**.
3. The Dean will ask the School of Education's Elected Faculty Council² to evaluate the student's performance and assign a final grade **within ten (10) calendar days**.
 - a. When a final decision is made, the Chair of the School of Education's Elected Faculty Council³ shall notify the Academic Advisor, Faculty Program Director, Dean, and the student of the outcome in writing.
 - b. The Dean will notify the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UW Tacoma of the final decision.
4. The School of Education's Elected Faculty Council's decision is final with no opportunities for further appeal.
5. After receipt of the final decision, the academic advisor will, if needed, complete the grade change process set forth by the UW Tacoma Office of the Registrar.

Graduate students only- may pursue a grievance, outside of the grade appeal process, through UW Policy 3.8/Academic Grievance Procedure through the UW Graduate School Office of the Dean, if they believe they have been subjected to unfair treatment in the administration of academic policies: <https://grad.uw.edu/policies/3-8-academic-grievance-procedure/>

Once a student submits a written appeal, all subsequent actions on the appeal are held at the program level. Decisions related to grade appeals do not appear on the student's transcript.

² The School of Education's Elected Council represents the delegated faculty body to review appeals at this level per UW guidelines on grade appeals.

³ If the Chair or any member of the Elected Faculty Council is the instructor of record, then the Dean will ensure appropriate replacements are found to review the appeal, to avoid conflicts of interest.

PART D- ALLEGATIONS OF BIAS & DISCRIMINATION

Grade appeals are usually separate from allegations of bias or discrimination. If you have concerns about bias or discrimination, please refer to the following resources, or contact your academic advisor (note: you may pursue different procedures at any time, including concurrently):

1. UW Tacoma Bias Incident Reporting: <https://az1.tacoma.uw.edu/multi/bias/landing>
2. UW Office of Civil Rights: <https://www.washington.edu/cr-investigations/>

Note: *some extensions to the time-lines in this procedure may need to be extended due to emergencies, unusual circumstances, or university holidays. If a delay is expected, the student will be notified in writing of any delays by the School of Education.*