

Grade Appeal and Grievance Policies & Procedures

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INTRODUCTION

This document describes the grade appeal and grievance policies and procedures that students may consult at any point during their program.

PART 1: Grade Appeal Policy

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

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

A) OVERVIEW

The School of Education follows UW Tacoma's and UW's general policy for grade appeals, but with more specific guidance. Students enrolled in different academic units (e.g., double-majoring or double-minoring, taking elective courses in another program) must follow the home unit's grade appeal policy, which may differ 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 students) who have concerns or questions about course assignments or grades before final grades are posted at the end of each quarter should contact the instructor of record directly to seek clarification. Students should ensure that their questions are addressed in Canvas and course documents such as assignment handouts, rubrics, or the course syllabus. If an error occurs in computing the course grade, it can usually be resolved directly with the instructor and in accordance with the timeline below.

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

1. As long as the feedback and grades/points awarded align 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 when the student can prove the instructor was grading in a manner that was arbitrary and/or capricious.
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 through this process. That is, individual grades earned within a course (e.g., for assignments, participation, etc.) are not subject to appeal. 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 (see final section for additional guidance). However, a student who believes there is evidence of a direct correlation between such allegations and grading practices that they believe lack procedural uniformity 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.

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 believes that 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 manner, shall first discuss the concern with the instructor *before the end of the following academic quarter* (note: the timeline does not usually include summer quarter. However, if the program does not require summer enrollments, then spring quarter appeals may be deferred to autumn quarter). All efforts will be made to resolve the grade appeal in a timely manner. Using UW email, 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 should 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 include:
 - 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, a direct reply will be sent to the student with a cc to the academic advisor. The academic advisor will complete the grade change process as outlined by the UW Tacoma Office of the Registrar.

If the instructor is unwilling to change the originally assigned grade and the student is satisfied with the answer and/or no longer wishes to pursue the 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>

Please note that the School of Education's responses to grade appeals, unless otherwise specified, will be noted in calendar days, excluding weekends, holidays, and term breaks.

C) PROCEDURES

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

Within ten (10) calendar days of receiving the student's appeal, the 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 determination is made that the grade was fair and reasonable, the Program Director will notify the instructor, student, and the student's Academic Advisor with a written explanation of the decision.
 - a. If a student disagrees with the 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 Council² **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. The Faculty Program Director should also be copied on this email request.
 - i. Provide a brief rationale for making this final appeal, including a clear explanation of why the actions of the Program Director did not adequately address the concern(s).
 - ii. At this point, the School of Education will forward all original materials to the EFC members for review. The student does not have to resubmit materials.
2. If the Program Director believes that the determination of the grade was not accurate, fair, or reasonable, **and** the instructor refuses to change the original grade, then Step 2 and subsequent procedures will be followed.

Should the 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**. The Program Director will also separately notify the instructor of record within the same time period. The Dean will ask the School of Education's Elected Faculty Council to evaluate the student's performance and assign a final grade **within ten (10) calendar days**.

3. When a final decision is made, the Chair of the School of Education's Elected Faculty Council³ or designee shall notify the Academic Advisor, Program Director, Dean, and the student of the final outcome in writing.
4. The Dean or designee will notify the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs at UW Tacoma of the final decision.

The School of Education's Elected Faculty Council's decision on the grade appeal is final with no opportunities for further appeal.

After receiving the final decision, the academic advisor will, if necessary, complete the grade change process set forth by the UW Tacoma Office of the Registrar.

¹ If the Program Director is the instructor of record, then the matter will be handled by the Dean or Dean Designate. 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.

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 2: SCHOOL OF EDUCATION'S GRIEVANCE POLICY

A) OVERVIEW

A student may be enrolled in an academic program with more detailed policies and procedures articulated in a field-based and/or program handbook. In such a case, the School of Education will defer to the program's written policies and requirements when reviewing grievances. For students in a certification program with mandatory clinical or field experiences, the program's written requirements, or those of the Office of Field Placements & Partnerships, will be followed.

Students who have concerns or questions about matters outside of academic grading may participate individually in a grievance process. Grievances may be made for actions related to the inconsistent application of an academic policy or procedure. The appropriate parties will engage in evidence review and fact-finding to make a final determination within the scope of their review as described below.

What will not be reviewed:

1. **Grievances about other employees, offices, or units outside of the School of Education**- students will be redirected to the appropriate processes.
2. **Incomplete files**- will be returned to the student and not be reviewed by the School of Education.
3. **Academic alerts or warning notices from a program**- as these are preventive and supportive measures to retain and support students, these notifications are not grievable.
Grade appeals: Students will follow the procedures outlined in **Part A** of this document.
4. **Interpersonal conflict**- see the School of Education's resource page for protocol resources on conflict resolution and resolving interpersonal conflicts.
<https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/soe/raising-concerns-and-questions>
5. **Referencing and Other Service-Related Declination**- we do not review complaints if a School of Education academic personnel, faculty, or staff member declines to provide a voluntary service to a student. Examples include declining to provide professional recommendation or references, or requests to serve on a capstone, dissertation, or other service committee. These matters are solely at each employee's discretion and based on their availability, expertise, and willingness to serve.
6. **Issues related to employment**- students may not grieve matters pertaining to nonrenewal or termination of employment if they are employed in the School of Education as graduate assistants, research assistants, teaching assistants, or student workers. If applicable, they may contact the relevant bargaining representation for dispute resolution or other investigative offices to discuss options.
7. **Student conduct matters**- these matters are adjudicated and reviewed by separate offices. A student who has an active conduct complaint may contact the UW Tacoma Student Conduct Officer directly with concerns or questions.
8. **Allegations of Bias, Discrimination, Retaliation, and Other Serious Matters**- see Part 4 for options and resources.

Informal Conciliation:

Prior to the submission of a grievance, the student is expected to engage in informal conciliation before the complaint is escalated to higher levels. Rare exceptions may be provided in case there are warranted concerns that require a higher-level review of the process; the Program Director, Dean, or designee will review on a case-by-case basis.

The first step is for the student to demonstrate an attempt to resolve the concern at the most direct and informal level; this evidence should be provided in writing.

If the concern involves a faculty mentor/instructor who is also a Program Director or the Dean, then the student may proceed to initiating informal conciliation at the next level or EFC Chair; details will be communicated based on the situation.

The complaint must be submitted through our HUB (https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/sites/default/files/2024-09/uwt-education_student-request-for-admin-review.pdf) following our instructions, and should clearly outline the following:

1. The key facts of the complaint, including the policy/process of concern, time and location, and other details, if appropriate,
2. The reason(s) the outcome of any previous attempts to resolve the situation, if taken, was not satisfactory, and
3. The desired outcome(s) the student(s) wishes to see occur and the reason(s) for those outcome(s).

Informal conciliation stage may be provided to the student by the appropriate unit personnel, or when requested, through the Office of the University Ombud. This step may be requested by the student to the Program Director, the Chair of the School of Education's Elected Faculty Council, and/or the Dean/Designate or vice-versa. The student(s) can initiate informal conciliation by notifying the relevant unit Chair/Director in writing (email is appropriate) with a request for conciliation within **three (3) months** of the actions of concern. **

***Specified time limitations for this policy refer to the academic year, September through June. If a student presents a grievance in June or the actions of concern allegedly occurred during the summer months, the time calculation may be suspended between the end of the academic year and the opening of the following academic year in September. In addition, time limitations do not include official University holidays or other closures during the regular academic year. The term "days" refers to days when the University is open for business, excluding weekends, holidays, and term breaks.*

The Program Director/Designee (or Dean/Designee), must meet with the student(s) within **ten (10) business days** upon receipt of the complaint to review the matter and discuss potential outcomes. A summary of notes will be provided to all parties within two – three (2-3) business days of the meeting. The Director/Designee may also meet with the faculty/mentor(s), or other expert personnel as needed, to gain understanding of the specific case, and/or of the allowable procedures within the School of Education and UW Tacoma. The Director/ Designee is responsible for keeping all correspondence relevant to the complaint in a secure file in accordance with the [records retention schedule for student grievance files](#).

Within **five (5) business days** of the meeting with the student, the Director/Designee will provide a written decision letter to the student with copies provided to all involved parties, indicating what specific step(s) the unit will take regarding the complaint. This decision will clearly outline:

1. What steps are possible within the rules/expectations governing the specific program, School of Education and the University,
2. What step(s) will or will not be taken, and why.

Following receipt of the final decision letter, the student complainant(s) may elect to meet with the Program Director/ Designee to clarify and/or implement the step(s) outlined in the letter. Should this informal conciliation not address the student grievance, a formal submission of a grievance can be submitted by the student in writing (email is appropriate).

Formal Grievance Submission

The grievance process is an individual decision and action that must be initiated by a current or formerly enrolled student in the School of Education.

Please reference specific program policies and procedures when submitting a grievance as supporting evidence. Policy/Procedure-related grievances will be reviewed by a School of Education's Elected Faculty Council (EFC) appointed ad hoc **Student Academic Grievance (SAG) Committee**, which will include at least two (2) EFC faculty representatives, one (1) staff representative, and one (1) student from a School of Education program not affiliated with the student filing the grievance and with whom has no conflict of interest with the complainant. The grievance decision from the (SAG) committee is submitted to the Dean with advisory recommendations. While the Dean makes the final determination based on the SAG Committee's recommendations, an additional opportunity to appeal the Dean's determination can be referred directly to UW Tacoma's Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs.

B) INSTRUCTIONS

A student in the School of Education who independently submits a formal grievance related to program policies or procedures must do so within **ten (10) business days from the date of receipt of the decision letter obtained through the informal conciliation stage**. Using UW email, the student will initiate the process by submitting the grievance and accompanying documents online following our instructions. The **Student Academic Grievance (SAG) Committee** will ordinarily review the materials within fifteen 15 business days of submission. The following are required for the grievance submission:

1. A succinctly written statement describing the situation or action at the center of the grievance and the related program policy or procedure of concern, with clear descriptions and examples; and the requested remedy for the situation.
2. As much relevant information and supporting documentation as possible should accompany the written justification. All supporting documents should be clearly labeled as *Appendix 1*, *Appendix 2*, *Appendix 3*, etc., and directly connected to the formal grievance. Examples of relevant supporting materials:
 - a. Copy of the policy or procedure at issue of the grievance.
 - b. Copy of supporting materials; documentation related to the grievance, etc.
 - c. Copies of any relevant program communication.

Please note: Documents submitted that are irrelevant to the situation or not labeled properly will not be reviewed.

C) PROCEDURES

After receiving the grievance and supporting documents, the student will receive confirmation that the materials were submitted. Thereafter, the procedures below will be followed- note that more detailed instructions will be provided to the student at each level:

Within fifteen (15) business days of receiving the student's grievance, the **Student Academic Grievance Committee (SAG)** will meet to review the complaint. Then, the SAG Committee will meet with the student first for additional context. Following the student meeting, **SAG Committee**, will meet with the Program Director and other relevant faculty or staff to determine whether the merits of the grievance.

The SAG Committee's discussions and decisions will be limited to:

1. Whether the grievance has merit, and
2. Whether the grievance has been appropriately addressed according to existing procedures/policies within the program, School of Education and/or the University.

The SAG Committee will finalize its recommendation by a majority vote (defined as at least 51%) and will submit the recommendation to the Dean for review. Within 5 business days of receipt of the SAG Committee recommendation, the Dean/Designee will provide a written decision letter of the student with copies to all involved parties indicating any specific step(s) the School of Education will take regarding the complaint. This decision will clearly outline

1. What, if any, steps are possible within the rules governing the School of Education and the University, and
2. What if any, step(s) will be taken, and why.

Following receipt of the final decision letter, the student complainant may elect to meet with the Dean/designee to clarify and/or implement the step(s) outlined in the letter by initiating contact within ten (10) business days to request a meeting. All efforts will be made to schedule the meeting within two (2) business weeks after the student initiates this request. All documentation of the proceedings will be kept on record in accordance with the [records retention schedule for student grievance files](#).

Student complainant or any other party directly involved who are not satisfied with the decision of the Dean may appeal in writing to the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs (EVCAA) within fifteen (15) business days of receipt of the final decision letter. The student's appeal should contain all written material amassed to date, copies of which will be on file in the Office of the Dean within the School of Education. The EVCAA's review/decision will be limited to the student's hearing record and is usually the final stage of appeal.

A student who is dissatisfied with the EVCAA's decision may submit a final request for review by the UW Graduate School.

PART 3: PROGRAM REMOVAL

A graduate or undergraduate student who is removed from a program due to conduct/dispositions-related issues or poor academic performance must first follow the procedures outlined in Part 2 above before pursuing these options noted below.

UNDERGRADUATES ONLY: Undergraduates may pursue program reinstatement if they were dropped for low scholarship, using the following petition process.

https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/sites/default/files/2020-11/petition_for_reinstatement.pdf

An undergraduate student may grieve removal from a program within **one (1) calendar month** of dismissal.

GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY: Graduate students may appeal a program removal decision with the UW Graduate School 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 and are not satisfied with the outcome(s) decided by the School of Education decision-makers as specified above. A graduate student may grieve removal from a program within three (3) calendar months of dismissal. <https://grad.uw.edu/policies/3-8-academic-grievance-procedure/>

PART 4: ALLEGATIONS OF BIAS, DISCRIMINATION, STUDENT & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT, AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OR CONFLICT

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

1. UW Civil Rights Compliance Office: <https://www.washington.edu/cr-investigations/>
2. UW Office of the Title IX Coordinator: <https://www.washington.edu/titleix/>

Note: *The timelines in this procedure may need to be adjusted due to emergencies, unusual circumstances, or university holidays. If a delay is expected, the student will be notified in writing by the appropriate administrative authority in the School of Education.*