

UCF-5.016 Student Academic Appeals

(1) General Policy.

- (a) This regulation applies to:
 1. Undergraduate or graduate students seeking to appeal a final course grade (individual grades on assignments, exams, etc. are not appealed by this process).
 2. Undergraduate students seeking to appeal a program decision. (Graduate student appeals of program decisions, including termination from an academic program or grades on thesis or dissertation, are handled in UCF-5.017).
- (b) All grade concerns must first be discussed directly with the instructor of the course. The professional judgement exercised by an instructor in assigning a grade or in conducting a class is excluded from the provisions of this regulation. A formal grade appeal is limited to or more of the following reasons:
 1. Alleged deviation from established and announced grading policy;
 2. Alleged errors in the application of grading procedures;
 3. Alleged deviation from University syllabus policy that could have impacted the resulting grade; and
 4. Alleged lowering of grades for non-academic reasons, including discrimination.
- (c) Program decisions include actions related to program or college specific requirements. An undergraduate program appeal is limited to one or more of the following reasons:
 1. Alleged deviation from program policies or university policies applied to the program as outlined in the Undergraduate Catalog or Undergraduate Program Handbook(s);
 2. Alleged errors in the application of program policies or procedures;
 3. Alleged program probation or program dismissal due to non-academic reasons; and
 4. Alleged undergraduate program action for non-academic reasons, including discrimination and/or sexual harassment in the undergraduate program, department or college.
- (d) If an appeal alleges discrimination, the appeal will first be referred to the Office of Institutional Equity (<https://oie.ucf.edu/>). The OIE process must be concluded before a formal grade appeal can be initiated.
- (e) If the student is charged with a conduct violation based on alleged academic misconduct (per UCF-5.008) that relates to the grade or program action being appealed, the student conduct process must be completed before the student initiates a formal grade appeal.

- (f) If the student is pursuing a program appeal that relates to a grade appeal, the grade appeal must be completed before the student initiates the program appeal.
 - (g) If needed, the University may extend deadlines applicable to the grade or program appeal process for the purposes of reviewing the appeal. If extensions are made, the new deadline will be shared in writing.
- (2) For any appeal, the following assumptions are adopted:
- (a) The burden of proof for a student academic appeal is on the student.
 - (b) Students and faculty members are entitled to a fair and timely resolution of academic appeals.
 - (c) Students have access to published materials, professional advisors, and student government to help them become familiar with and understand the procedures for handling academic appeals. Students may consult the Golden Rule, seek advice from an academic advisor, or consult with a student government advisor (sga_cjus@ucf.edu) regarding the student's rights and responsibilities with respect to this appeal process.
 - (d) Faculty members and administrators have access to the materials published in the Golden Rule and access to University staff in the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (<https://osrr.sdes.ucf.edu/>) to help them be aware of and understand the procedures to address academic appeals.
 - (e) The University as an institution and its faculty members and students are entitled to procedures that ensure due process and the maintenance of academic standards.
 - (f) All appeal communications between the student and any University personnel must be made via a university-provided system.
 - 1. Information regarding informal appeals should be communicated using the UCF email account (e.g., knights.ucf.edu or ucf.edu).
 - 2. Information regarding formal appeals are submitted using the appeal forms and processes available at <https://academicsuccess.ucf.edu/gradeappeal/>.
- (3) Step 1: Resolution of Student Appeals with the Instructor or Program
- (a) The appeal of final grades or an undergraduate program action must be initiated within ninety (90) calendar days of the final grade being posted or of the undergraduate program action being taken.
 - (b) All student appeals of grades or undergraduate program actions must first be addressed by the person or program whose action is being appealed. In cases of grade appeals this will be the instructor of the course and in cases of undergraduate program actions this will be the faculty administrator (e.g., program director or program coordinator) of the program that enacted the action. Henceforth, the instructor or faculty administrator are referred to as the "Responding Party". This attempted resolution is required before the student can continue to the formal appeal process described in Step 2.
 - (c) If the issue cannot be resolved directly with the Responding Party, or if the Responding Party is not available, the student has the right to pursue a Step 2 formal

resolution at the unit level with the unit head or their designee. The “unit head” is usually the faculty member who serves as chair of the department or director of the school that houses the course or program.

(4) Step 2: Formal Resolution of the Student Appeal at the Unit Level

- (a) To initiate the formal academic appeal, the student must submit the appropriate appeal form and supporting documentation. The appeal form is available at <https://academicsuccess.ucf.edu/gradeappeal/>. If supporting documentation cannot be submitted online, the student must provide it to the unit head or designee. This documentation must clearly state the reason for the appeal and must include the resolution sought by the student.
- (b) Once the appeal is received by the unit head, they or their designee will review the appeal and supporting documentation to determine if there are grounds for the appeal.
 1. If there is not a basis for the appeal, the appeal will be dismissed, and the unit head or designee will inform the student in writing why the appeal is dismissed.
 2. If there is a basis for the appeal, within ten (10) business days of receipt of the appeal the unit head or designee will consult with the Responding Party and may also ask to meet with the student.
 - a. If the Responding Party or student is not available to discuss or respond to the appeal, the resolution should wait until the Responding Party or student can respond, but not more than thirty (30) business days.
 - b. In the event an immediate resolution is needed (e.g., due to pending graduation certification) the unit head will make a decision based on available information.
- (c) Within fifteen (15) days of receipt of the appeal, or longer based on either the Responding Party or student not being available (see above), the unit head or designee will provide the student and the Responding Party with a written decision.

(5) Step 3: Resolution of Student Academic Appeals at the College Level

- (a) If the student has new information to present or can show that a procedural error occurred in the previous steps, within ten (10) business days of the unit head or designee’s written decision the student may submit the appeal to the dean of the college that offers the course or program. The student will provide the information using the processes outlined in (2)(f).
- (b) The dean will delegate the appeal to an associate dean or designee who will, within ten (10) business days of receipt, review the appeal. One of the following actions will take place:
 1. If an appeal is presented that was previously dismissed for having no basis, and none of the new or additional information establishes a basis, then the appeal will again be dismissed, and the associate dean or designee will inform the student in writing why the appeal is dismissed.

2. If the student presents new or additional information that must first be reviewed by the unit head, then the associate dean or designee will inform the student in writing that this information must be reviewed first by the unit head and that the student is required to revisit Step 2.
 3. If the appeal warrants a review, the associate dean or designee will submit a recommendation to the dean.
- (c) If a recommendation is submitted to the dean, within five (5) business days of receiving the associate dean or designee's recommendation the college dean will provide the student with a written decision on the appeal. The dean's decision will be sent to the student and copied to the Responding Party, the unit head, and the appropriate dean of the undergraduate or graduate college.

(6) Step 4: Resolution of Student Academic Appeals at the University Level

- (a) If the student has new information to present or can show that a procedural error occurred in the previous steps, within ten (10) business days of the dean's written decision the student may submit the appeal to the dean of the college of undergraduate studies or the dean of the graduate college. The student will provide the information using the processes outlined in (2)(f).
- (b) The university dean will review the appeal within ten (10) business days of receipt. One of the following actions will take place:
 1. If an appeal is presented that was previously dismissed for having no basis and none of the new or additional information establishes a basis, then the appeal will again be dismissed, and the university dean or designee will inform the student in writing why the appeal is dismissed.
 2. If the student presents new or additional information that must first be reviewed by the college dean, then the university dean or designee will inform the student in writing that this information must be reviewed first by the college dean and that the student is required to revisit Step 3.
 3. If the information presented warrants additional review, the university dean will inform the student in writing that the appeal will be reviewed by the Ad Hoc Student Academic Appeal Committee which will make a recommendation to the university dean. The appeal will continue to Step 5.

(7) Step 5: Ad Hoc Student Academic Appeal Committee

- (a) The committee will function as an objective, fact-finding body when examining all available and relevant information concerning the student's appeal of a grade or program action by the Responding Party. Such information may include the student's documented appeal, written and/or oral information provided by the student or Responding Party, statements made by both parties before the committee, and any other information the committee may deem relevant.
- (b) The committee will review the student's appeal of the awarded grade or the undergraduate program action and will make a recommendation to the university dean about how the appeal will be resolved.

- (c) The committee shall be made up of no more than two (2) full-time instructional faculty members and an equal number of students. The university shall make a reasonable effort to select students of comparable academic classification as the student initiating the appeal. The university will select student members from a panel of students appointed and trained by the Vice President of Student Development and Enrollment Services and/or the Dean of the College of Graduate Studies. The list of students appointed to the student panel shall be maintained by the office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (for undergraduate) or the College of Graduate Studies (for graduate).
- (d) Once the committee is convened, the committee should make reasonable efforts to meet for review of the case within twenty (20) business days. If the committee cannot meet within the 20 days, the university will inform the parties of the need for additional time.
- (e) The meeting is not covered by Sunshine laws, is closed to outside parties, and will not be recorded.
 - 1. The student and Responding Party shall be separately invited to meet with the committee. Participating individuals in the appeal may appear through virtual (electronic) means at the committee meeting. While either party may invite a guest to attend the meeting, no guest may address the committee or respond to questions.
 - 2. The student and Responding Party shall be allowed adequate time to respond to the appeal and material as submitted, to answer any questions from committee members, and to present additional information needed to clarify the issues involved.
 - 3. Should either party fail to attend the scheduled appeal meeting, the meeting will be held in the party's absence with the understanding that the proposed outcomes and resolutions will be made using the information available at the time of the appeal meeting and in the party's absence.
- (f) After meeting with both parties, the committee will deliberate and issue a recommendation by majority vote to the university dean. If applicable, the committee will suggest a resolution to the appeal. This decision may let the grade/action stand as is or may alter the recommended grade/action. If the decision of the committee is to alter a previous decision, only the faculty members on the committee will recommend what the alteration will be; however, the student members on the committee may participate in the discussion. The committee chair will ensure that the committee's majority opinion, rationale, and recommended findings and resolutions are documented and forwarded to the university dean within five (5) days of the conclusion of the committee hearing.
- (g) Within five (5) business days of receiving the committee's recommendation, the university dean will provide the student with a written decision on the appeal. This decision represents final agency action. The dean's decision will be copied to the unit head and the dean of the college from which the appeal originated.

(8) Responsibility for Record Keeping of Formal Student Academic Appeals

- (a) To support institutional compliance with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges' Principles of Accreditation, the following parties shall be responsible for maintaining complete records of all formal student academic appeals.
 - 1. The College of Undergraduate Studies for undergraduate-level academic appeals; and
 - 2. The College of Graduate Studies for graduate-level academic appeals.
- (b) The complete record shall include the following components:
 - 1. First and last name of the student filing the formal appeal or the student's unique UCF personal identification number,
 - 2. Date the formal appeal was filed,
 - 3. Final decision resulting from review of the formal appeal,
 - 4. Date the formal appeal was determined closed, and
 - 5. Documentation reviewed at each phase of the formal appeal process.
- (c) The dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies and the dean of the College of Graduate Studies or their respective designees shall be responsible for monitoring formal academic appeals for patterns that may warrant broader review in an effort to ensure the integrity of the academic enterprise and continuous compliance with accreditation standards. At minimum, the respective dean or designee shall conduct an annual review of the elements addressed in the SACS-COC Principles of Accreditation (10)(b)1, 2, 3, and 4 and shall consult the documentation on file for SACS-COC Principles of Accreditation (1)(b)5 as needed to render a determination of need for broader review.

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