

## Grade Appeal Policy and Procedure

The Grade Appeal Policy is intended to provide the student with a safeguard against receiving an unfair grade, while respecting the professionalism of the instructor and their academic responsibility for the course. St. Clare's recognizes that,

- Every student has a right to receive a grade assigned according to a fair and unprejudiced evaluation and based on a method that is neither arbitrary nor capricious.
- Instructors have the right to assign a grade based on any method that is professionally acceptable, appropriate to the course, in accordance with the syllabus and other guidance given to the students, and applied equally.
- Instructors should provide feedback that is individual, specific and constructive so that the grading standards can be clearly explained to the student.
- Instructors are expected to provide careful evaluation and prompt assignment of appropriate grades. The types of assignment and grading methods should be explained to students at the beginning of the course and be included in the syllabus or other course description documents.

A grade appeal shall be confined to charges of unfair action toward an individual student or of assessment of an assignment that is unfair. It should not challenge an instructor's grading standard. A student has a right to expect thoughtful and clearly defined approaches to course and assignment grading, but it must be recognized that varied standards and individual approaches to grading across academic disciplines and course levels are valid. Reference should also be made to the appropriate grade descriptors that relate to the course.

The grade appeal considers whether a grade was determined in a fair and appropriate manner; it does not attempt to grade or re-grade individual assignments or other components of the course. The student should expect to be able to substantiate the claim that his or her grade represents unfair treatment, compared to the standard applied to other students. In a grade appeal arbitrariness, prejudice, and/or error will be considered as legitimate grounds for an appeal.

**Arbitrariness:** The grade awarded represents such a substantial departure from accepted academic norms, proper procedures or the course syllabus as to demonstrate that the instructor did not actually exercise professional judgment.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> A useful working definition of such academic norms and proper procedures might be this one by the Academic Senate Committee on Courses of Instruction at the University of California, Berkeley: "Proper' academic procedures for evaluation require that the grading is based solely on the instructor's evaluation of how well a student's performance (project, paper, exam question, or student participation) addresses a specific requirement. This evaluation can involve elements of recall of factual information, integration of material and concepts covered (in class, readings, or assignments), and application of material and concepts to new situations. As long as the evaluation is based on the relevance of the answer (project, paper, exam question, or student participation) to the question asked (assignment given), there is no basis for considering any

**Prejudice:** The grade awarded was motivated by ill will, and is not indicative of the student's academic performance.

**Error:** The instructor made a mistake in fact or has calculated the grade incorrectly.

This grade appeal procedure applies only when a student initiates a grade appeal and not when the instructor decides to change a grade on his or her own initiative or following internal or external moderation processes.

### **Grade Appeal Procedure**

The Grade Appeal Procedure attempts to resolve a disagreement between student and instructor concerning the assignment of a grade in a fair and respectful manner. The intent is to provide a mechanism for the informal discussion of differences of opinion, and for the formal adjudication by the director of the programme only when necessary. *In all instances, students who believe that an appropriate grade has not been assigned must first seek to resolve the matter informally with the course instructor.*

#### **First stage: Grade review with instructor**

A student who wishes to question a grade must discuss the matter first with the instructor as soon as possible, preferably no later than one week after receiving the grade. In most cases, the discussion between the student and the instructor should suffice and the matter will not need to be carried further.

#### **Second Stage: Examination of grounds for appeal.**

If a student's concerns cannot be resolved by discussion with the instructor the student should request to meet with the appropriate member of staff for their course to examine whether they have grounds for an appeal within a week. This meeting may involve a review of:

- comments and feedback the student received from the instructor;
- the syllabus and other instructions relating to the assignment;
- grade descriptors that relate to the programme.

If the complaint is considered to have merit the member of staff who oversees this stage may meet with the instructor. The instructor may choose to let the grade remain or to change the grade.

#### **Appeal**

If the matter remains unresolved after the second stage, the student should submit a written request within one week to the Director of Liberal Arts Programme and Coordinator of Senior Courses. The director will determine, with the assistance of

---

such evaluations improper. Inherent in this interpretation is that equivalent answers or work get equivalent grades. [[http://history.berkeley.edu/undergraduate/grade\\_appeal\\_policy.html](http://history.berkeley.edu/undergraduate/grade_appeal_policy.html)]

other teaching faculty and management staff if necessary, whether the grade was assigned in a fair and appropriate manner, or whether clear and convincing evidence of unfair treatment such as arbitrariness, prejudice, and/or error might justify changing the grade. If the director concludes that the grade was assigned in a fair and appropriate manner he/she will report this in writing to the student and instructor and the matter will be considered closed. If the director determines that compelling reasons exist for changing the grade, s/he would request that the instructor make the change, providing the instructor with a written explanation of the reasons. The new grade may be higher than, the same as, or lower than the original grade.

**Review of Appeal, if appropriate to the programme.**

The Director of Liberal Arts Programme and Coordinator of Senior Courses may also liaise with senior academic staff at the U.S. universities who accredit our courses and invite such staff to review our appeal procedure. The details and process would depend on which university the student was enrolled at as each has a distinct administrative structure, especially as it relates to the organization of study abroad. We would contact the study abroad office and liaise with the chair of the relevant academic department who has oversight of the course where the grade has been contested. We would invite the relevant academic chair to review the appeal. For the University Foundation course we would invite the appointed External Moderator to review any appeals related to that course as part of the moderation process.

### Summary of the Grade Appeal Procedure for current students

Course	Liberal Arts <sup>2</sup>	English plus Academic Subjects	University Foundation Course	English Courses
<b>First stage: Grade review with instructor</b>	Students must discuss their grievance with the course instructor and attempt to resolve the matter.			
<b>Second Stage: Examination of grounds for appeal.</b>	If this is unsuccessful the student should raise the matter with Paul Sinclair, Assistant Director of the Liberal Arts programme.	If this is unsuccessful the student should raise the matter with Richard Walton, Director of Studies, EFL.	If this is unsuccessful the student should raise the matter with their Personal Tutor who oversees their academic progress, or Richard Walton, Director of Studies, EFL should the grade relate to the English component of the course.	If this is unsuccessful the student should raise the matter with Richard Walton, Director of Studies, EFL.
<b>Appeal</b>	Appeal can then be made to Dr Ines Molinaro, Director of Liberal Arts Programme and Coordinator of Senior Courses.			
<b>Review of Appeal, if appropriate to the programme.</b>	An appropriate faculty member at the student's home university might review a Liberal Arts appeal if that university is responsible for awarding credit for the course.		The UFC appeal would be reviewed during the external moderation procedure.	

<sup>2</sup> Liberal Arts here should be taken to mean all academic subject courses (core courses, tutorial courses and the seminar series) taken by Liberal Arts or English plus Academic Subjects students.