

Student Complaint/Grievances/Appeal Process

The University/College is to *fulfill its promise to students* to provide high quality academic, useful, and ethically-based *professional preparation* in a specific field of study/practice. Furthermore, the University/College aims to support students in having a “good experience” at Drexel University.

It is important that the University/College have in place a *Student Complaint/Grievance/Appeal Process*. Fundamental and important precepts include:

- Students have an avenue for communicating a concern.
- Students receive due process for any transgression.
- Students receive fair treatment, without bias, in any review.
- Student issues are reviewed with care and in a timely manner.
- Students receive communication explaining the rationale for decisions made by faculty and administration regarding an issue.
- Faculty and Administration are open to suggestions for quality improvement of any policy, procedure, or practice.

The initial approach that the University/College takes toward student complaints/grievances is that before a student seeks recourse, he/she should first exhaust the immediate means of resolution between the parties involved. Typically this occurs between faculty and student.

The Office of the Dean in the College of Nursing and Health Professions has a well-developed protocol to handle any student complaint/grievance/appeal. This process is facilitated by the Assistant Dean of Student and Technology Operations. These steps are consistent with the University’s overall Complaint Resolution, Student Procedures which are explained in the current University Student Handbook at

http://www.drexel.edu/studentlife/community_standards/studentHandbook/.

- Undergraduate: http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_standing.asp
- Graduate: <http://www.drexel.edu/graduatecollege/forms-policies/policies/>

Please note that students must have a current FERPA Waiver completed and on file (accessible via DrexelOne) if parents, guardians or others are involved in the process. Additionally, please note that the policy of the College supersedes that of the University in the event that the College’s policy is more stringent.

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Final Grade Appeal Policy

An appeal by a student about an assessment made of his/her academic performance by a faculty member or clinical supervisor is a formal and serious matter. Assessment of the quality of a student's work rests with the faculty member assigned to the course and he/she has the responsibility to assess the learner activity and assign a grade in a fair and reasonable manner. For this reason, students who challenge a grade on an assessment or final grade need to first formally make this appeal to the faculty member assigned to the course. The appeal should be made in writing and should clearly state the basis on which the student is appealing the faculty assessment and the student should present the evidence to support the appeal.

Allowable Bases for Grade Appeals

Grades on individual assignment assessments and final course grades are only appealable if

- there was an arithmetic error made in calculating the grade on an individual assessment or the final grade;
- the student can prove that the assessment or final grade was given in an arbitrary or capricious manner (i.e., the grade was based on factors other than the student's performance on the learning assessment activities in the course); or
- the student can prove that the faculty member failed to invoke the use of a predetermined and communicated rubric/scoring system or failed to communicate expectations for the assignment.

Students may not appeal grades based on their belief that a faculty member judged a work improperly. The faculty member is in the best position to judge the quality of a student's work when entrusted to teach the course as a subject matter expert. In addition, a grade appeal cannot be viewed as a request to lower the passing standard in a course. The only allowable bases for grade appeals are those presented above.

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The organizational steps and timelines of an appeal generally of an *academic nature* in the College of Nursing and Health Professions are as follows:

Step 1. Student works to resolve issue with faculty member (if the issue involves a faculty member)
***If this issue requires the impartial assistance of the Office of the Ombuds, more information can be found at <http://www.drexel.edu/ombuds/>.**

- a. Step 1 should take no longer than five (5) calendar days.
- b. Every effort should be made to resolve an issue directly with the individual faculty member, especially as it relates to assessment of course work and clinical evaluations. When this is not possible and/or did not resolve the issue, individuals may file a complaint, in writing, to the academic department chair.
- c. If the issue does not involve a faculty member, the student may move to Step 2 of the process.

Step 2. Academic department chair works to resolve issue with student

- a. Step 2 should take no longer than five (5) calendar days.
- b. Students are encouraged to first discuss the complain/grievance/appeal with the department chair before filing a formal and written complaint/grievance/appeal.
- c. If the student is not satisfied with a resolution or decision, a formal and written complaint/grievance/appeal may be made. This include three important items:
 - i. The exact nature of the complaint/grievance/appeal
 - ii. Supporting information that a problem exists
 - iii. Suggested remediation or resolution to the issue
- d. If the issue is not resolved, the student may move to Step 3 of the process.
- e. Please work with the Assistant Dean of Student and Technology Operations regarding next steps and guidance.

Step 3. Any appeal of the Department Chair's actions is presented to the Associate Dean of the College and, if necessary, to the Dean of the College.

- a. The Assistant Dean of Student and Technology Operations is available to assist and guide students regarding next steps.
- b. This appeal must be filed with the Associate Dean's office within five (5) calendar days of the department chair's communication about the ruling of the issue. This formal communication from the student should include:
 - i. The exact nature of the complaint/grievance/appeal
 - ii. Supporting information that a problem exists or wrong decision has been made
 - iii. Suggested remediation or resolution to the issue
- c. The Associate Dean of the College will review the formal complaint/grievance/appeal. The Associate Dean will formally respond to the student in writing within five (5) calendar days.
- d. If the student is not satisfied with the resolution or decision of the Associate Dean, a formal and written complaint/grievance/appeal may be filed with the Dean of the College within five (5) calendar days of the Associate Dean's communication about the ruling of the issue. This formal communication from the student should include:
 - i. The exact nature of the complaint/grievance/appeal
 - ii. Supporting information that a problem exists or wrong decision has been made
 - iii. Suggested remediation or resolution to the issue
- e. The Dean of the College will review the formal complaint/grievance/appeal. The Dean will formally respond to the student in writing within five (5) calendar days of the appeal. This decision shall be the final recourse available within the College.



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- f. Once the Dean's decision or advice has been rendered, the student has five (5) calendar days to make a formal appeal of the Dean's decision to the Provost of the University. **(Grade grievances decided by the Dean are final and are not appealable to the Provost.)**
- g. The formal appeal to the Provost must be made in writing and include:
 - i. The exact nature of the appeal
 - ii. Supporting information that a wrong decision has been made by the Dean
 - iii. Suggested remediation or resolution to the issue
- h. The Assistant Dean of Student and Technology Operations in the College will send the student a formal letter outlining how to prepare and send an appeal to the Provost's Office once officially notified by the student that an appeal will take place.

Step 4. Review of Appeal by the Provost

- a. The Provost of the University or designee will receive the formal appeal sent by the student.
- b. Depending on the nature of the issue, the student will hear back from a representative of the Office of the Provost within a week.
- c. Decision timeline from the Office of the Provost is available.
- d. **Decision made by the Provost is final.**

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