

Grading Grievances (C1da.v02)

A student, learning coach, or parent who believes that a grade, typically the final letter grade, has been assigned in an unreasonable, discriminatory, arbitrary, or capricious manner or that is the result of a clerical mistake may, after attempting to request a review and correction by the teacher of record, contest the grade using the following procedure. The complainant may bypass a review by the instructor of record when the reason for the appeal is based on a claim that the grade was assigned in an unreasonable or discriminatory manner. For the purposes of this policy, a teacher acted unreasonably if it is perceived that s/he refused to listen to or acted dismissively when the student, parent, or learning coach brought forward a grading concern or question.

Appeal Process

- Appeals must be initiated within five business days of receiving the grade. Failure to timely present the grievance in accordance with this procedure shall be deemed to be a waiver of the grievance process.
- Appeals may be filed in writing (via email or on a designated form), must be filed with the director of learning or assistant superintendent, and must cite one of the reasons listed above as a basis for the grievance. Ideally, appeals should be accompanied by supporting evidence to assist the administrative team with the review.
- The administrator receiving the grievance shall initiate an investigation upon receipt of a grievance filed in accordance with the procedure listed above. The administrator shall review grading criteria, the grade book, and the student's graded assignments and tests. The administrator should consult with the teacher of record and the student during this process. If the teacher of record or student is unable to respond to the administrator within five business days, the administrator may proceed with reaching a decision without consulting these sources. An exception to this is when a teacher is on a short-term personal or sick leave. The administrator should allow up to seven business days to meet with the teacher to discuss the concern and inform the complainant that the investigation timeline has been extended; if a meeting with the teacher cannot take place within this timeframe, the administrator may proceed with reaching a decision.

If a complaint is content-specific (e.g., allegation that a teacher is marking correct answers wrong), the administrator investigating the complaint must consult with a content expert on the complaint, which is typically the teacher of record or another teacher licensed in the content area if the teacher of record is unavailable as described above.

Based on the findings, the administrator shall render a decision, informing the teacher of record, the student, learning coach, and parent. The administrator shall also document the reasons for his/her decision and provide this documentation to the assistant superintendent (if not the decision maker) and NDCDE director. The administrator shall also place a notation in the student information system indicating if s/he has changed a grade and provide the reasons why. If the grade being contested is the final grade and the administrator has decided to change it, s/he shall submit a ticket to the NDCDE help desk to change the grade in Genius and update the completion certificate. The administrator should send the updated completion certificate to the student, learning coach, parent,

and teacher of record.

- If the administrator uncovers an issue with the course as a result of this review, such as unclear instructions or inappropriate point values associated with assignments, s/he should notify the instructor of record, other impacted teachers, and the LMS/Curriculum department to initiate a course update.

Final Determination

The administrator's decision to affirm or alter a grade shall be final and binding. The administrator's decision is based on his/her professional judgment and has no impact on the teacher of record's licensure.

Guidelines Guiding Decision-Making

To help reach a decision under this policy, and depending on the nature of the grading grievance, an administrator may need to perform the following analysis:

- Ensure that the course contains clear assignment directions and grading guidelines, such as rubrics or standards for determining grades on each major assignment.
- Determine if the point values associated with the course assignments were appropriate based on the nature of the assignments.
- Review if the grading was done within a reasonable timeframe or if any delays may have impacted the fairness of the evaluation.
- Review the reports associated with plagiarism detection to ensure no false positives or other inaccuracies that may have resulted in a reduction in the student's grade.
- Examine the clarity and specificity of feedback provided to the student.
- Review the gradebook to ensure it was set up correctly and calculating grades appropriately.
- Compare the scores and feedback of the student contesting his/her grade with those of other students to ensure consistency.

End of policy

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