

Grade Appeal Procedure

This information details the process for appealing a grade in a Writing Program course. We have tried to be thorough and clear in our explanation of the procedures. Once you've reviewed this document, the Assistant Director of the Writing Program is happy to meet with you and advise you how to proceed with an appeal. This document incorporates information from U.K.'s *Student Rights and Responsibilities*. That document can be found in its entirety at <http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/>. **Note:** You have two weeks from the date when grades are officially posted to file a grade appeal. Appeals filed after two weeks will not be considered.

Step One: Contact your instructor to determine the basis of your grade. If you are unable to contact your instructor, then arrange to meet with the Assistant Director of the Writing Program or another Writing Program administrator.

Step Two: If, after contacting your instructor, you still wish to appeal your grade, then you must write a detailed letter to the Writing Program Grievance Committee, which is comprised of four outside readers (three full-time lecturers in the Writing Program) and one Arbitrator. The Arbitrator will be an administrator of the Writing Program: the Director, Assistant Director, or Associate Director. The Committee will forward a copy of your letter to your instructor and request that he or she respond to your appeal in writing within two weeks. If any of the following guidelines (A-H) are not fulfilled, then your appeal will be automatically rejected.

A. You need to write your letter within **two weeks** of receiving the grade for your paper or within **two weeks** of receiving your final course grade.

B. Professional Misjudgment: Grade appeals must be based solely on **professional misjudgment on the part of the instructor**. Sometimes a student believes that his or her instructor arrived at the wrong grade, that a failing grade should have been passing, or that a "C" paper really was a "B" paper. You are allowed to make an appeal based on what you believe to be a professional misjudgment by your instructor. Keep in mind that the level of difficulty regarding assignments in writing course at UK is significantly higher than standard high school writing assignments. Typical high school level writing assignments are not considered "passing" by current UK Writing Program standards.

Grade appeals must be based solely on professional misjudgment on the part of the instructor. It would be unethical to change a grade for any reason not related to quality of work. Grades cannot be appealed simply to receive or maintain a scholarship, fellowship, or any other monetary award or recognition of distinction, such as the Dean's List or other honors designations; to be eligible for a club or organization (university affiliated or not); or to maintain a certain level of academic standing.

C. Content of your letter: Your letter should be precise and detailed and should indicate why you are appealing the grade. It should make reference to grading criteria found in *Writing at U.K.* (a required text available at the bookstore) and perhaps any assignment criteria your instructor provided you. All major writing assignments are cleared through the Writing Program Office and are on file in that office. You may also make reference to U.K.'s *Students Rights and Responsibilities* (<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/>):

5.1.1 THE MARKING SYSTEM Results of work will be recorded in the Registrar's Office as follows: (US: 3/18/96 and 4/8/96; 3/10/97; 4/13/98)

A Represents an exceptionally high achievement as a result of aptitude, effort and intellectual initiative. It is valued at four (4) grade points for each credit hour.

B Represents a high achievement as a result of ability and effort. It is valued at three (3) grade points for each credit hour.

C Represents average achievement. It is valued at two (2) grade points for each credit hour.

D Represents the minimum passing grade (not to be used for graduate students). It is valued at one (1) grade point for each credit hour.

E Represents unsatisfactory performance and indicates failure in the course. It is valued at zero (0) grade points and zero (0) credit hours.

For example, if you are arguing that you should have received a "B," you need to provide evidence that your work represents "a high achievement as a result of ability and effort." You need also to provide evidence that your work matches the criteria for a "B" grade established in *Writing at U.K.* A "B" grade, according to these standards, means that your writing "stands above the average of most incoming University of Kentucky writers." It means that it "illustrates a mature level of thought and development." It means, among other things, that "you fully develop paragraphs and select appropriate development patterns." Be ready to lay out the criteria and provide evidence that you have met them.

D. Your formal grade appeal letter **must also include** the following information: student's name, address, telephone number, and email address, along with the instructor's name and course section number. The letter needs to be addressed to the Grievance Committee c/o Deborah Kirkman, Assistant Director of the Writing Program, 1223 Patterson Office Tower, Lexington, KY 40506-0027.

E. In addition to the required appeal letter, a student **must provide a clean copy** of the disputed material, along with the original graded essay to the Writing Program Office. If the instructor still possesses the original graded essay, then he or she will be required to submit the original graded essay to the Writing Program Office.

F. Students **must provide** all of the materials listed above for **any** and **all** papers to be disputed.

G. If a student chooses to appeal a grade received for a paper, then the original grade cannot be lowered **unless** during the appeal process it is determined by the Grievance Committee that the paper is **partially** or **fully plagiarized**.

H. When you are appealing a failing grade for any of your courses that require written work, please keep in mind the following from U.K.'s *Student Rights and Responsibilities*.

6.2.4.3 Acceptable Standards in English. Teachers in all courses are expected to call attention to and penalize for errors in English usage and to require the rewriting of papers which do not meet acceptable standards in English.

Any instructor who finds the written work of any student seriously defective in English is expected to report the case, together with specimen papers, to the dean of the student's college. A committee composed of this dean and the chair of the Department of English shall have power to require additional work in composition without credit. This remedial work shall begin not later than the following semester and shall continue until the committee is satisfied with the student's proficiency. When a student is required to do this additional work, the committee will report this requirement to the Registrar, who will indicate the fact on the student's record.

Step Three: The Writing Program Grievance Committee will send you a copy of the instructor's response to the student's letter.

Step Four: Your case will be reviewed by the Writing Program Grievance Committee, which may ask you or your instructor for additional information and documentation. Unless of a highly confidential nature, this additional information will be shared with both parties, and both parties will have a chance to respond. The Committee will make its recommendation to the Arbitrator and, in cases where full-time faculty are involved, to the relevant full-time faculty member.

A. The Committee will review your work with all identifying information (your name, your instructor's name) removed. They will judge your work based on the guidelines specified on the appropriate assignment sheet and without knowing what grade it received and will render an impartial, professional assessment. Note: Although the committee will read a "clean copy" of the disputed material, **you must submit the original graded essay to the Writing Program Office for verification purposes.** Once the graded original is matched to the clean copy, the original will be placed in a confidential file; no member of the committee, other than the Arbitrator, will have access to it. **Keep in mind, if a clean copy of a paper supplied by the student does not match up exactly against the original copy, which was submitted to the instructor, then the appeal process becomes null and void and no further action can be taken by the student regarding the Grievance Committee. If this is the case then the student may elect to contact the UK Academic Ombud.**

B. Neither students nor the instructor are required to be present for the appeal process.

Step Five: The Arbitrator will review all the materials and, based on the three full-time lecturers' recommendation, will make a determination.

Full-time faculty have the right to insist that the grade they issued is a proper one. Only the University Appeals Board can override their determination. Instructors who work on semester contracts (part-time instructors or teaching assistants) work under the guidance of the Director of the Writing Program, who is ultimately responsible for the grade. Only the University Appeals Board can override his or her determination. In cases where a lead faculty member supervises a teaching assistant, the lead faculty member, rather than the Director, will make the determination.

Step Six: Take your case to the Academic Ombud.

You have now completed the process the Writing Program offers. If you still believe that you should receive a different grade, you should take your case to the Academic Ombud, who negotiates between students and faculty or academic units. The Ombud will determine whether or not he or she thinks your case “contains merit.” If the Ombud finds your case has merit, he or she will forward it to the University Appeals Board. If the Ombud finds your case has no merit, you have **thirty days** to appeal the decision to the University Appeals Board.

Step Seven: Your case goes before the University Appeals Board.

If the Appeals Board finds that “an academic evaluation based upon anything other than a good-faith judgment of a student has been proved,” it can and will change the grade to W, or to the “appropriate letter grade,” or to P, which means passing with credit toward graduation. Even if your program doesn't normally accept “P” grades, it will accept this one. The “P” grade is not figured into your GPA.