

PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR APPEALS OF FINAL COURSE GRADES.

PREAMBLE

Students who enroll in Marshall University recognize that the graduate faculty, due to their education and experience, are able to make objective qualitative and quantitative assessment of students' academic work. In keeping with policy, faculty publish the grading criteria for all courses they teach. The final grade issued by the instructor represents his or her overall assessment of the student's performance in each course. As such, a student may only appeal a final grade and only if the instructor's assessment:

1. reflects an error in calculation or reporting (e.g. a computational error, oversight of submitted materials, or posting the wrong grade), or
2. used standards different from those established in the written department or Graduate College policies, if specific policies exist, for assigning the grade, or
3. departed from previously articulated, written standards, without notifying graduate students, in determining the grade.

Marshall's appeals process is not analogous to, is not equivalent to, and does not conform to criminal law processes. The purpose of the appeal is to determine if and how a final course grade did not assess the overall performance of a student in a course. The appeal process shall be informal in nature so as to provide substantial justice, and it shall not be bound by legal jargon, court-like proceedings, or legal definitions. Refer to the *Marshall University Graduate Catalog*, specifically the section, *Administrative Steps for Appealing a Final Grade or an Action Based on Academic Performance or Dishonesty*.

APPEAL PROCESS

The appeal process includes many steps beginning with an informal meeting between the student and the instructor. Those matters that cannot be resolved at the informal level may be appealed to the department or unit head, and then to the Dean of the Graduate College. The final arbiter in the process is the Dean of the Graduate College.

During the appeal process, the student may seek the support of an advocate or legal counsel. The University provides a student advocate at no charge. A student seeking legal counsel may do so at his or her expense.

The advocate or counsel may advise the student during the appeal process. The advocate or counsel may also join the student but may not participate in any scheduled meeting.

Falsification, distortion, misrepresentation of information, or furnishing false information to any Marshall official, faculty member or office, including the Graduate Council, is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

MATTERS OF REVIEW

The fundamental matters for review include:

1. Is there evidence that the grade reflects an error in calculation, an oversight, or an error of reporting to the Registrar.

2. Is there evidence that the instructor used standards different from published policies of the course syllabus, or college or departmental policies.
3. Is there evidence that the instructor altered the grading standards without notifying the students of the change.

STEP 1: INFORMAL REVIEW

Students appealing the final course grade must first attempt to resolve the matter informally within 10 days of posting of grades online.

STEP 2: THE DEPARTMENT/UNIT HEAD

If the informal review does not resolve the matter, the student may, within 10 days, submit to the Department/Unit Head the Course Grade Appeal form and supplemental materials for review. The Department/Unit Head will respond within 10 days of receiving the materials.

STEP 3: THE DEAN OF THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

The student may, within 10 days, continue the appeal by submitting to the Dean of the Graduate College the Course Grade Appeal form and supplemental materials for review. The Dean of the Graduate College will respond within 10 days of receiving the materials. The decision is final and may not be appealed.