

DES MOINES AREA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
EDUCATIONAL SERVICES PROCEDURES

Subject: STUDENT RIGHTS, APPEALS AND FERPA
Procedure: Appeal of Final Grades Procedure
Effective Date: August 27, 2007
Procedure Number: ES 4660

I. Institutional Regulations:

The Board of Directors of DMACC confers upon the staff the power to invoke sanctions and promulgate rules to protect the educational processes and the rights of individual students and staff.

II. Procedure

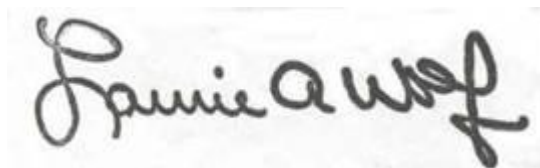
A. The Appeal Process for Final Grades

The purpose of the Appeal Process for Final Grades is to provide the student with a safeguard against receiving an incorrect final grade, while respecting the academic authority of the instructor. This procedure recognizes that every student has a right to receive a grade assigned upon a fair and unprejudiced evaluation based on a method that is neither arbitrary nor capricious. Furthermore, instructors have the right to assign a grade based on any method that is professionally acceptable, submitted in writing to all students, and applied equally. This procedure is not intended to deal with faculty misconduct; if misconduct is alleged, refer to procedure ES 4640.

1. Assigning of final grades is the responsibility of the faculty member teaching the course. The faculty member is the person best qualified to judge the academic progress of the student enrolled in that course.
2. When a student believes s/he has received an incorrect final course grade, the student will first collect information about the course requirements to help in making an informed decision. Those sources of information will include 1) the course syllabus, including the course objectives and instructor's grading system and 2) a preliminary discussion with the instructor, during which grade disputes due to computational errors, computer errors, misunderstandings in completion of assignments, or other issues can be resolved. Only if the instructor is no longer working at the college or is otherwise unavailable may the student proceed to appeal the final grade without discussing the matter with the instructor.
3. Students are to work with and Advisor or Counselor in working through the appeal process. The Advisor or Counselor assures that the student's rights and procedures are understood by the student. The Advisor or Counselor may also serve as a resource for faculty.
4. Faculty members are entitled to have a support person present at any point(s) during the process. The support person may not be anyone who is otherwise involved in the process, but might be i.e., DMACC colleague or HEA representative.
5. A student may submit a formal grade appeal when s/he believes that a final grade is incorrect, arbitrary, or capricious. However, the student bears the burden of providing verifiable evidence that there are sufficient grounds for changing a grade. .
6. To initiate an appeal, a student must complete the Appeal of Final Course Grade Form (Final Course Grade Appeal Form – ES 4660), which will include a detailed description of all relevant information and documentation in support of the appeal and the remedy sought. The Advisor or Counselor's signature is also required on the form. To initiate STEP ONE of the appeal process, the form must be submitted to the instructor within the first three (3) weeks of the next college term after the grade was assigned (an equivalent exception will be allowed for non-regularly reported grades). The instructor will discuss the appeal with the student **within five (5) full college class days** following receipt of the appeal form; response to STEP ONE on the appeal form will be made to the student **within five (5) full college class days** after this discussion. The original copy of the appeal form will be returned to the student, and a photocopy will be retained by the instructor.
7. If resolution of the appeal cannot be made with the instructor, the student may initiate STEP TWO of the appeal process by submitting the original copy of the appeal to the chairperson/group leader/director **within five (5) full college class days** of notification of the instructor's decision. The chairperson/group leader/director will discuss the appeal with the student and instructor **within five (5) full college class days** following receipt of the appeal form; the purpose of this discussion is to help find a resolution of the grade dispute. The outcome of the discussion will be noted in STEP TWO on the appeal form and the original copy of the appeal form will be returned to the student **within five (5) full college class days** after this discussion.
8. If resolution of the appeal cannot be made during step two, the student may initiate STEP THREE of the appeal process by submitting the original copy of the appeal to the academic dean/provost **within five (5) full college class days** of notification of the outcome of step two. The academic dean/provost will discuss the appeal with the student, instructor, and chairperson/group leader/director **within five (5) full college class days**

following receipt of the appeal form; the purpose of this discussion is to help find a resolution of the grade dispute. The outcome of the discussion will be noted in STEP THREE on the appeal form and the original copy of the appeal form will be returned to the student **within five (5) full college days** of the discussion date.

9. If resolution of the appeal cannot be made during step three, the student may initiate STEP FOUR of the appeal process by submitting the original copy of the appeal to the Chairperson of the College Review Board **within five (5) full college days** of notification of the outcome of step three. The academic dean/provost will inform the student of this right. The academic dean/provost will also certify to the College Review Board Chairperson that the steps in the grade appeal have been fulfilled and will forward a copy of all actions taken up to this point in the appeals process. The hearing will be scheduled **within five (5) full college class days** of receipt of the student's original appeal form, and response to STEP FOUR on the appeal form will be made to the student **within five (5) full college days** of the date of this meeting.
10. The College Review Board will reach one of the following decisions:
 - a. The College Review Board may reach a resolution that is mutually acceptable to the student and the instructor who issued the grade or sanction. Should the acceptable conciliation involve a grade change, the instructor will submit a change of grade form.
 - b. The College Review Board may determine that it would be unjust to allow the original grade or sanction to stand. The new grade may be higher than, the same as, or lower than the original grade. The Chairperson of the College Review Board and three members from the College Review Board will sign and submit the change of grade form to the Registrar.
 - c. The College Review Board may determine that the original grade or sanction stands.
11. Decisions reached and implemented by the College Review Board are final and binding on all parties.
12. The instructor and student will be advised in writing of the College Review Board decision.
13. Under no circumstance may persons other than the original faculty member or the College Review Board change a grade.
14. The original copy of the appeal form will be returned to the student
15. If any timelines are not met by college personnel, the appeal automatically goes to the next higher level. If timelines are not met by the student, the appeal process is cancelled.



APPROVED:

Executive Dean, Student Services

4-16-07

Date



Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

4-16-07

Date

A Summary of ES 4660 Key Points

- The Board of Directors of DMACC confers upon the staff the power to invoke sanctions and promulgate rules to protect the educational processes and the rights of individual students and staff.
 - ES 4660 Appeal of Final Grades Procedure provides procedures that give students the protection to be evaluated in the classroom on the basis of satisfactory progress, academic achievement, and fulfillment of educational requirements with freedom of expression protected and respected.
 - Students are guaranteed their constitutional right to due process and their right to appeal any action brought or taken by the college that can reasonably be expected to affect their status within the college.
 - Assigning of final grades is the responsibility of the faculty member teaching the course.
 - Instructors have the right to assign a grade based on any method that is professionally acceptable, submitted in writing to all students, and applied equally.
 - Faculty members are entitled to have a support person present at any point(s) during the process. The support person may not be anyone who is otherwise involved in the process, but might be i.e., DMACC colleague or HEA representative.
 - A student may submit a formal grade appeal when s/he believes that a final grade is incorrect, arbitrary, or capricious. The student bears the burden of providing verifiable evidence that there are sufficient grounds for changing a grade. The form must be submitted to the instructor within the first three (3) weeks of the next college term after the grade was assigned (an equivalent exception will be allowed for non-regularly reported grades).
1. The student is required to start with the instructor before formally initiating a formal grade appeal. This is a preliminary step. The Advisor or Counselor is available for clarification of policy procedures for faculty and student alike.
 - a. The informal discussion is for the student to review with the instructor the instructor's course expectations and the student's "recorded" earned grades. Good communication and understanding between the faculty and student may resolve the issues at this level, especially when the dispute is due to computational errors, misunderstandings in completion of assignments, or other easily resolved issues.
 - b. It is suggested that the instructor be open minded to the student's concern and address the issue as one in which the instructor and the student may have a difference of opinion.
 - c. Schedule enough time with the student to communicate with the student and address the student's concern(s). Ask the student why s/he believes that the grade is incorrect and what grade s/he believes was earned. After listening to the student's concerns, take time to address each concern individually.
 - d. The student may benefit from a review of the student's work, grades obtained on each item, and information about grading from the syllabus.
 - e. The instructor should strive to thoroughly investigate and evaluate the student's concern(s) and review his/her grade decision with the student.
 - f. If no agreement is reached, advise the student to meet with a campus Advisor or Counselor if s/he wishes to file a formal Appeal of Final Grade Form (ES 4660).
 2. **STEP ONE:** The information is reviewed by the instructor. After the instructor and the student have discussed the appeal, the instructor and the student sign the form. The instructor makes a copy for his/her records and returns the original to the student. **It is important to keep a copy of the appeal form after meeting with the student and securing both signatures.**
 3. **STEP TWO:** If the appeal is not resolved, the student may continue the process by submitting the form to the Program Chair/Group Leader/Director. This step presents another communication opportunity with the student and with the instructor.
 4. **STEP THREE:** If the appeal is not resolved, the student may continue the process by submitting the form to the Academic Dean/Provost for another communication opportunity.
 5. **STEP FOUR:** If the appeal is not cancelled or resolved, the student may continue the process by submitting the appeal form to the College Review Board Chairperson.
 6. The College Review Board Chairperson will contact the instructor and student regarding the date, time, and place for the College Review Board Hearing.
 - a. The College Review Board's role is to assess whether or not the student was treated fairly.
 - b. Before the hearing, the instructor should organize the information to be presented in chronological order by date of occurrence.
 - c. During the hearing, the instructor should be prepared to summarize the information, calmly present the information, and answer clarifying questions from the College Review Board and the student.
 - d. The instructor and student will be advised in writing of the College Review Board decision.



APPEAL OF FINAL GRADE FORM
Use this form to appeal a final grade
Appeal of Final Grades Procedure – ES4660

Please type or print. Upon completion, please submit to the person indicated at Step One (below). This form must be submitted within the first three (3) weeks of the next college term after the grade was assigned.

Student's Name _____ Student ID # _____
Address _____ Phone Home _____
_____ Phone Work _____
Course Number _____ Section _____ Course Title _____
Instructor's Name _____ Campus _____

In the space below, provide verifiable evidence that there are sufficient grounds for changing your final grade. Include all relevant details and attachments that support your appeal. Also state the remedy you are requesting (use additional sheets if necessary).

Remedy sought: _____

Signature of Student _____ Date Submitted _____
Signature of Advisor or Counselor _____ Date Submitted _____

(This form must be returned to the student. Photocopy for your records.)

STEP ONE: Discussion with Instructor

Decision _____

Request Granted () Request Denied () Other resolution—See above decision ()
Signature of Instructor _____ Date _____
Signature of Student _____ Date _____

(This form must be returned to the student. Photocopy for your records.)

STEP TWO: Discussion with Program Chair/Group Leader/Director

Signature of _____ Date Received _____
Program Chair/Group Leader/Director

Outcome _____

Comments _____

Discussed with instructor () Discussed with student () Date _____

(This form must be returned to the student. Photocopy for your records.)

STEP THREE: Discussion with Academic Dean/Provost

Signature of _____ Date Received _____
Academic Dean/Provost

Outcome _____

Comments _____

Discussed with instructor () Discussed with student () Date _____

(This form must be returned to the student. Photocopy for your records.)

STEP FOUR: College Review Board Hearing

Signature of _____ Date Received _____
College Review Board Chairperson

Decision _____

Comments _____

Instructor and student notified in writing () Date _____

(This form must be returned to the student. Photocopy for your records.)

STEPS TO FOLLOW IN DETERMINING IF AN APPEAL IS THE NEXT STEP FOR YOU

You are to contact the campus Advisor or Counselor on your campus for assistance in this appeal process to assure that you understand the process and your rights.

- If you believe that you have received an incorrect final course grade, you must first collect information about the course requirements to help you in making an informed decision. Those sources of information will include 1) the course syllabus, including the course objectives and instructor's grading system and 2) a preliminary discussion with the instructor to learn about the instructor's course expectations and your "recorded" earned grades in the grade book. Sometimes grade disputes can be resolved which are due to computational errors, computer errors, misunderstandings in completion of assignments, or other issues. This is an opportunity for you to resolve the differences and gather information to help you make your next step decision.
- If, after gathering this information, you believe that you have received an incorrect final course grade, you will obtain a copy of the Appeal of Final Grade Procedure, ES4660, and become aware of the procedures. (A copy of ES 4660 is available in the office where you picked up these instructions.) Some key points from the procedure are listed below.
 1. The Board of Directors of DMACC confers upon the staff the power to invoke sanctions to protect the educational processes and the rights of individual students and staff.
 2. Appeal of Final Grade Procedure, ES 4660, provides procedures that give students the protection to be evaluated in the classroom on the basis of satisfactory progress, academic achievement, and fulfillment of educational requirements with freedom of expression protected and respected.
 3. Students are guaranteed their constitutional right to due process and their right to appeal any action brought or taken by the college that can reasonably be expected to affect their status within the college.
 4. Assigning of final grades is the responsibility of the faculty member teaching the course.

TO INITIATE A GRADE APPEAL:

- A. Complete the Appeal of Final Grade Form ES4660. The Advisor or Counselor's signature is required. (A copy of Appeal of Final Grade Form – ES4660 is attached to these instructions.) Detailed descriptions of all relevant information in support of your appeal are very important. Responses and actions to your appeal will be based on these descriptions. The college representatives at each level of your appeal will review the situation based on information described in your written appeal; **additional thoughts or points of discussion added at later steps will not be considered as relevant to your appeal.** The student bears the burden of providing verifiable evidence that there are sufficient grounds for changing a grade. The form must be submitted to the instructor within the first three (3) weeks of the next college term after the grade was assigned.
- B. **STEP ONE.** You must submit the completed ES4660 form, including your written statement that provides relevant details in support of your appeal and the action you are requesting, to the instructor. Include all information because you cannot add other information or details to this document after this step. (Your prior contact with the instructor was an information-gathering step to help you to make an informed decision.) The instructor will formally discuss the appeal with you and will complete STEP ONE of form ES4660. The original copy of your appeal form will be returned to you after you and the instructor have signed the form.
- C. **STEP TWO.** If the final grade differences have not been resolved to your satisfaction you may continue the appeal process by submitting your form, completed through Step One, to the program chair/group leader/director **within five (5) full college class days** of notification of the of the instructor's decision. You are not permitted to make any changes in your appeal. You can cancel your appeal of a final grade at any step of the process.
- D. **STEP THREE.** If the final grade differences have not been resolved to your satisfaction you may continue the appeal process by submitting your form, completed through Step Two, to the academic dean/provost **within five (5) full college class days** of notification of the outcome of Step Two.
- E. **STEP FOUR.** If the final grade differences have not been resolved to your satisfaction you may continue the appeal process by submitting your form, completed through Step Three, to the College Review Board chairperson **within five (5) full college class days** of notification of the outcome of Step Three.
- F. The College Review Board hearing will be scheduled **within five (5) full college class days** of receipt of your original appeal form.

At each step of the appeal, you will be notified of the decision in writing **within five (5) full college class days** of receiving the written appeal or the appeal automatically proceeds to the next step. If timelines are not met by the student, the appeal process is cancelled.