Appeals and Dismissals

Appeal of a Grade

A grade appeal is not designed to evaluate general teaching effectiveness, but rather to determine whether a student was treated in an arbitrary and/or capricious manner by the instructor in regard to a final grade.

Graduate students who wish to appeal final grades must use the following procedural format. Appeal of a grade must be made within one semester following the posting of the grade. Grades earned in the spring semester that are to be appealed need not be appealed during the summer, but the appeal process must be initiated in the following fall semester. Documentation of the appeal must be sent to the Graduate School to be placed in the student's file. The Graduate School encourages resolution of appeals at the lowest possible level. Faculty members who are overruled in the appeal process are entitled to the same sequence of appeal as the graduate student.

Midterm grades are not official and may not be formally appealed. Students who wish redress for midterm grades should discuss the grade with the instructor of the course in order to determine a course of action leading up to the final grade.

When a grade appeal involves plagiarism, cheating, or other instances of academic dishonesty, refer also to the "Academic Dishonesty" section of the Graduate Catalog.

Procedures for the Appeal of a Grade

After each step in the procedures for the appeal of a grade, all written appeal request and decision statements must be copied to all involved parties (e.g., the student, the instructor, the department chair, the Dean of the academic college/division).

Step 1: The Instructor of the Course

When a student receives a grade that is judged by that student to be unjustifiably low, normally the first step in the appeal process is to discuss the matter with the instructor of the course. This is an informal meeting to attempt to resolve the issue. If the instructor agrees with the student, the grade is changed using standard procedures. If the instructor supports the original decision, the student may file a formal appeal. The student must prepare a formal written statement in accordance with the format presented in the "Protocol for Appealing a Grade," which is described in the next section. The original of this statement is given to the department chair, and a copy is given to the instructor. In response, the instructor must prepare a written statement explaining the reasons for the grade and submit that statement to the department chair with a copy to the student.

Step 2: The Department Chair

The chair of the department in which the appealed grade was received is charged with reviewing the student's and the instructor's written statements. The chair may also interview the student and the instructor, and may conduct whatever additional investigation deemed appropriate to help in the decision-making process. The chair must render a decision within 15 working days of receipt of the student's appeal documents.

If the chair sustains the decision of the instructor, the appeal may be taken by the student to the Dean of the academic college/division. If the chair disagrees with the instructor's decision, the chair must forward all appeal documents to the Dean of the academic college/division. Regardless of the decision, the chair must prepare and submit to the Dean of the academic college/division, a written statement that explains the reason for her/his decision with a copy to the instructor and the student.

Step 3: The Dean of the Academic College/Division

The Dean of the academic college/division is next in the formal appeal process. The Dean's first charge is to appoint an impartial committee of graduate faculty members to review all documentation pertaining to the appeal. The Dean will provide copies of all documentation to the committee. In addition to reviewing these documents, the committee should interview both the student and the instructor and may conduct any other investigation deemed necessary. The committee, which is advisory to the Dean, must submit a written statement of its recommendation to the Dean.

The Dean should review all documents and recommendations and may interview the student, the instructor, department chair, and conduct any other investigation deemed necessary. The Dean's decision is to be tendered in writing, and addressed to the student, sent by certified mail (return receipt requested) with copies to the instructor, department chair and chair of the impartial committee. The committee's deliberation and the Dean's decision must be completed within 30 working days of receipt of the student's appeal in the Dean's office. If the decision of the Dean is rejected by the student, the appeal may be taken by the student to the Graduate Council.

Step 4: The Graduate Council via the Dean of the Graduate School

At the request of the student, the Graduate Council will review all appeal documentation and respond with a decision within 30 working days of receipt of the student's appeal. The Graduate Council may interview the student and instructor and carry out any other investigation deemed necessary. Once the decision is made, it is final and will be communicated by the Dean of the Graduate School.

Step 5: Change of Grade Within the Specific College/Division (instructor, department chair, dean)

At any stage where the appeal process is concluded, the last appeal level will process a change of grade, if appropriate, using standard procedures.

In instances where the appeal is resolved at the Graduate Council level, the Council's decision is communicated in writing by the Dean of the Graduate School to the student, and copied to the Dean of the academic college/division, department chair, instructor, and chair of the impartial committee. The Dean of the academic college is responsible for processing the change of grade, if appropriate, using standard procedures upon receipt of Council's appeal decision correspondence.

Protocol for Appealing a Grade

Protocol for appeal of a grade must include the student’s name, department/college, date of the appeal, course title and number, instructor’s name, and grade received in the course. Also included must be the student’s rationale for appeal of the grade. The student should state as succinctly as possible the reasons for making the appeal. The student must also state the remedy he/she is seeking.

Appeals of a final institutional decision to the State Board of Education must be made in accordance with Idaho State Board of Education Governing Policies and Procedures Section III.P.18.

Dismissal Policy

A graduate student may be dismissed from a graduate program by a department/college according to the following criteria:

1. If the student receives two or more grades of C+ or below, or...
2. If the student fails to meet the continuation standards of the department (including conditions stated in the Admission letter), or
3. If it is the academic judgment of two-thirds of the graduate faculty in the department that the student is not making satisfactory progress in the program, and such judgment is recorded by formal vote.

In all cases the student must be notified in writing by certified mail, return receipt requested, that he/she is dismissed and must be told in the document that she/he has the right of appeal according to the Idaho State University Graduate Catalog. The student should be given a copy of the Graduate Catalog, appropriate catalog pages, or notified that the Catalog is available online or in the Graduate School.

All dismissal communications are to be copied to the department chair, Dean of the academic college, and Dean of the Graduate School.

Students receiving letters of dismissal will automatically be dropped from all graduate courses in the program from which they are being dismissed, regardless of whether they choose to appeal; fees will be refunded in accordance with university policy. A "W" grade will then be entered on the transcript for all graduate courses not completed. Students receiving dismissal letters after the 10th day of classes may petition the Dean of the Graduate School for permission to complete the graduate courses in which they are enrolled. Students who appeal the dismissal will be blocked from registration for additional graduate courses during the appeals process. See “Procedures for the Appeal of Dismissal from a Graduate Program” for specific procedures.

The initiation of the appeal of the dismissal must occur within 15 working days of the notification of the dismissal, unless the student is appealing dismissal due to receiving two or more grades of C+ or below. In that case, the student may wish to appeal one or more grades before beginning appeal of dismissal (see “Appeal of a Grade” section). If the grade is upheld, and the student now wishes to appeal the dismissal, the student must begin the appeal of dismissal within 15 working days of receipt of the notification of the decision of the grade appeal. If the grade is changed to a B- or above, and the student no longer has two or more grades of C+ or below, the dismissal will be cancelled by the department/college. However, if the dismissal is based on Items 2 or 3, previously listed, the dismissal proceedings may continue. The Graduate School encourages resolution of appeals at the lowest possible level.

When a dismissal involves plagiarism, cheating, or other academic dishonesty, refer also to the “Academic Dishonesty” section of the Graduate Catalog.

Procedures for the Appeal of Dismissal from a Graduate Program

At each level appeal decisions are to be communicated in writing and addressed to the student, sent by certified mail (return receipt requested), and copied to all appropriate level decision persons, and the Graduate School.

Step 1: The Departmental Level

1. The student must request reconsideration in writing using the "Protocol for Appealing Dismissal from a Graduate Program," which is described in the next section.
2. A majority of the graduate faculty of the department must meet within 15 working days of the filed appeal and must decide by a 2/3 vote of those present to sustain the dismissal, or the dismissal is revoked. If necessary, the meeting of the graduate faculty may include those participating by telephone, email, or video conference. Should it prove impossible during the summer to convene a majority of the graduate faculty, the department chair/program director is required to assemble them in the first 15 working days they are on contract in the fall semester.
3. Either decision (revoke or sustain) is to be explained in writing to the student. Copies of this decision and explanation must be sent to the Dean of the academic college and the Dean of the Graduate School.
4. If the department upholds the dismissal, the student may appeal the decision to the Dean of the academic college. The student must appeal to the dean of the academic college within 15 working days of the receipt of the notification of the department’s decision.
5. If the dismissal is revoked, the department chair shall notify, in writing, the student, the Dean of the academic college and the Dean of the Graduate School, and the student shall be reinstated using standard procedures.

Step 2: The Dean of the Academic College

1. If the student appeals to the Dean of the academic college, then the Dean should review all documents and recommendations and may interview the student, the instructor, department chair, and conduct any other investigation deemed necessary. The Dean must consider the appeal within 30 working days of the student’s filed appeal and must decide to either revoke or sustain the dismissal.
2. Dean Overrules Dismissal. If the dismissal is revoked, the Dean must state in writing the reasons for the overrule and notify the student, the department chair, and the Dean of the Graduate School, and the student shall be reinstated using standard procedures. The graduate faculty of the department may appeal the Dean’s decision to the Graduate Council following the appeal steps listed in this policy.
3. Dean Sustains Dismissal. If the Dean sustains the decision to dismiss, she/he must notify in writing the student, the department chair, and the Dean of the Graduate School.

Step 3: The Graduate Council via the Dean of the Graduate School

1. The student may appeal to the Graduate Council if the Dean of the academic college sustains the dismissal. The student must appeal to the Graduate Council within 15 working days of receipt of the notification of the dean’s decision. This appeal must be in writing.
2. The Graduate Council must consider the appeal within 30 working days of receipt of the student’s appeal. This appeal should include copies of all appeal documents.
3. The Graduate Council may interview the student, graduate faculty, and Dean of the academic college, and conduct any other investigation deemed necessary. The student may have an advisor present during Council’s interview, but this person shall not act in a legal capacity (these are not legal proceedings) and may not address the Council.
4. The Council’s decision to revoke or sustain the dismissal is final.
5. In instances where the appeal is resolved at the Graduate Council level, the Council’s decision is communicated in writing, by the Dean of the Graduate School to the student, and copied to the Dean of the academic college and the department chair.
6. The Council’s decision, with all other documentation, will be kept in the student’s file in the Graduate School.
7. If the decision is to revoke the dismissal, the Dean of the Graduate School will reinstate the student in the program.

Protocol for Appealing Dismissal from a Graduate Program

Protocol for appeal of dismissal from a graduate program must include the student’s name, department/college, and date of the appeal. Also to be included is the rationale for appeal of the dismissal. The student should state as succinctly as possible the reason for making the appeal. The student must also state the remedy he/she is seeking.
Appeals of a final institutional decision to the State Board of Education must be made in accordance with Idaho State Board of Education Governing Policies and Procedures Section III.P.18.

Re-Applying After a Dismissal

A student may re-apply to a different program at Idaho State University after being dismissed from their current program.