

## What you should know about grade appeals

The purpose of this handout is to outline the procedures for appealing a final grade. If you are considering an appeal you should read Directive AA37, Review of Final Grade, found at <http://www2.algonquincollege.com/directives/policy/review-of-final-grades/>

For further information on policies and guidelines see the Algonquin College Student "Handbook" at <http://www.algonquincollege.com/student-services/sao/student-handbook/>

The information below contains some suggested steps for consideration.

### STEP 1 - Informal Consultation

Begin by consulting the professor. When you meet, be prepared to be a good listener when the professor explains why the mark is what it is. Feel free to take notes of important points. Note: it is your right to see and review exams and any other evaluation methods. Your professor will also give you an opportunity to explain your point of view as well. Under no circumstances should you challenge or debate with your professor. If after speaking to your professor you still feel strongly about the situation you can then proceed to **Step 2**.

What if you cannot reach your professor? If direct communication cannot be reached with the professor, please make sure you have tried the following:

- checking with the department office for the availability of your professor,
- sending an email message with your explanation of the request with times and dates that you are available and where you can be reached at, or
- writing a short letter/note with your explanation of the request with times and dates that you are available and where you can be reached at

According to Directive AA37, students who believe that their final grade, in whole or in part, has not been appropriately graded must first informally review their concerns with the professor within **five (5) working days** of their final grade being issued. Grades not questioned within this period will not be reviewed at a later date.

Directive AA37 further states that "when a grade is not resolved with a professor, or when a student does not receive a response from a professor within **five (5) working days** of the request, students are to contact the Academic Administrator responsible for the course for help prior to launching a Formal Review.

If all attempts have failed, please proceed to **"Step 2"** without delay. Be mindful of deadlines. Contacting your academic advisor may be a good first step because they are a good source of information and advice on a wide range of situations.

### STEP 2 – Review of Final Grades

Within **ten (10) working days** of the date issuance of the transcript submit a written request for a review of final grade to the Registrar's Office by completion of a "Review of Final Grade" form. This form can be obtained from the Registrar's Office. You will have to pay \$25, but if your request is successful you will get this money back.

### **Grounds for appeal**

The grounds are the reasons why you think the decision-maker should change your grade.

### ***What the Course Chair does***

A Chair will normally need about one week to respond to a request and establish a review committee consisting of a professor familiar with the course and one other person, a professor, program coordinator or Chair, as appropriate. Usually the review committee will complete the review within one week from the time the committee is established.

## **COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT GRADE APPEALS**

### ***Do marks ever go up on appeal? How often?***

Marks do go up sometimes. They can also go down or remain the same. It is hard to find out how often marks change on appeal. Each case is supposed to be looked at on its own merits.

### ***Can a multiple choice test mark be appealed?***

There is no rule against appealing the mark on a multiple choice test, but such an appeal is likely to fail because:

- (1) there is no discretion in the way a multiple choice test is graded, and
- (2) if there is an error, for instance, an invalid question, every student will have been subjected to the error

### ***Suppose your marks have been belled down or otherwise adjusted - how can you appeal that?***

A grade which has been adjusted can be appealed, but a reason is needed. The mere fact that the grade was adjusted is not a reason to appeal.

***If you write a test when you are sick and do poorly can you appeal to get a better mark?***

No. If you are sick and decide to write a test or exam, you have assumed the risk and your grade will normally stand.

***What about assignments or tests which get lost?***

The College places a very high value on the accuracy of grades. If a test or exam is lost, even if it is not your fault, you may have to write another assignment, test or exam. You should always keep copies of assignments to protect yourself in case of loss.

***Suppose you only need two more marks and they are very important to you. Isn't it true that an instructor can always find two more marks when it counts?***

No, it isn't true. In the vast majority of cases the original grade is the best and most accurate grade.

***If the marker makes a mistake in my favour, can my mark be lowered when the mistake is found?***

Yes, a mistake can be corrected. For example, to allow one student to keep a grade of 75 when that grade should have been 65 creates a situation which is unfair to other students.

***What can you do if you think a particular exam or assignment is unfair?***

Raise the issue with the professor informally first. Then write to the Chair. Be sure to state your reasons clearly, and, if possible, what remedy you are seeking.

**NOTE:** *The information contained herein is adopted from a guide produced by the Ombuds Office of the University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario. This guide was adapted with permission from one produced by the Ombuds Office, The University of Western Ontario. The guide reflects the experiences of numerous professional program students who, over more than a decade, used the services of the Office of the Ombudsperson.*