



SAULT
COLLEGE

Grade Appeal Handbook

2020-2021



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Grade Appeal Policy

Purpose

This policy sets out the means by which students may appeal final grades pursuant to established criteria. The College's object is to give fair consideration to student academic performance while maintaining the integrity of its programs.

Grade Appeal Criteria

1. An appeal shall be granted when a student demonstrates that one or more of the following criteria are met:
 - (a) **Irregularity in process.** The assigned grade is a result of a failure by the faculty or instructor to follow a course outline or a documented policy or process.
 - (b) **Unfair or inconsistent assessment.** The assigned grade is a result of an unfair or inconsistent assessment.
 - (c) **Exceptional circumstances.** The assigned grade is a result of exceptional circumstances.
 - (i) Exceptional circumstances are sudden, unforeseen and temporary circumstances that are not caused by students and are not amenable to being managed by students.
 - (ii) Students are responsible for managing all the stressors and demands associated with daily life, including by asking for help and accommodation before such stressors and demands affect academic performance. A failure to meet this student responsibility is grounds for dismissing an exceptional circumstances appeal.

Burden of Proof

2. Students who file appeals have the burden of proving that the criteria for an appeal are established. Students should therefore submit all relevant documentation with their appeals. For example:

- **Irregularity in process appeals:** policy documents relied upon, communications or other documents showing an irregularity.
- **Unfair or inconsistent assessment appeals:** comparison assessments and communications showing unfairness.
- **Exceptional circumstances appeals:** medical notes, death certificates, funeral notices, obituaries along with letters or other documentation that shows a relationship to a deceased person, letter from counsellor setting out accommodation problems.

Standing Committee on Academic Appeals

3. There shall be a Standing Committee of Academic Appeals (the “Committee”) responsible for participating in Step 3 appeals under this Policy.
4. Each academic year the Sault College Student Union will select eight qualified students to be Committee members. Participating students must have an overall program GPA of 2.0 or higher or weighted term GPA of 60% or higher.
5. Each academic year the Vice President Academic and Research (the “VPA”) will select at least 15 faculty members to be Committee members.
6. The Director Student Services/Student Success Officer shall act as a resource Committee members and shall maintain a current list of all Committee members.

Appeal Process

7. Step 1 – Appeal to Faculty Member

- (a) Students may file a Step 1 appeal to the responsible faculty member up until the deadline for grade appeals that is set out in *Sault College Key Dates – For Students*. If students receive a final grade beyond the *Sault College Key Dates – For Students* deadline then a Step 1 appeal can be filed within five business days from the date of receiving the grade.
- (b) Students may use the Sault College Academic Grade Appeal Form or send an e-mail that sets out the basis for the appeal, which must include the words “Grade Appeal” in the email subject line. Students are encouraged to submit to the faculty as much information as possible with details regarding their burden of proof, including any supporting documentation for them to consider at Step 1
- (c) The responsible faculty member shall meet with the student if possible and issue a written Step 1 decision (by signing back the Appeal Form or sending an e-mail to the student) within five business days. Alternatively, the faculty member and student may agree to a resolution, which the faculty member shall document.

8. Step 2 – Appeal to Chair

- (a) Students who have received an unsatisfactory Step 1 decision or who have not received a timely Step 1 decision may file a Step 2 appeal within four business days of receiving a Step 1 decision or (if no Step 1 decision has been issued) within four business days from the date by which a Step 1 decision ought to have been made.

- (b) Step 2 appeals are to be filed with the Student Success Officer within the Student Support Centre (E1101 or appeals@saultcollege.ca) for transmission to the responsible Chair. Students who wish to file a Step 2 appeal may obtain a template appeal letter and assistance from the Student Success Officer, and are encouraged to seek assistance well before the appeal deadline.
- (c) Step 2 Grade Appeal submissions must include all relevant information to demonstrate the student's burden of proof. No additional information will be considered beyond Step 2.
- (d) Step 2 appeals will ordinarily be decided by the responsible Chair after a meeting with the student and responsible faculty member. Prior to the meeting, the faculty member shall provide the Student and Chair all documentation that the Chair relies upon that the student does not already possess. If the student believes they are missing relevant documentation, they should request it from the faculty member prior to the meeting.
- (e) The Chair's decision will ordinarily be communicated to the student, the responsible faculty member and the Student Success Officer (appeals@saultcollege.ca) by Sault College e-mail within six business days of the day the College receives the Step 2 appeal.

9. Step 3 - Appeal to VPA/Panel

- (a) Students who have received an unsatisfactory Step 2 decision or who have not received a timely Step 2 decision may file a Step 3 appeal within two business days of receiving a Step 2 decision or (if no Step 2 decision has

been issued) within four business days from the date by which a Step 2 decision ought to have been made.

- (b) Step 3 appeals are to be filed with the Student Success Officer within the Student Support Centre (E1101 or appeals@saultcollege.ca) for transmission to the VPA. The entirety of the student's Step 1 and Step 2 submissions and decisions, including any supporting documentation that had been previously submitted, will be forwarded to the VPA for a Step 3 panel review. The appeal shall identify all witnesses the student believes should be heard from in determining the Step 3 appeal.
- (c) The VPA will establish and chair a panel comprised of the VPA and a student and faculty member of the Committee, neither of whom are in the same program as the student and neither of whom are in a conflict of interest.
- (d) The panel may allow an appeal based on a review of the appeal alone, but will otherwise determine a Step 3 appeal based on either written submissions or a meeting with the student and faculty member. The panel will select a procedure that is fair and appropriate in the circumstances.
- (e) If a meeting is to be held:
 - The attendance of witnesses, support persons and all persons other than the parties shall be subject to the VPA's approval.
 - No party may rely on a document that was not considered during the Step 2 process. The student's Sault College academic record may be obtained and considered by the panel notwithstanding this requirement.

- (f) The meeting shall be conducted in an informal manner. Each party will be given the opportunity to explain their position within a set time limit, ordinarily 10 minutes. The panel may then question the parties and/or call upon witnesses they believe may provide helpful evidence. Witnesses will be questioned by the panel and, if the VPA deems it appropriate, by the parties. Each party will be given an opportunity to comment on any evidence given by witnesses before the meeting concludes.
- (g) The panel will deliberate in confidence. The VPA shall seek input from the other members of the panel, but shall be free to accept or reject the input and make the decision alone. Any notes taken by the panel members during a meeting or deliberation shall be collected by the VPA and destroyed to preserve deliberative secrecy and student privacy.
- (h) The Step 3 decision will ordinarily be communicated by the office of the VPA to the student, the responsible faculty member, the Chair and the Student Success Officer (appeals@saultcollege.ca) via Sault College e-mail within 10 business days of the day the College receives the Step 3 appeal. The Step 3 decision is final.

Confidentiality

10. The College treats all communications exchanged in an appeal and appeal proceedings as confidential. Information obtained by the parties in the appeal process shall be used and disclosed only for the purpose of resolving the appeal alone. Witnesses who participate in a Step 3 appeal meeting shall not disclose information obtained in the proceeding.

General Provisions

11. An appeal filed under this Policy does not stay a grade award or give rise to any student privileges other than expressly set out in this Policy. The College may, at its discretion, allow a student to continue in a program or participate in a course pending the resolution of an appeal.
12. Any duties assigned to a College official under this policy may be delegated. Likewise, College officials may use administrative assistants to undertake administrative tasks associated with their duties.
13. All time limits under this policy may be extended by agreement.