

Policy

Office/Contact: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Sources/Links: [BOR Policy 2.9.1.](#)

NORTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Policies and Guidelines

SUBJECT: Student Academic Appeal Policy

NUMBER: 2.8.11

1. Purpose

This policy provides the process for students to submit a petition for an exception to an academic policy or appeal a final grade or academic decision.

2. Definitions

3. Policy

There are three forms for submission of different types of student academic petitions:

- Academic Policy Exception Petition Form
- Petition for Late Drop/Withdrawal with or without Refund
- Final Grade/Academic Decision Appeal Form

These forms are available in Knowledge Base: Current Students/Records & Registration.

The Academic Policy Exception Petition Form is for petitioning for an exception to an academic policy. This form should be completed and submitted to records@northern.edu or be delivered to the Registrar's Office. These petitions must be brought within thirty calendar days from the date of the pertinent deadline or end of the pertinent course or academic term. Decisions of the Registrar are final.

The Petition for Late Drop/Withdrawal Form is for petitioning for a late course drop or withdrawal. This form should be completed and submitted to records@northern.edu or be delivered to the Registrar's Office. These petitions must be brought within thirty calendar days from the date of the pertinent deadline or end of the pertinent course or academic term. Decisions of the Registrar are final.

The Final Grade/Academic Decision Appeal Form is submitted as part of a Student Academic Appeal involving a final course grade or other action that has similar finality, such as denial of admission to an undergraduate major or refusal to permit the continuation of an academic program. See below.

Student Academic Appeal Procedure

NSU's Student Academic Appeal Policy is derived from BOR Policy 2.9.1. The evaluation of students involves the exercise of professional judgment informed by prolonged and specialized training in an academic subject matter and by experience in presenting those techniques and knowledge to persons who may be unfamiliar with them. Deference should be given to judgments that reflect the academic standards accepted by the university as appropriate to the discipline involved in the dispute and for instruction in that discipline. No deference should be given to actions that do not embody accepted academic standards, particularly if the motive for such actions is unrelated to academic concerns.

When a complaint presents facts that would suggest that the challenged action stemmed from conduct violating BOR Policy 1.4.3 or 1.4.4, which prohibit sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination, the matter will be referred under Board Policy 1.4.3 to the institutional Title IX/EEO coordinator for investigation and resolution under those policies. No further action will be taken under Board Policy 2.9 pending the completion of proceedings under Board Policy 1.4.3. See BOR Policy 2.9.1.

1. Timing and Substantive Conditions on Appeals

A. Academic appeals may be brought only by students who were registered during the term in which the disputed action was taken.

B. Academic appeals may be brought only from final course grades or other actions that have similar finality, such as, without limitation, denial of admission to an undergraduate major or refusal to permit the continuation of an academic program.

C. Academic appeals must be brought within thirty calendar days from the date that the student received notification of the action. If this action occurs within fifteen calendar days before the end of the term, the student must bring an appeal within fifteen calendar days after the beginning of the academic term (fall, spring, or summer) following the term in which the challenged action was taken. A student may petition the provost for an extension of this timeline if circumstances prevented a timely appeal.

D. Academic appeals may be brought to challenge a grade or academic decision typically on one or more of three grounds:

- 1) if an academic decision resulted from administrative error or from misapprehension of some material fact or circumstance, e.g., evaluation reflected an error in the examination or question itself or misread the student's written response;
- 2) if an academic decision departs substantially from accepted academic standards for the discipline and the university; or
- 3) if circumstances suggest that an academic decision reflected the prejudiced or capricious consideration of student opinions or conduct unrelated to academic standards, of student status protected under Board policy, state or federal civil rights law or of other considerations that are inconsistent with the bona fide exercise of academic judgment.

2. Academic Appeal Procedure

A. A student who wishes to appeal a grade or academic decision shall discuss the matter first with the course instructor or the person(s) responsible for the decision. The instructor or academic decision-maker(s) shall listen to the student's concerns, shall provide explanation, and shall change the grade or reconsider the decision if the student provides convincing argument for doing so.

B. If, after the discussion with the instructor or academic decision-maker, the student's concerns remain unresolved, the student may appeal the matter to the appropriate department chair. The student with an academic appeal shall file a written appeal on the Final Grade/Academic Decision Appeal Form with the department chair and during a scheduled conference shall request relief from that person. This filing must occur within thirty calendar days from the date that the student received notification of the action. The department chair shall listen to the student's concerns. If the course is an online course and the student is off campus, the scheduled conference may be made via video conference, e.g., Zoom. If the department chair believes that the complaint may have merit, within two (2) days of receipt of the written appeal, the department chair shall send a copy of the Appeal Form to the division dean and the faculty member. The department chair shall discuss the appeal with the student, faculty member, and division dean, individually.

The department chair shall make a decision and send the decision to the dean, faculty member and the student within ten (10) school days after the written appeal has been filed, using official NSU email. Any deadlines in this procedure for the department chair that fall outside of the normal fall and spring semesters, e.g., during the winter break or summer terms, shall be set to the first week of the next semester.

C. If a department chair's grade or decision, in the role as a faculty member, is being appealed, and if resolution satisfactory to the student is not reached as outlined in step A, the written

Final Grade/Academic Decision Appeal Form shall be filed with the appropriate division dean and procedures similar to those outlined in step B shall be followed.

D. If the department chair's (or dean's) decision is not satisfactory to the student, the student may forward the Final Grade/Academic Decision Appeal Form to the Academic Appeal Committee within ten (10) school days after receiving the department chair's/division dean's decision. The student shall send the Appeal Form to the Academic Appeal Committee via an email to the provost's official NSU email on the student's official NSU email. A meeting of the Academic Appeal Committee must be convened within ten (10) school days after the appeal has been filed with the provost. The committee must reach a decision within ten (10) days after its first meeting. Any deadlines in this procedure for the Academic Appeal Committee that fall outside of the normal fall and spring semesters, e.g., during the winter break or summer terms, shall be set to the first week of the next semester.

E. The composition of the Academic Appeal Committee is described in the NSU Faculty Handbook.

F. The committee shall follow the procedures below:

- Hearings are closed.
- The faculty member and the student shall have access to each other's written statements prior to the hearing and have the right to offer rebuttal to each other's comments at the hearing.
- The faculty member and the student may present appropriate testimony and may be advised by a person of their choice.
- During the hearing and in the presence of the faculty member and the student, the committee may request testimony from at least one consultant from the faculty member's academic discipline.
- The committee or its advisor may ask relevant questions of the faculty member and the student. The faculty member and advisor as well as the student and advisor may ask relevant questions of the committee. The committee members, the faculty member, the student and advisors may ask questions relevant to all participants' testimony.
- Any records of the faculty member or the student deemed pertinent to the appeal shall be made available to the committee upon its request. The confidentiality of these records shall be protected.
- If the course is an online course and the student is off campus, the student and their advisor may be invited to participate in the hearing via video conference, e.g., Zoom.

G. The decision of the committee and the reasons for it shall be reported in writing to the faculty member and the student, with copies being sent to the Registrar, division dean, and department chair. The report is to be sent within at least ten (10) school days following the hearing, communicated via official NSU email. If an action or decision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs, in the role of faculty member, is being appealed, the Associate Vice President

for Academic Affairs shall act as chairperson of the committee. The decision of the Academic Appeal Committee is final.

4. Responsible Administrator

The Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs is responsible for the annual review of this policy and its procedures.

5. Source History:

This policy comes from the NSU Faculty Handbook. A significant revision of this policy was recommended by the Opportunity for All Council on 11/26/2024. The revised policy was shared to solicit feedback from Deans Council on 1/8/2025 and Faculty Senate on 1/17/2025.