



Grade Appeal Policy

Summary of Purpose

This policy was created to ensure a fair and equitable appeal process that allows a medical student to appeal a grade and/or grade narrative when they can demonstrate that the grade and/or grade narrative inaccurately reflects their performance in a course, clerkship, or elective.

Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to the final course or clerkship or elective grade and/or grade narrative for medical students enrolled in the medical education program and to course and clerkship and elective directors and staff who support that program.

Definitions

Course Leader: Individual(s) who oversee the development, content, pedagogy and assessment of courses offered in the preclinical curriculum; responsible for evaluating whether learners have met the objectives of the course and for assigning student grades.

Clerkship Director: Individual(s) who oversee the development, content, pedagogy and assessment of clerkships offered in the clinical curriculum; responsible for evaluating whether learners have met the objectives of the clerkship, writing the grade narratives and assigning final grades. These are different from rotation (e.g., clerkship subcomponent such as surgical oncology) or site (e.g., California Pacific Medical Center - CPMC) directors.

Elective Director: Individual(s) who oversee the development, content, pedagogy and assessment of electives offered in the clinical curriculum; responsible for evaluating whether learners have met the objectives of the elective, writing the grade narratives and assigning final grades.

Policy Statement

- The assignment of grades and/or grade narratives is the responsibility of the course leader, clerkship or elective director.

- If a student believes that the grade and/or grade narrative earned in a course or clerkship or elective is inappropriate, there are three levels of appeal that may be pursued. Each level of review is independent of the one prior and will be based on the initial written appeal by the student in addition to any written addendums as applicable.
- A student who wishes to appeal a final grade and/or grade narrative must follow the appeal process within the timeframe specified in the grade appeal procedure. Appeals that do not comply with the timeframe will not be accepted.
- All appeals must be in writing and contain the basis for the appeal. All responses must be in writing and address the points raised by the student deliberately and transparently.
- Individual course and clerkship evaluation and grading practices will be outlined using a standard location and format in the learning management system (i.e. Canvas) and provide the standard level of detail regarding the relative contribution and determination of each assessment to the overall grade and/or grade narrative as per clinical education policy. (Please see grading criteria established for individual courses in the preclinical curriculum located in the course syllabus, or the grading policy for the clinical clerkships.)

Procedure

Before the formal appeal process is initiated, any medical student who believes a final grade is incorrect should confer with the course leader or clerkship or elective director to request a reconsideration.

If the student disagrees with the grading decision, the formal grade appeal process may be initiated by completing the grade appeal form (see Appendix). The student must complete a grade appeal form to initiate the formal process (Level 1). A medical student has three levels of appeal to contest a grade and/or grade narrative. The levels are outlined in the table below.

If a student has failed a course or clerkship and the failing grade is upheld following all levels of appeal he or she will be referred to the chair of the Academic Progress Committee (APC) in alignment with Geisel grading policies and the APC policy.

Table. Grade appeal actions and expected time frames

A conversation with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs may occur at any time for advice.

Level	Grade Appeal Action	Expected Time Frame*
	Informal conversation with the course leader or clerkship/elective director	As soon as possible, but must be within six weeks of grade and/or grade narrative being posted.
Level 1	Initiate formal appeal to course leader or clerkship/elective director by filing Grade Appeal Form	As soon as possible but must be within six weeks of grade and/or grade narrative being posted, or within two weeks of informal meeting with clerkship director to discuss grade.
Level 1 Response	Written response by course leader or clerkship/elective director returned to student	Within two weeks of receipt of grade appeal form.
Level 2	Appeal to Grade Appeal Response Team (GART) returned to student and clerkship director	Within two weeks after decision by course leader or clerkship/elective director
Level 2 Response	Written response by member of GART	Within four weeks of receipt of grade appeal form. If more time is needed, the student and course leader or clerkship/elective director will be consulted. The registrar's office will also be consulted to address any potential issues arising from the timing.
Level 3	Appeal to Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education (SADME) and the Level 3 Appeal Team	Two weeks after decision by GART
Level 3 Response	Written decision by Level 3 Appeal Team returned to student, clerkship director and associate curricular dean	Within four weeks of appeal to Level 3 Appeal Team

**Time frames for the review of the appeal are intended as goals but circumstances may require flexibility. If any level of appeal will take longer than the expected time frame, the student and clerkship team will be in communication and agree on a reasonable adjusted timeline, with the Associate Dean for Assessment Quality and Accreditation (ADAQA) as a liaison for discordant requests.*

The procedure for each level in a formal appeal is described below.

Informal Informational Conversation

This is considered an informal review of the grade and/or grade narrative. This discussion should be initiated as soon as possible but must be within 6 weeks of the posting of the grade and/or grade narrative on Oasis. The student is entitled to an explanation of exactly how the final grade and/or grade narrative was determined and to view the results of component quizzes, examinations, and evaluations that contributed to the final grade and/or grade narrative.

Students who decide to appeal a grade and/or grade narrative are encouraged to have a conversation with their Student Affairs Advising Dean who can review the protocol and provide guidance during the appeal process.

Contacting faculty or house staff for evaluation feedback outside the standard evaluation and assessment feedback mechanisms already in place should be done by the clerkship director or associate dean as applicable. It is not permitted to be done by the student though the student may request that a clerkship director or dean be in touch with a particular individual as applicable with written response. If a student is found to have done so directly, that evaluator's input cannot be used for the appeal process.

Level 1: Course Leader or Clerkship/Elective Director

The student may initiate the formal appeal process by completing the grade appeal form and submitting it to the course leader or clerkship/elective director. The course leader or clerkship/elective director will review the appeal with the course or clerkship grading committee and make a determination within two weeks of receiving the student's written appeal. If gathering the necessary information or making the determination will take longer than the expected time frame of two weeks, the student will be made aware of this and a reasonable timeline agreed upon and followed with the ADAQA as a liaison for discordant requests.

All responses must be in writing and address the points raised by the student deliberately and transparently.

If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the course leader or clerkship/elective director, the student may proceed to the next level and appeal to the Grade Appeals Response Team (GART).

Level 2: Grade Appeals Response Team (GART)

The student may initiate the Level 2 appeal by sending the following to the Grade Appeal Response Team via the Associate Dean for Assessment, Quality and Accreditation:

1. Grade appeal form,
2. Course leader or clerkship/elective director's written response, and if applicable,
3. A written student addendum.

This appeal should be made within two weeks after the Level 1 decision from the course leader or clerkship/elective director. In the event of a delay or conflict (e.g., coincides with an exam), a student may request an extension prior to the deadline from the ADAQA. If the course leader is also the ADAQA, then the Level 2 appeal should be submitted to the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education (SADME).

The Grade Appeal Response Team consists of the following members:

- ADAQA
- Director for Evaluation and Assessment
- No fewer than 2 faculty who teach in Phase 1
- No fewer than 2 faculty who teach in Phase 2 or 3
- The Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- The Associate Dean for Preclinical Education (non-voting member)
- The Associate Dean for Clinical Education (non-voting member)

While it may not be possible for all members of GART to be involved in every grade appeal case, at least 4 members must be present to vote on decisions or, if that is not possible, to provide an electronic vote for appeal decisions. At least one of those voting members will be from the phase where the appeal originated. Appeals will be granted if a simple majority of voting members votes to approve or in case of a tie vote.

Any GART member who is directly involved in the grade being appealed or who has any other conflict of interest, as defined by Dartmouth policies, must recuse themselves. In such cases, a replacement or proxy may be selected by the GART members.

Students will be notified in advance of the membership of GART and will be provided the opportunity to identify any GART members who they believe may have a Conflict of Interest. In such cases, that member will not be permitted to vote and a replacement or proxy may be selected by the GART members.

The GART will make a determination within four weeks of receiving the student's written appeal. If gathering the necessary information or making the determination will take longer than the expected time frame of two weeks, the student will be made aware of this and a reasonable timeline agreed upon and followed with the ADAQA as a liaison for discordant requests.

All responses must be in writing and address the points raised by the student deliberately and transparently.

If the student believes that the decision of the GART is not consistent with Geisel policies or that the appropriate process was not followed, the student may proceed to the next level and appeal to the Level 3 Appeal Team, which is coordinated by the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education (SADME).

Level 3: The Level 3 Appeal Team

The student may initiate a Level 3 appeal by sending the following to the SADME:

1. Grade appeal form,
2. Course leader or clerkship/elective director's written response,
3. GART's written response, and if applicable,
4. A written student addendum.

This written appeal should be made within two weeks after GART's Level 2 decision. In the event of a delay or conflict (e.g., coincides with an exam), a student may request an extension prior to the deadline from the SADME.

The Level 3 Appeal Team consists of the SADME, the Associate Dean for Admissions and the Chair of the APC. This group will review the written request by the student, review pertinent materials from the course, and may interview appropriate individuals. Their focus is limited to a determination if policies and processes were appropriately followed. If they determine that these processes were not appropriately followed, they will decide if the case should be brought back to GART or if it is necessary to convene an ad hoc group to re-initiate a Level 2 appeal. If the decision is made to create a new, ad hoc group to hear the Level 2 appeal, the Level 3 Appeal Team will convene a panel of three faculty or administrators who are familiar with medical educational assessment procedures at Geisel but who do not currently have any grading responsibilities for the course or clerkship/elective grade being appealed and who have no conflict of interest with the student whose grade is being appealed.

A determination will be made within four weeks of appeal to Level 3 Appeal Team. All responses must be in writing and address the points raised by the student deliberately and transparently.

The decision of this panel is considered final.

Key Words

Appeal of Grade, Final Exam, NBME Subject Matter Exam, Quiz, "Shelf" Exam

LCME Standard

Standard 9.9 – Student Advancement and Appeal Process

A medical school ensures that the medical education program has a single standard for the advancement and graduation of medical students across all locations and a fair and formal process for taking any action that may affect the status of a medical student, including timely notice of the impending action, disclosure of the evidence on which the action would be based, an opportunity for the medical student to respond, and an opportunity to appeal any adverse decision related to advancement, graduation, or dismissal.

Standard 11.6 – Student Access to Educational Records

A medical school has policies and procedures in place that permit a medical student to review and to challenge his or her educational records, including the Medical Student Performance Evaluation, if he or she considers the information contained therein to be inaccurate, misleading, or inappropriate.

Related Information

University Documents

None.

Other Documents

Preclinical Education Grading Policy.
Clinical Education Grading Policy.

Related Links

Grade Appeal Form (See Appendix).

Policy Administration

Policy Number	UME-CNTRL-0005	Effective	October 12, 2015
Authorized By	Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education	Written By	Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education and Associate Dean for Clinical Education
Approved By	Medical Education Committee	Date Approved	May 2023
Date Reviewed	April 2023	Date Revised	April 2023
Responsible Office	Office of Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education	Responsible Administrator	Chair, Medical Education Committee
Inform	Advising Deans; Associate Deans; Chair, Committee for Student Performance and Conduct; Chair, Department of Medical Education; Registrar		

Policy Contact Information

Director, Preclinical Education
Preclinical.Office@dartmouth.edu

Director, Clinical Education
Clinical.Education.Office@Dartmouth.edu

Director, Evaluation & Assessment
Nancy.Barbour@dartmouth.edu

History

Date	History
October 12, 2015	Policy was written and approved by the Medical Education Committee (MEC).
August 15, 2017	Policy was revised by the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education, Greg Ogrinc, and Associate Dean for Clinical Education, John F. Dick, III. The policy revisions were approved by the MEC.
July 12, 2018	Policy was revised by the Chair of the MEC based on student feedback.
July 17, 2018	Policy was revised to update the procedure timeline and clarify the scope and applicability. Policy revisions were approved by the MEC.
February 26, 2019	Policy was revised to reflect nomenclature changes and added definitions for clarity. Policy revisions were approved by the MEC.
January 19, 2021	Policy was revised and approved by the MEC.
May 17, 2023	Policy was revised and approved by the MEC. The revisions include the addition of the Grade Appeals Response Team to level 2 of the appeals process and the addition of the Level 3 Grade Appeal Team to level 3 of the appeals process.

Background

None.

Grade Appeal Form

Please complete and submit this form with your rationale and as documentation for your grade appeal request.

Today's date	
Student's name (printed)	
NetID Number	
Email address	
Phone	
Course/Clerkship name	
Course Leader/Clerkship Director name	
Dates of course/clerkship	
Final Grade received	
Final Grade expected	

Basis for Grade Appeal (Please check all criteria that apply):

- Computation dispute about the final grade.
- Unequal application of grading standards or applying grading criteria to one student or some students in a manner that treats them differently.
- Unfair or unannounced alterations or deviations of assignments, grading criteria, or computational process as stated in the syllabus.
- Grade narrative not reflective or fully representative of student's performance.
- Other

Please provide a concise rationale that addresses **each** criterion checked above, including the reason why you expected the grade and/or grade narrative you indicated. (This is not space limited. Please use extra space as necessary.)

Type here.

The information I provided as part of this request for a grade appeal is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and ability. I also have read the Geisel Grade Appeal Policy found in the student handbook.

Student's Signature

Date