

Appeals against Academic Decisions

A. Appeals against Academic Decisions Made by an Instructor in a Graduate Course.

1. If a student wishes to question a course grade or other academic decision made by an individual instructor, he or she must first appeal informally to that instructor and ensure that the instructor is aware of any and all the facts which the student believes should bear upon the decision. This should be done as early as possible after the decision is announced and, normally, not more than two months thereafter. The instructor shall be obliged to make a formal reply to the appeal, normally within two weeks of receipt of the request.

2. If the decision is not altered and the student is not satisfied that it is academically proper, he or she may lodge with the Head of the department a formal request for review of the decision. This request must be made as soon as possible and not later than one month after the appeal to the instructor has failed. The request must be made in writing and must include a complete statement of any and all the facts which the student believes should bear upon the decision. The Head shall investigate the case by whatever means seem appropriate and shall endeavour to ensure that all the facts which the student believes to be pertinent to the appeal have been brought to the Head's attention and that of the instructor, and that all the factors which bear on the instructor's decision are known to the Head, who shall also attempt to ensure that both the instructor and the student are fully aware of the other's point of view. The Head shall normally return a formal, written response to the student's appeal within two weeks of the receipt of

that appeal. It is highly desirable, and in the interests of the department and the student, that all reasonable steps be taken by the Head to resolve the dispute at this level.

3. If the student is not satisfied with the decision thus arrived at, he or she may request of the Head that a departmental special committee be struck to review the appeal. Request that a special committee be struck must be made in writing within two weeks of receipt of the Head's response to the original appeal. The Head shall immediately appoint a special committee to review the appeal, and shall pass to that Committee the student's original letter of appeal, and any subsequent written declaration of the grounds of the appeal. The Head shall also forward at the same time his or her own written report on the appeal, the instructor's written response to the appeal, and any other documents pertaining to the appeal. Each party to the dispute shall have the right of access to all documents presented to the review committee. The Head shall also inform the Chair of Division II of the appeal. The committee will consist of three faculty members, who shall not include the instructor appealed against, but shall include a professor from another department, appointed by the Chair of Division II, and a student member of the department, who shall normally be the Chair of the GES. The Head shall ensure that the student member is acceptable to the faculty members of the committee, to the instructor whose decision has been appealed, and to the appellant. The committee shall review the case by whatever means it deems appropriate, but will normally interview both the instructor and the student and may seek knowledgeable advice from a faculty

member other than the instructor involved. The external faculty member and the student member shall have full access to any documents produced before the committee and shall participate in all the deliberations of the committee, but shall not have a vote. The committee shall communicate its findings to the Head within two weeks of its formation. Within one week of receipt of the committee's report, the Head shall communicate his or her decision in writing to the student and to the instructor. A copy of this decision, and a statement of the grounds for the decision, shall be forwarded to the Chair of Division II. No further appeal against the academic decision may be made.

B. Appeals against Decisions on the Comprehensive Examination.

1. If a student wishes to query an academic decision made initially by the Board of Examiners for the PhD comprehensive examination and ratified by the Graduate Studies Committee, he or she must lodge the appeal formally with the Head, in the manner cited in A (2) above, within one month after the decision is announced. The Head shall meet with the student in order to ensure that all the facts the student believes pertinent to the appeal are contained in his or her written request for reconsideration of the academic decision, and to ensure that the student understands the procedures by which decisions on the comprehensive examination are reached. If the student then still desires to proceed with the appeal, the Head shall meet with the Graduate Studies Committee, and with the Board of Examiners, within two weeks of receipt of the appeal, to review the appealed decision, and shall communicate his or her judgement to the student as soon thereafter as possible.

2. If the decision is not altered and the student is not satisfied that it is academically proper, then

he or she may, within two weeks of receipt of the Head's judgement, request that the Head strike a review committee; this request will consist of a detailed rebuttal of the Head's report, stating the grounds for a further appeal. The Head shall advise the Chair of Division II of the appeal and its grounds. The Head shall appoint a special committee, constituted as described in A (3), except that, since this appeal is against the decision of a committee and not of a single instructor, no member of that committee or of the Board of Examiners may serve on the special committee. The committee shall review the case as it deems appropriate, but will normally seek knowledgeable advice from faculty members not on the Board of Examiners or on the Graduate Studies Committee. The committee shall normally communicate its findings to the Head within 3 weeks of its formation. The Head shall, within 1 week of receipt of these findings, communicate his or her decision to the student and to the Graduate Studies Committee and send a copy of the decision to the Chair of Division II. There shall be no further appeal against this academic decision.

3. Appeals against the composition of examining committees should follow the general procedure detailed in A (2) above.

C. Grievances

Academic decisions are not matters of grievance and do not fall under the University grievance procedures. If the academic decision has not been altered after the appropriate review procedures have been carried out, and if the student believes he or she may have a case of grievance, he or she should consult with the University Grievance Advisor.