



Requests for Relief from Academic Decisions

Policy Category:	Rights and Responsibilities
Subject:	Requests for Relief from Academic Decisions
Subsections:	Introduction ; Definitions ; Legal Counsel ; Undergraduate Student Requests For Relief From Academic Decisions ; Graduate Student Requests For Relief From Academic Decisions ; Appeals to SRBA
Approving Authority:	Senate
Responsible Committee:	Senate Committee on Academic Policy
Related Procedures:	Procedure for Undergraduate Student Academic Requests for Relief Procedure for Graduate Student Academic Requests for Relief
Officer(s) Responsible for Procedure:	Provost & Vice-President (Academic)
Related Policies:	Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities Senate Review Board Academic Appeals Scholastic Offences
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Throughout this document, reference to “Dean” is to be interpreted as “Dean or their designate or equivalent”, and reference to “Department Chair” is to be interpreted as “Department Chair or their designate or equivalent”. If the matter has been designated by the Dean or Chair to another person, that person is authorized to make the Faculty or Department’s final decision on the matter.

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In a course offered by Western Continuing Studies, “Department Chair” shall be interpreted as “Executive Director of Western Continuing Studies” and “Faculty Dean” shall be interpreted as “Dean of the partnering Faculty”.

Throughout this document, the word “Vice-Provost” means “Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) or designate”.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with its related procedures.

2.0 **DEFINITIONS**

Reasonable Apprehension of Bias means that a reasonable and informed person, viewing the matter realistically and practically, would think that it is more likely than not that a decision maker was biased in respect of the decision.

University, for the purposes of this policy, means Western University and its Affiliated University Colleges.

3.0 **LEGAL COUNSEL**

Legal counsel is not permitted at any stage of the request for relief process prior to the level of the Senate Review Board Academic (SRBA).

4.0 **UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FROM ACADEMIC DECISIONS**

The Deans’ rulings in academic matters are final unless overturned or modified on appeal to SRBA.

4.1 Requests for Relief

Student requests for relief generally fall into one of the following:

- 1) Category 1: Requests for relief relating to a specific course (e.g., with respect to a mark, grade, appropriateness of assignments or examinations, grading practices, or other academic decision determined by a course instructor).
- 2) Category 2: Requests for relief in the form of an exemption from a Senate academic regulation (e.g., progression requirements, program eligibility, graduation requirements), which authority has been delegated to the Deans by the University Senate.

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- 3) Category 3: Requests for relief from a decision by the Academic Advising unit or Dean's Office of the student's Home Faculty (e.g., regarding academic considerations or academic regulations).

In general, Category 1 includes requests for relief intrinsic to a specific course, while all other categories involve requests for relief related to a particular student and difficulties they may have encountered.

The category of request for relief determines the route followed. As a general principle, a request for relief may only proceed via one pathway. Students in doubt as to the appropriate path for their requests should consult their Dean.

4.2 Requests for Relief to Instructor, Department Chair, And Faculty Dean

A student may request that a grade on a particular piece of work, or a final standing in a course or program, be changed, or a student may request an exemption from a Senate academic regulation. The subject of a request for relief can range from a waiver of progression requirements to accuracy of grades on examinations or assignments. Such a request can include questions of fairness or appropriateness of general grading practices and can be launched regardless of whether a record of the student's work exists.

A student must submit their request for relief pursuant to the *Procedure for Undergraduate Student Academic Requests for Relief*.

4.3 Grounds of Requests for Relief

A request for relief must be based on one or more of the following grounds:

- 1) medical or compassionate circumstances
- 2) extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control
- 3) reasonable apprehension of bias
- 4) inaccuracy
- 5) unfairness

Such requests must be supported by evidence. A detailed description of the evidence supporting the request (including any supporting documentation) must be presented, in writing, as part of the request for relief.

Note that requests for relief based on medical or compassionate circumstances should in most cases have been made to the student's Dean's Office/Academic Advising unit at the time of the circumstances. Requests for retroactive relief based

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on such circumstances and which do not involve the fairness of the course itself should be initiated with the Dean's Office/Academic Advising unit of the student's Home Faculty and include a clear explanation of why academic considerations were not requested in a timely manner.

Ignorance of Senate regulations and policies, and particular program requirements as set out in the Academic Calendar, do not constitute grounds for a request for relief.

5.0 GRADUATE STUDENT REQUESTS FOR RELIEF FROM ACADEMIC DECISIONS

Students may submit a request for relief from an academic decision or ruling to their graduate program and, if unsuccessful, to the Vice-Provost (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies). Some decisions may be appealed further to SRBA. The Vice-Provost's rulings in academic matters are final unless overturned or modified on appeal to SRBA.

5.1 Subject Matter of Academic Requests for Relief

A student may submit a request for relief for:

- 1) A mark on an examination or on a particular piece of work, or final standing in a course
- 2) A ruling of an instructor, program, or administrator in an academic matter.

5.2 Grounds of Requests for Relief

A request for relief must be based on one or more of the following grounds:

- 1) medical or compassionate circumstances
- 2) extenuating circumstances beyond the student's control
- 3) reasonable apprehension of bias
- 4) inaccuracy
- 5) unfairness

Such requests must be supported by evidence. A detailed description of the evidence supporting the request (including any supporting documentation) must be presented, in writing, as part of the request for relief.

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Ignorance of Senate regulations and policies and program requirements does not constitute grounds for a request for relief.

A student must submit their request for relief pursuant to the *Procedure for Graduate Student Academic Requests for Relief*.

6.0 APPEAL TO SRBA

A student may have a right of appeal to SRBA if the decision falls within its jurisdiction. Appeals to SRBA must be made **within six weeks of the date of the Dean's (Undergraduate) or Vice-Provost's (Graduate) decision**.

The decision of the Dean, Vice-Provost or their designate remains in full force and effect unless and until overturned or modified by SRBA.

See the *Senate Review Board Academic Appeals* policy and *Procedure for Senate Review Board Academic Appeals* for further information.

Last Reviewed:

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