

Appeals Policy

It is the policy of Northeastern University that all students shall be treated fairly with respect to evaluations made of their academic performance, standing, and progress. This policy provides an appeals mechanism to students who believe that they have been erroneously, capriciously, inappropriately, or otherwise unfairly treated in an academic determination.

The university presumes that academic judgments by its faculty are fair, consistent, and objective. Substitution of a different academic judgment for that of the original evaluator is a serious intrusion upon academic prerogatives entrusted to the faculty and others involved in academic evaluations.

This policy applies to appeals related to academic determinations in COE graduate courses, regardless of the student's home college, and graduate programs. Appeals related to graduate courses or programs offered by another college should be handled by that college. Appeals related to third-semester dismissals should be submitted directly to the college.

Step 1. The student should first speak with the involved faculty or staff member about any determination about which they have questions and attempt to reach a resolution.

Step 2. If the student is not satisfied with the decision, the student may appeal. If the appeal relates to a course or program offered by a department, the appeal should be submitted to that department. Otherwise, the appeal should be submitted directly to the college. Department appeals should be submitted to the department chair (or designee) who should apply the department's procedures to review the case. The student must appeal within four weeks of the academic determination.

A student shall initiate this appeal of an academic determination by submitting a written statement that specifies the details of the action or judgment that they seek to appeal. This statement must start with a clear description of the basis for the appeal and should include basic facts about the situation leading to the appeal, when the situation occurred, who was involved, and the resolution sought by the student. All relevant supporting materials should be attached as addenda to the statement. Appeals should avoid unsubstantiated, defamatory, or ad hominem accusations regarding the motivations of the faculty member or other persons involved in making the academic determination.

The department will either affirm the original decision or substitute an alternative decision. The department's decision shall be made in writing and include the reasoning behind the decision. The department's decision must be made within two weeks of receiving the appeal.

Step 3. The student may appeal the department's decision to the college. To initiate the college appeal, the student shall submit to the associate dean of graduate education their statement, the department's response, and any additional information the student would like to be considered. Appeals to the college are reviewed by the Graduate Appeals Committee, which makes recommendations to the associate dean for graduate education. The student shall be offered the opportunity to meet with the committee to make a statement, present relevant facts of the case, and respond to clarifying questions the committee may have regarding the case. The chair of the committee reserves the right to end this meeting after 10 minutes if no further relevant facts are forthcoming. The committee may invite faculty and staff members to discuss the case and share relevant information.

The committee will either affirm the original decision, substitute an alternative decision, or refer the case back to the department for additional consideration. The committee's decision shall be made in writing and include the reasoning behind the decision. The committee's decision must be made within two weeks of receiving the appeal.

Step 4. Upon receiving the recommendation of the committee, the associate dean for graduate education shall review the case and make a final decision for the college.