

**RYERSON UNIVERSITY  
POLICY OF SENATE**

**GRADE AND STANDING APPEALS**

<b>Policy Number:</b>	168
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<b>Responsible Office:</b>	Provost and Vice President Academic

## 1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set out the framework, principles, regulations, and procedures governing all appeals of academic standing and final academic grades when all options for an informal resolution have been exhausted.

## 2. APPLICATION AND SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all full-time, part-time, undergraduate, graduate, law, and The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education (“The Chang School”) students and any others to whom this policy may apply at Ryerson University (the “University”).

This policy also applies to all faculty, staff, and administrators involved in the grading and appeal process. It describes the grounds and processes by which students may appeal academic standings and final academic grades when all options for an informal resolution have been exhausted.

- 2.2 Recognizing that the appeal process may be stressful, time intensive, and have high stakes for students, significant effort should be made to informally resolve issues relating to final academic grades before the submission of an appeal.
- 2.3 Any informal resolution must satisfy Senate academic policy and procedure requirements.
- 2.4 Grade reassessment and grade recalculation are not grounds for an academic appeal (see [Policy 162: Grade Reassessment and Grade Recalculation](#)).
- 2.5 Religious, Aboriginal, and spiritual observance is not a ground for appeal if the appropriate forms were not filed on time (see [Policy 150: Accommodation of Student Religious, Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance](#)).

## 3. DEFINITIONS

### 3.1 Burden of Proof

In a grade appeal and standing appeal, the burden of proof is on the student to show that, on a balance of probabilities, it is more likely than not that the decision relating to final grade or academic standing is incorrect.

### 3.2 Decision Maker

The person(s) within the department, program, Faculty, Senate Office, or Senate Appeals Committee (SAC) Panel authorized to make a decision regarding the appeal of a grade or standing.

### 3.3 Final Grade

For the purposes of this policy final grade includes Progress Report designations for graduate students. Final grades are also referred to as official grades.

### **3.4 Grade Appeal**

A grade appeal is a request for a final grade to be reviewed or changed based on the presence of grounds for appeal and evidence supplied by the student to support their case.

### **3.5 Hearing**

The appeal proceeding in which the student presents their case to an SAC Panel (the decision makers) which will result in a final decision outcome.

### **3.6 Natural Justice**

This is composed of four (4) principles: the right to know the case against you; the right to an impartial and unbiased decision maker; the opportunity to be heard; the right to a decision and rationale for that decision.

### **3.7 Remedy**

This is the resolution requested by the student or the outcome from the decision maker to address a student's final grade or academic standing appeal. Possible remedies can be found in Procedures – Section 4.

### **3.8 Senate Appeal Committee (SAC) Panel**

The panel established by the Secretary of Senate, responsible for reviewing appeal submissions and/or Senate dismissal recommendations and that upon evaluating the evidence provided, makes a decision on the appeal. Senate Appeal Committee decisions are final and not appealable.

### **3.9 Standing Appeal**

A standing appeal is a request for a standing of Required to Withdraw (RTW) or Permanent Program Withdrawal (PPW) in the case of undergraduate students, and Withdrawn in the case of graduate students, to be reviewed or changed based on the grounds for appeal and evidence supplied by the student to support their case.

## **4. PRINCIPLES**

### **4.1. Academic Success**

Ryerson University is committed to promoting academic success and to ensuring that students' academic records reflect their academic abilities and accomplishments. The University expects that grades will reflect demonstrated knowledge of course material, and that academic decisions concerning final grades and academic standings will be fair, consistent, and objective.

### **4.2. Senate Policy Framework**

The values stipulated in the [University's Senate Policy Framework](#) are applicable and fundamental to this policy.

### **4.3. Fair Process**

The policy should be applied in a way that is consistent with the principles of natural justice, including, but not limited to the right to have one's perspective heard, to be

informed about other perspectives and relevant information, and to receive a timely and fair decision based on the merits of each individual case.

#### **4.4. Non-Adversarial Approach**

The University is committed to resolving academic disputes in a mutually respectful, and timely way, rather than from an adversarial standpoint.

#### **4.5. Right to Support**

Both students and instructors have the right to seek and receive support and advice concerning participation in the appeals process.

#### **4.6. Accommodation**

All processes and procedures associated with this policy are to be carried out in accordance with relevant law and University policy concerning the accommodation of students (see [Policy 159: Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) and [Policy 150: Accommodation of Student Religious, Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance](#)).

#### **4.7 Timeliness**

It is in the best interest of the student and the University for the timely resolution of any appeals under this Policy. Both the University and the student must work together to ensure the timely resolution of any appeals.

## **5. GENERAL REGULATIONS**

- 5.1. Students earn grades that reflect their ability to demonstrate their knowledge of the course material through the means of evaluation.
- 5.2. It is the student's responsibility to raise concerns with the instructor about issues related to grades as soon as they arise and attempt to informally resolve these issues.
- 5.3. Where there is no response from the instructor regarding the concerns raised by the student relating to the final grade, or if the student does not feel that they can discuss the matter with the instructor, or if no resolution is reached, the Chair/Director of the teaching department must be consulted regarding an informal resolution.
- 5.4. Failure to attempt an informal resolution to the concern related to a final grade may jeopardize the success of an appeal made at a later date.
- 5.5. Grade appeals are for issues related to final grades that could not be informally resolved with an instructor, Chair/Director or designate.
- 5.6. Students may only appeal a final grade or academic standing if one or more grounds for appeal exist. The four (4) grounds for appeal are: Course Management; Extenuating Circumstances; Procedural Error; and Prejudice (see Policy – Section 6 for details).

- 5.7. Students can only appeal their Required to Withdraw (RTW) or Permanently Withdrawn (PPW) standing (for undergraduate students) or Withdrawn (for graduate students) in a standing appeal.
- 5.8. There are three (3) levels to which a student can progressively appeal a final grade or their academic standing:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Level – Department/School/Program
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Level – Faculty
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Level – Senate

A student may only appeal to the next level if they disagree with the decision of the previous level and if grounds for appeal exist or if they do not accept the remedy proposed by the previous level decision maker.
- 5.9. The burden of proof is on the student to show on a “balance of probabilities” that the decision relating to the final grade or academic standing is incorrect. Thus, to show that:
  - 5.9.1 the final grade incorrectly reflects their demonstrated knowledge of the course material; or
  - 5.9.2 their current academic standing should be changed; as academic standing is determined by a students’ overall cumulative academic performance; students must provide substantial reasons why their current standing is not appropriate.
- 5.10. Students must submit all documentation necessary to support their appeal.
- 5.11. Students have ten (10) business days from the date of receiving their official final grade/standing to submit the 1<sup>st</sup> Level appeal. All other levels of appeal must be submitted within ten (10) business days of receiving the decision letter.
- 5.12. Decision makers at every level will receive mandatory online training via the Senate Office to maintain currency in the appeals policy and procedures.
- 5.13. Decision makers must acquire and consider information on all perspectives before reaching a decision.
- 5.14. Appeals may only be dismissed at the Senate Level by a Senate Appeals Committee (SAC) Review Panel where the appeal either fails to meet the definition of one of the required grounds for appeal or fails to describe a clear reason when the student disagrees with the Faculty Level decision. If new evidence is submitted at the Senate Level, it must have a reasonable possibility of affecting the decision in order to proceed to a hearing. The decision of the SAC Review Panel is final and not appealable. For details on the Senate Level dismissal process, see Procedures – Section 5.
- 5.15. If the appeal is granted and the student proceeds with the remedy proposed, a grade appeal outcome may result in the final grade being increased, decreased, or unchanged and cannot be further appealed (see [Policy 162: Grade Reassessment and Grade Recalculation](#)).

- 5.16 Students may continue in their program and can be registered in courses on the basis of a probationary contract (undergraduate) or provisional plan (graduate) for up to one term while their standing appeal is being considered. Exceptions may be made when the decision timeline is delayed due to the University.
- 5.17 Students must pay all appropriate fees. If the standing appeal is denied and the student remains RTW/PPW or Withdrawn, they will be given a full refund of the fees charged for the courses in which they enrolled in that semester. Refunds will not be considered for past semesters that have already been completed.
- 5.18 Students must be mindful of the time allotted by the University to complete their degree/certificate. If, during the appeal process, the student exceeds their time allotted or a time extension has been exceeded and the process to request an additional extension is either not followed or not granted: the grade appeal and standing appeal may no longer be required/considered as the person appealing is no longer a student in that program. Decision makers should always consult with the Senate Office on these cases.

## 6. GROUNDS FOR APPEAL

### 6.1 Course Management

Appeals may be filed on the ground of Course Management when students believe that a final grade has been adversely affected because an instructor or supervisor has deviated significantly from course management policies (see [Policy 166: Course Management](#)), from the course outline, or the instructor has demonstrated personal bias or unfair treatment.

6.2.1. Personal bias or unfair treatment are not considered to be the same as Prejudice (see Policy – Section 6.4).

6.2.2. For graduate students, the grounds of Course Management includes the management of non-course program requirements by the supervisor and/or Graduate Program Director.

### 6.2 Extenuating Circumstances

Appeals may be filed on the ground of Extenuating Circumstances when students believe that there have been occurrences of reasonable significance that: (a) are outside a student's immediate control; (b) could not have been reasonably foreseen or avoided; and (c) significantly impact the student's ability to fulfill their academic requirements.

### 6.3 Procedural Error

Appeals may be filed on the ground of Procedural Error when it is believed that there has been an error in the procedure followed in the application of either this policy or any applicable policy of the University that has impacted a student's grade or standing. Appeals granted on this ground will resolve the procedural error.

#### 6.4 Prejudice

Appeals may be filed on the ground of Prejudice when it is believed that that the student's final grade or standing has been impacted by prejudice based on a ground protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code:

- Age
- Ancestry, colour, race
- Citizenship
- Ethnic origin
- Place of origin
- Creed
- Disability
- Family status
- Marital status (including single status)
- Gender identity, gender expression
- Receipt of public assistance (in housing only)
- Record of offences (in employment only)
- Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding)
- Sexual orientation.

Students who believe their grade has been adversely affected by another form of personal bias or unfair treatment, unrelated to a protected human rights ground, may appeal under the ground of Course Management.

### 7. DECISIONS

7.1 The Decision maker at any level of appeal may:

- deny the appeal;
- grant the appeal; or
- grant or deny the appeal in part, subject to conditions (refer to Procedures - Section 4.2)

7.2 If the student does not accept the conditions attached (refer to Procedures - Section 4.2), the appeal will be considered denied.

7.3 As outlined in Procedures – Section 5, the Secretary of Senate may recommend dismissal of an appeal to the Senate Appeals Committee for their review.

7.4 Decisions must satisfy Senate academic policy and procedure requirements.

### RESCINDED POLICIES

Senate Policy 134: Undergraduate Academic Consideration and Appeals Policy

Senate Policy 152: Graduate Academic Consideration and Appeals Policy

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

Senate Policy 46: Undergraduate Grading, Promotion and Academic Standing (The “GPA Policy”)  
<https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol46.pdf>

Senate Policy 157: Establishment of Student Email Accounts for Official University Communication  
<https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol157.pdf>

Policy 159: Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities  
<https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol159.pdf>

Senate Policy 162: Grade Reassessment and Grade Recalculation  
[https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol162\\_reassessment.pdf](https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol162_reassessment.pdf)

Senate Policy 164: Graduate Status, Enrolment and Evaluation  
<https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol164.pdf>

Senate Policy 166: Course Management Policy  
<https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol166.pdf>

**GLOSSARY/APPENDICES**

<b>Advocate</b>	An individual sanctioned by one of the recognized Ryerson student bodies (e.g. the Ryerson Students' Union [RSU], Continuing Education Students' Association of Ryerson [CESAR]), or any other arm's length student group sanctioned by Ryerson University. An advocate is available at the request of a student to advise and assist with submissions, appeals, and to act as a resource for the student at meetings/formal discussions and appeal hearings. Policy 168 Procedures includes a list of authorized advocates.
<b>Academic Accommodation</b>	A pre-planned variation in the way a student with a disability receives course curriculum and materials, participates in course activities, or demonstrates mastery of course content and skills through evaluation and assessment (see Policy 159: Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities).
<b>Faculty (capitalized)</b>	Refers to the administrative unit (see Policy 2: Undergraduate Curriculum Structure) and the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Level of the appeal process.
<b>faculty (non-capitalized)</b>	The term "faculty," for the purpose of this policy, refers to the academic teaching staff of the University.
<b>Grade – Final</b>	A final grade is awarded upon completion of all required components of a course and is issued by the Registrar's Office through RAMSS.
<b>Grade Reassessment</b>	A review and re-evaluation of a graded course component when a student disagrees with their grade based on the merit of their work (see Policy 162: <u>Grade Reassessment and Grade Recalculation Policy</u> ).
<b>Instructor</b>	The person responsible for the course and includes all those represented by the Ryerson Faculty Association as well as part-time, sessional, and Continuing Education contract lecturers who are represented by Unit 1 or Unit 2 of CUPE Local 3904.
<b>Teaching Department</b>	The academic unit that is responsible for the development, delivery, and administration of a course (see Policy 2: Undergraduate Curriculum Structure).