

# Senate Policy Regarding Academic Appeals

## I. Introduction

Lakehead University is committed to the fair and expeditious handling of all academic appeals. The Senate Policy Regarding Academic Appeals is intended to ensure that students are treated fairly with regard to academic appeals.

Specifically, the Policy provides students with a means to address their concerns about final course marks and other academic decisions. Students may appeal when they believe that an inappropriate decision was made or that their personal circumstances were not considered. Inappropriate decisions may arise during the process of evaluating course work or in decisions regarding procedures, regulations, requirements or standards of the course of study in which the student is enrolled.

Students are expected to make reasonable efforts to resolve issues beginning with the individuals making the decisions. Nothing herein shall relieve students of their obligation to review and understand any and all regulations, requirements and standards that may apply to their course of study, or to all students at Lakehead University. Accordingly, appeals filed under this policy may be dismissed by the Senate Academic Appeals Committee (SAAC) without hearing if the decision under appeal is consistent with the relevant published regulations, requirements or standards.

## II. What May Be Appealed

Students may use the procedures and guidelines set forth in this Policy to appeal a Final Course Mark or an Academic Decision Other than a Final Course Mark.

A student may not appeal both a Final Course Mark and an Academic Decision Other than a Final Course Mark when both appeals relate to the same issue.

Students may not use the procedures set forth in this Policy to appeal decisions regarding admission or readmission to Lakehead University.

Students may not appeal decisions concerning academic misconduct of any kind under this Policy. Sanctioning of, and appeals from decisions concerning, academic misconduct are governed by Lakehead University's *Code of Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedures*.

### Final Course Mark

A Final Course Mark is the grade assigned to a student by the Office of the Registrar in respect of a completed course or project including a thesis. Student work that contributes to a Final Course Mark, as described in section III(1), may be appealed only as part of an appeal of a Final Course Mark.

**Note on Placements, Practica, Clinical Experiences and Fieldwork:** Because required placements, practica, clinical experiences and fieldwork involve performance of skills learned by students and because this performance is summarily evaluated over a period of weeks, the University policy on appeal of final grades applies only to class grades and not to required placement, practicum, clinical experience or fieldwork grades.

If a student feels unfairly treated by the process of assigning a placement, practicum, clinical experience, or fieldwork grade or by the application of academic regulations pertaining to these experiences, then the student may appeal to have the process and application of the rules reviewed, but not the final grade. Refer to the following section on “Academic Decisions Other Than a Final Course Mark” for more information on the processes to be followed.

### **Academic Decisions Other Than a Final Course Mark**

Academic Decisions Other than a Final Course Mark are decisions regarding procedures, regulations, requirements or standards of the course of study in which the student is enrolled. Examples include decisions regarding course registration; the process of assigning a placement, practicum, clinical experience, or fieldwork grade or by the application of academic regulations pertaining to these experiences; academic standing; program requirements; and eligibility to graduate.

### **III. How to Appeal**

The sections that follow outline two pathways for appeal. In both cases, important communications from individuals and committees hearing the appeal shall be sent to the student through his or her official Lakehead University email account.

#### **(1) Appeal of a Final Course Mark**

##### Timeframe for Appeal of a Final Course Mark:

- Step 1: Student - Within 15 working days of final grades being released by Registrar’s Office.  
Response – No formal response required.
- Step 2: Student –  
Response – Dean to provide response normally within 15 days of receipt of appeal
- Step 3: Student – Within 15 working days of receipt of Dean’s decision in Step 2.  
Response –

**Step 1:** The student shall discuss the Final Course Mark with the course instructor. No formal response is required. If the matter is not resolved the student can proceed to Step 2 by filing a “Request for Appeal of a Final Course Mark” with the Dean’s Office responsible for the course and payment of the

applicable fee to the Office of Financial Services. This “Request for Appeal” must be filed within 15 working days of the release by the University Registrar of the final grade for the course under appeal.

For the purposes of this policy “working day” means any day of the week from Monday to Friday, excluding statutory holidays and any other day that Lakehead University is closed.

An Appeal will be incomplete unless it includes:

- the applicable administrative fee for each Final Course Mark under appeal; and
- a detailed (maximum two page) explanation of the applicant's reasons for appealing the Final Course Mark.

**Step 2:** Upon notification of the “Request for Appeal of a Final Course Mark,” the Dean will forward a copy of the notification to the instructor involved, Director/Chair of the associated School/Department, and the University Registrar.

The Dean is charged with determining the final outcome of the appeal. Depending upon the nature of the appeal, the Dean may:

- Determine that there is no reasonable prospect of success or that the grounds presented do not constitute valid grounds for an appeal or that the application is incomplete.
- Seek further information from the instructor, students or other relevant persons.
- Have the instructor re-read any paper, test or examination.
- Have an independent qualified person review any paper, test or examination. All reviews should where practicable be conducted “blind” (i.e. without the reviewer knowing the identity of the student). It is appropriate for the reviewer to refer to the decision, and reasoning, of the initial marker while considering a review. The reviewer does not mark the assessment anew (*de novo*), but asks the question “is the mark within the range of acceptable options appropriate for an assessment item of this quality?”
- Appoint an independent investigator or panel, who will investigate the matter under appeal, make findings and advise the Dean.
- Adopt any other process that would fairly and expeditiously assist in determining the appeal.

The Dean will provide a decision in writing with reasons to the student, instructor involved, Director/Chair of the relevant School/Department, and the University Registrar normally within 15 working days of receipt of the appeal.

**Step 3:** It is open to the student to apply for a hearing of the Senate Academic Appeals Committee (SAAC) as described below and the student must be so advised by the Dean in the appeal decision. The student has 15 Working Days from receipt of the Dean's decision to file an appeal to the Senate Academic Appeals Committee (SAAC) pursuant to this Policy.

**Important Notes:**

- a. Students shall be entitled to examine their final examination papers under conditions prescribed by the Dean's Office in consultation with instructors, and in compliance with University policy, in order to protect the integrity of the examinations.
- b. There is no appeal of ongoing performance such as class or lab participation, tutorial performance, in class quizzes, professional behaviour, skill exercises, or any individual assessment worth less than 10% of the Final Course Mark. These marks stand and are to be included in the calculation of the final grade in the course.
- c. Student work that is not excluded may be appealed only as part of an appeal of a Final Course Mark. Examples include written reports, tests, midterm and final exams.
- d. All formal final grade appeals, i.e., a "Request for Appeal of a Final Course Mark," must be filed with the appropriate Dean's Office within 15 working days of the final grades being released to the student by the University Registrar. In exceptional circumstances the Dean has the discretion to waive the deadline for filing an appeal.
- e. Formal appeals to the Dean shall be dealt with expeditiously and the decision on the appeal should normally be provided in writing to the student within 15 working days from the filing of the "Request for Appeal of a Final Course Mark".
- f. On appeal grades may be raised or lowered and the new mark, whether higher or lower than the original, replaces it as the student's official mark in the course.
- g. If the student's grade is raised the Appeal Fee will be refunded to the student.
- h. For courses that require the course or work in dispute as a pre-requisite, the student shall be permitted to attend such courses until the decision on the appeal is communicated to him/her. At this time, the student will be

instructed by the Registrar to register in or withdraw from (and no longer attend) the courses concerned.

- i. No student who has failed a year or been forced to withdraw from the program is allowed to attend classes pending an appeal. Graduate students may continue in the program pending the outcome of an appeal.
- j. Appeals will only be considered for up to a maximum of two full-course equivalents per program.

## **(2) Appealing an Academic Decision Other than a Final Course Mark**

### Timeframe for Appeal of an Academic Decision Other than a Final Course Mark:

Step 1: Student - Within 15 working days of the decision being appealed.

Response – No formal response required.

Step 2: Student –

Response – Dean to provide response normally within 15 days of receipt of appeal

Step 3: Student – Within 15 working days of receipt of Dean's decision in Step 2.

Response –

**Step 1:** A student who wishes to appeal an Academic Decision Other than a Final Course Mark shall discuss the matter with the instructor or decision maker involved. No formal response is required. If the matter is not resolved the student can proceed to Step 2 by filing a "Request for Appeal of an Academic Decision Other than a Final Course Mark" with the Dean's Office responsible for the matter and payment of the applicable fee to the Office of Financial Services. This "Request for Appeal" must be filed within 15 working days of the release of the decision under appeal. (See section III(1) for the definition of "working day".)

An Appeal will be incomplete unless it includes:

- the applicable administrative fee for each Academic Decision Other than a Final Course Mark under appeal; and
- a detailed (maximum two page) explanation of the applicant's reasons for appealing the Academic Decision Other than a Final Course Mark.

**Step 2:** Upon notification of the "Request for Appeal of an Academic Decision Other than a Final Course Mark," the Dean will forward a copy of the notification to the decision-maker or instructor involved, the Director/Chair of the relevant School/Department, and the University Registrar.

The Dean is charged with determining the final outcome of the appeal. Depending upon the nature of the appeal, the Dean has all the powers of investigation as outlined above in section III(1).

The Dean will provide a decision in writing with reasons to the student, decision-maker or instructor involved, Director/Chair of the relevant School/Department, and University Registrar normally within 15 working days of receipt of the appeal.

**Step 3:** It is open to the student to apply for a hearing of the Senate Academic Appeals Committee (SAAC) as described below and the student must be so advised by the Dean in the appeal decision. The student has 15 Working Days from receipt of the Dean's decision to file an appeal to the Senate Academic Appeals Committee pursuant to the University Regulations.

**Important Notes:**

- a. All formal appeals of Academic Decisions Other than a Final Course Mark must be filed with the appropriate Dean's Office within 15 working days of the release of the decision under appeal. In exceptional circumstances the Dean has the discretion to waive the deadline for filing an appeal.
- b. Formal appeals to the Dean shall be dealt with expeditiously and the decision on the appeal should normally be provided in writing to the student within 15 working days from the filing of the "Request for Appeal of an Academic Decision Other than a Final Course Mark".
- c. If the student is successful on appeal the Appeal Fee will be refunded to the student.
- d. For appeals that involve the student's status in courses that require the course or work in dispute as a pre-requisite, the student shall be permitted to attend such courses until the decision on the appeal is communicated to him/her. At this time, the student will be instructed by the Registrar to register in or withdraw from (and no longer attend) the courses concerned.
- e. No student who has failed a year or been forced to withdraw from the program is allowed to attend classes pending an appeal. Graduate students may continue in the program pending the outcome of an appeal.
- f. If the decision under appeal involves a University decision, rather than a Faculty decision, the appeal is to the Vice-Provost (Student Affairs), who shall follow the same procedures and timelines as outlined in section III(2).
- g. If the decision under appeal involves a decision made by a Faculty Dean, the appeal is to the Vice-President (Academic) and Provost, who shall follow the same procedures and timelines as outlined in section III(2).