

# GRADES: GRADE REPORTS, GRADE POINT AVERAGE, INCOMPLETE GRADES, GRADE APPEALS

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## Grade Reports

Members of the faculty are officers of instruction at Rider University.

Among their responsibilities as such is the evaluation of students' academic accomplishments in courses of instruction. These evaluations ultimately are expressed in grades that are recorded in the students' academic record. Members of the faculty, judging the competencies and performances of students, assign grades based on their professional experience and training. Grades assigned by the faculty follow practices and procedures within the standards established by Rider University and within the standards established by individual course requirements.

Letter grades are used at Rider University for recording faculty evaluations of final student achievement in individual courses and are entered on the permanent academic record of a student's academic performance.

**The academic grades used by faculty for recording evaluations of student achievement are as follows. For determining grade point averages (GPAs), grades have weighted values called variously honor points, quality points, or grade points as follows:**

Grade	Transcript Notation
A	4.0
A-	3.7
B+	3.3
B	3.0
B-	2.7
C+	2.3
C	2.0
C-	1.7
D	1.0
F *	0.0

\* Failing academic work; fail to abide by standards of academic honesty and integrity; unauthorized withdrawal, and fail to complete work in prescribed time.)

Each instructor of a course will inform the student of the course objectives, procedures, and applicable grading standards. Upon a student's written request, members of the faculty will provide a review of the student's course standing at least once each term by the mid-point of that term. Each student may also review material submitted to the instructor for evaluation such as papers, examinations, and the like. In

these ways, students will be able to assess their own progress in a course before final grades are assigned.

**NOTE:** Faculty members are not required to maintain student course materials more than four months after the end of an academic term.

**A student grade report may also show the following transcript notations, which carry no grade point value:**

Grade	Transcript Notation
I	Incomplete
L	Late grade
N *	Registered; did not attend
AU	Audit
P	Pass
S	Satisfactory progress
U	Failure in pass/fail course
W *	Withdrawal
Y	Satisfactory completion of supplemental education course
Z	Insufficient progress in supplemental education course
NCR	No credit

\* "N" and "W" notations are included in the total semester hours attempted, as far as tuition payment is concerned.

## Grade Point Average (GPA)

Grade point averages (GPA) are used to establish academic standing. In order to compute the grade point average, students must first determine the number of quality points earned for each course. The total number of quality points for a course is derived by multiplying the number of credits for the course by the number of quality points for each letter grade. The grade point average (GPA) is determined by dividing the number of quality points by the number of GPA hours.

## Incomplete Grades

Students who, as a result of extenuating circumstances, are unable to complete the required work of a course within the term, may request an extension of time from a faculty member. Such extensions of time can be granted only in cases in which illness or another serious emergency has prevented the student from completing the course requirements or from taking a final examination. The request for extension of time must be made prior to the last scheduled class meeting, except in those unusual situations in which prior notification is impossible.

The faculty member shall determine whether to grant the request for a time extension and the type of verification (if any) required to support the request. The faculty member shall specify the time, up to four weeks from the last day of the term, as specified in the academic calendar, by which work must be completed by the student. If the faculty member does agree to the request, the notation "I" (Incomplete) shall be submitted on the grade roll. In those situations where the faculty member has not received a request for an extension of time, the notation "I" (Incomplete) may be submitted on the grade roll by the faculty member when, in his or her judgment, such a determination appears justified. Upon submission

of completed required work the faculty member shall submit a Change of Grade form to the Registrar.

Students who, as a result of extenuating circumstances, are unable to submit the completed required work at the end of the four-week period may request an extension of the incomplete grade. The request for an extension of the incomplete must be made prior to the expiration of the four-week period. If the faculty member agrees to the request for an extension of the incomplete, the faculty member shall specify the time, up to a maximum of two weeks from the date of expiration of the four-week period (i.e., six weeks from the last day of the term) by which work must be completed by the student and shall submit an Extension of Incomplete form to the Registrar.

Upon submission of completed required work, the faculty member shall submit a Change of Grade form to the Registrar and assign the course grade. Failure of the Registrar to receive from the faculty member a Change of Grade form or an Extension of Incomplete form at the end of the four-week period, or a Change of Grade form at the end of the six-week period shall result in the automatic assignment of the grade "F," "Z," or "U" by the Registrar.

Students who receive an incomplete in a course that is part of a course sequence must obtain permission from the department chairperson to remain enrolled in the next course in the sequence or they will be removed from that next course.

## Grade Appeals

### Basis for Grade Appeal

A final course grade may be changed only at the initiative of the faculty member who originally assigned the grade or as the result of a decision made in the hearing of a grade appeal by the Faculty Grade Review Panel. It is assumed that the final course grade is assigned in good faith and based on the professional expertise of the faculty member.

A student may appeal a final course grade only on the grounds that it represents an arbitrary, capricious, and/or unreasonable evaluation of his or her performance.

A grade appeal may not be based on a disagreement with the faculty member's professional academic evaluation of the student's work. The burden of proof rests with the student. A grade appeal shall be supported only when a student convincingly demonstrates that an arbitrary, capricious, and/or unreasonable evaluation occurred. Changes and appeals for grades on written comprehensive graduate examinations are subject to the same requirements and procedures as course grades.

The Faculty Grade Review Panel may return appeals to department chairs when such individuals have not discharged their responsibilities during the appeals process; may decline to hear an appeal when there is insufficient documentation of arbitrary, capricious and/or unreasonable grading; and shall decline an appeal if it is based on failure to accommodate a disability covered by the University Disability Policy.

### Faculty Grade Review Panel

The Faculty Grade Review Panel has final authority concerning all grade appeal questions. **The panel consists of the following nine members:**

1. Six tenured faculty members including one tenured faculty member elected by the bargaining unit members of each of the five college/school academic policy committees and one selected by the

bargaining unit members of the University Academic Policy Committee, who shall serve as chairperson of the panel;

2. A seventh faculty member selected jointly by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and the academic deans;
3. Two full-time students selected by the Student Government Association who, at the time of their service, must be seniors who have attained a grade point average of at least 3.25.

Each of the above appointing groups shall also designate an alternate for each member they appoint to the panel. Faculty members of the panel shall serve two-year terms and may be reappointed.

A quorum of the Faculty Grade Review Panel shall consist of any five members. The failure or inability of any appointing body to fulfill its responsibility to appoint any member or members to the panel shall not prevent the panel from organizing itself and exercising its duties.

**The chairperson of the panel will serve as the hearing coordinator and has the following duties and responsibilities:**

1. Inform the members of the panel that a grade appeal has been received and set a date for the hearing,
2. Distribute documentary materials pertaining to the appeal to members of the panel,
3. Maintain a permanent record of the panel's proceedings,
4. Prepare and distribute any decision made by the panel to the appropriate parties.

### Prior to Initiating a Grade Appeal

A student who believes that his or her final course grade represents an arbitrary, capricious, and/or unreasonable evaluation of his or her work is strongly encouraged to talk with the faculty member in an effort to resolve the issue before filing a formal grade appeal. However, it must be emphasized that this informal discussion does not constitute the initiation of a grade appeal and does not extend the time limits specified in the next paragraph.

### Initiating a Grade Appeal

To initiate a grade appeal, the student must forward a letter to the faculty member which clearly and precisely describes the student's reasons for believing that the final course grade constitutes an arbitrary, capricious, and/or unreasonable evaluation of his or her performance. A copy of this letter shall also be sent to the faculty member's department chairperson. (If the faculty member taught the relevant course in another department, the letter shall be sent to the chair of that other department. If the relevant course is in a program and is not cross-listed, the letter shall be sent to the chair of the program director's home department.)

For appeal of fall semester grades, the letter must be postmarked or hand-delivered within seven (7) days of the start of the upcoming spring semester. For appeal of spring semester grades, it must be postmarked or hand-delivered within thirty (30) days of the last regularly scheduled spring semester examination. For appeal of summer grades, it must be postmarked or hand-delivered within seven (7) days of the start of the upcoming fall semester. For appeal of grades on written comprehensive graduate examinations, it must be postmarked or hand-delivered within thirty (30) days of the date that grades were issued for the examination.

If a change of grade occurs after the aforementioned deadlines, the grade appeal must be filed within thirty (30) days of the submission of the changed grade to the registrar.

If the faculty member who assigned the grade in question is no longer at Rider or is away from Rider on an extended basis and not available for consultation, the initial review shall be conducted by the appropriate department chairperson, and the schedule may be extended at the appropriate dean's discretion.

If the faculty member who assigned the grade in question is the department chairperson, the chairperson's dean or that dean's designee shall replace the chairperson in all the procedures that follow.

Failure to submit a written statement of the appeal within the time guidelines established above shall constitute grounds for denying a student access to the grade appeal process. Failure to provide a clear and precise statement shall constitute grounds for denying the appeal at any step in the process. Once a grade appeal is initiated, the basis of all subsequent proceedings must be limited to the allegations appearing in the initial written statement. This limitation does not exclude the introduction of new evidence directly related to the initial allegations.

The chairperson of the Faculty Grade Review Panel, upon written request of any party, may extend any deadline contained in this policy if he or she believes that circumstances beyond the control of a party to the appeal have prevented compliance with stated deadlines. The decision of the panel chairperson to extend or not to extend a deadline shall not be subject to appeal.

## The Grade Appeal Process

### Step One

In the letter of appeal, the student may request a formal meeting with the faculty member. If the faculty member agrees to such a meeting, the meeting shall be held no later than fourteen (14) days after the beginning of the fall or spring semester following the semester or session in which the grade was given. However, the parties are encouraged to schedule such a meeting at an earlier date if mutually convenient.

The faculty member shall render a decision on the appeal within seven (7) days of such a meeting and shall notify the student and the department chairperson in writing of the decision. If the faculty member agrees to change the final course grade of the student, he or she shall submit a Change of Grade form to the Registrar.

If the faculty member believes that a meeting with the student would not be productive, he or she shall make a decision on the appeal based on the student's letter and shall communicate the decision in writing to the student and the department chairperson within fourteen (14) days of the beginning of the fall or spring semester following the semester or session in which the grade was given.

If the student accepts the decision of the faculty member at Step One, no further action is required. If the student does not accept the faculty member's decision at Step One, he or she may appeal the decision to Step Two in writing to the department chairperson with a copy to the faculty member's dean. This letter must be postmarked or hand-delivered within seven (7) days of the postmark date of the faculty member's Step One decision.

If the student does not receive a written response from the faculty member or department chairperson within fourteen (14) days of the beginning of the fall or spring semester following the semester or session in which the grade was given, the student may, within twenty-one (21)

days of the beginning of that semester, proceed to Step Two as indicated below. All such written responses shall be mailed to the student's campus address, if the student resides on campus, or otherwise to the student's home address on record.

### Step Two

Within fourteen (14) days of the receipt of a student's letter of appeal to Step Two, the department chairperson shall schedule a meeting with the student and the faculty member. At such meeting, the student and the faculty member will have the opportunity to explain their positions with respect to the grade in question, but they shall be limited to the allegations raised in the student's initial written statement.

The department chairperson shall render an opinion on the matter within seven (7) days of the Step Two meeting and shall provide explanatory language for this opinion in writing to the student, the faculty member and the faculty member's dean.

If the department chairperson's opinion supports the position of the faculty member, the student shall have seven (7) days from the postmark date of the letter from the department chairperson to continue his or her appeal to the Faculty Grade Review Panel as described in Step Three.

If the department chairperson's opinion supports the student's position in the appeal, the faculty member shall have seven (7) days from the postmark date of the department chairperson's letter opinion either to accept that opinion and submit a Change of Grade form to the registrar, or to reject the opinion and notify the student, department chairperson, and faculty member's dean that the faculty member is making an appeal pursuant to the Step Three process.

If the student does not receive notification of a change of grade within twenty-one (21) days of the date of the department chairperson's written decision, the student may carry the appeal to Step Three.

### Step Three

To carry the appeal to Step Three, the student must submit a letter expressing that intent to the chairperson of the Faculty Grade Review Panel with copies to the faculty member, the department chairperson, the dean, and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Within seven (7) days (excluding vacation and examination periods) of the receipt of this letter, or the letter from the faculty member who has appealed, whichever the case may be, the chairperson of the Faculty Grade Review Panel shall schedule a meeting of the panel to consider the appeal.

The student and the faculty member shall have the right to appear before the panel to present information pertaining to the allegations made in the student's initial written statement.

The Faculty Grade Review Panel may, if it deems it desirable, request attendance by the chairperson, the dean, and/or any other representatives of the University. Attorneys or advisors to the participants may attend but not participate in the meeting of the panel.

The unwillingness of the faculty member or student to appear before the panel shall not prevent the panel from proceeding with its deliberations. In those deliberations, the panel shall have access to written documents pertaining to the appeal, pertinent records of student performance, and such verbal presentations as may be made during panel deliberations.

On the basis of careful consideration of the available information, the Faculty Grade Review Panel will determine if an arbitrary, capricious, and/or unreasonable evaluation of the student's performance has occurred.

This determination will be made in writing and provided to all affected parties.

If the panel determines that no such action occurred, the case will be closed with no further right of appeal. If the panel determines that an arbitrary, capricious, and/or unreasonable evaluation has occurred, it will direct the faculty member's department (or will establish an evaluation committee of faculty members in the field of the course offered) to re-evaluate the student's performance based upon the panel's decision, the records and documentary materials.

Within fourteen (14) days of the receipt of the panel's directive, the department or evaluation committee shall recommend to the panel a grade that it deems appropriate, whether higher than, lower than, or the same as the original grade. Normally, the panel will accept the revised evaluation by the department or committee and will subsequently notify the Registrar of any change of grade. Should the panel feel that the department or committee has not conducted its review in an appropriate manner and that, as a result, the suggested substitute grade is not appropriate, it shall have the authority to direct the Registrar to enter the grade that the panel judges appropriate.

Decisions of the panel are not subject to further appeal. The panel may also return appeals to department chairs when such individuals have not discharged their responsibilities during the appeals process, or when there is insufficient documentation of arbitrary, capricious and/or unreasonable grading. The panel shall decline an appeal if it is based on failure to accommodate a disability covered by the University Disability Policy.

## **Expediting a Grade Appeal**

When a student's graduation is affected by the outcome of a grade appeal in a semester, term, or session immediately preceding such graduation, faculty members shall make reasonable efforts to expedite the process.

## **Grade Changes Made at Initiative of Faculty Member**

The individual faculty member may determine that it is appropriate to change a recorded academic grade. Such changes must be made within four (4) months of the date that the original grade was assigned. Any change of grade initiated by a faculty member more than four (4) months after the date the original grade was assigned must be approved by the faculty member's dean. Faculty members, using the online form on the myRider Faculty Tab, will prepare a written change of grade stating the reasons for the grade change. Upon receipt of this form by the Office of the Registrar, the grade will be changed on the official records of the University.