



Academic Appeals Resource Guide

Update May 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	3
Claims of Discrimination	3
Overview of the Academic Appeals Process	4
Academic Decision Appeals Stakeholder Roles and Workflow	5
Step 1 Appeal Process and Procedures.....	7
Overview and Recommendations for Instructors	7
Sample Decision Letter Step 1	8
Step 2 Appeal Process and Procedures.....	9
Overview and Recommendations for Department/Program Chair	9
Sample Decision Letter Step 2	10
Step 3 Appeal Process and Procedures.....	11
Overview and Recommendations for College Committee	11
Sample Decision Letter Step 3	12
Step 4 Appeal Process and Procedures.....	13
Overview and Recommendations for Academic Affairs	13
Sample Decision Letter Step 4.....	14

Introduction

This is the Academic Appeals Resource Guide for reference, and use, in responding to issues and claims pertaining to decisions of the university's Academic Appeals Policies and Procedures. This document contains meeting tips and guidelines, and template letters from the Step I-Step IV decision makers.

This guide presents the overall process on the roles of each contributor and provides resources for each stakeholder at each step. This resource guide is endorsed by the Office of the Provost and Faculty Senate Student Academic Standards Committee to help consolidate support for common practices.

In order to fulfill our mission, NLU has established procedures to foster open communication and ensure we drive continuous improvement by focusing on service excellence. The Dean of Students (or designee), who serves in lieu of an Ombudsman, is the point of contact in Student Affairs for students who seek assistance in addressing student concerns, including academic appeals.

Students must initiate the appeal process within 15 business days following formal (documented) notification of the decision by contacting the individual responsible for the decision (i.e., the instructor who assigned a grade or the administrator who informed the person of the decision). To attempt informal resolution of the disagreement, the student may also consult with the Dean of Students (or designee) to obtain informal assistance. Such consultation does not initiate the appeal process. After this consultation, If a student wishes to initiate a formal academic appeal, the Dean of Students (or designee) will email the student a brief meeting summary and refer the student to NLU's [Let Us Know](#) page, where students will find more information regarding the appeal process, including the form they will need to complete and submit to formally initiate their appeal.

Claims of Bias and Discrimination

In order for an academic decision to be appealed on the grounds of discrimination, bias, or harassment, the student must contend in writing that the decision was influenced by factors(s) that relate to any of the parties involved being a member of a protected class, per National Louis University's [Anti-Discrimination Policy](#).

Any student with questions complaints or concerns about discrimination, bias, or harassment is encouraged to contact the Dean of Students (or designee) or submit a report via NLU's [Let Us Know](#) page.

Overview of the Academic Appeals Process

Student appeals may only appeal an academic decision for one of the following reasons:

1. criteria and procedures for the decision were not published
2. published criteria and procedures were not consistent with college, school, division, department or program policy and procedures, or violate a student's rights
3. published criteria and procedures were not followed in making the decision, or
4. the decision was substantially influenced by factors other than published criteria.

Additionally, it is the student's responsibility to furnish supporting evidence to substantiate their appeal; this is to ensure appeals are evidence-based and provide objective measures to review and reach a fair resolution for all parties involved in the academic appeal. As such, students are encouraged to include supporting evidence at every step of the academic appeal process.

The following types of disputes are covered under the academic appeal process:

- Graded assignments (i.e., quizzes, exams, papers, presentations, projects, and field experience)
- Final grades

Note: Admission and re-admission decisions are specifically excluded from the Policy on Academic Appeals. Additionally, charges of academic dishonesty are excluded from the Policy on Academic Appeals and are governed by the [Academic Honesty Policy](#). Appeals of disciplinary actions resulting from disruptive classroom behavior are governed by the [Disruptive Behavior Policy](#).

Academic appeals are facilitated in a four-step process, with the final and binding decision being made by the Provost / Senior Academic Officer, or their designee. Alternately, the student may also consult with an academic advisor, program director, department chair, Dean of Students (or designee), or student services professional to obtain informal assistance. Such consultation does not initiate the appeal process. A policy may not be appealed; only appeals based on academic decisions under a policy and procedure may be heard for appeal. This does not prevent students from petitioning for reform of academic policies and procedures outside of the appeal process. In such cases, the student should be directed to the individual or academic unit responsible for developing the decision in question.

The full policy is available in the Undergraduate and Graduate Academic Catalog.

Academic Decision Appeals Stakeholder Roles and Workflow

Student's Role

- Initiate the academic appeal using the [electronic form](#)
 - Furnish relevant supporting information to substantiate their academic appeal
 - Respond to any questions or clarifying information requested by the individual responsible for the decision and reviewing the academic appeal
 - Escalating the appeal by notifying the Provost Office as appropriate, and in accordance the stated policy
-

Provost Office Role

- Serve as the initial contact and triage point for receiving, reviewing, and routing the academic appeal to the appropriate party
 - Monitor timeliness of all parties involved with the academic appeal and send reminders as needed
 - Provide technical support to involved parties reviewing and responding to an academic appeal
 - Communicate final decision to students involved in an academic appeal
 - Escalate or close the academic appeal in Maxient depending on the status of the appeal
 - Maintain the overall disposition of the appeal, until the matter is fully closed in Maxient
 - Provide technical support to all parties involved in the academic appeals process
 - Prepare/update training materials and resources as needed to improve understanding of the academic appeals process
 - Review all academic appeals escalated to Step IV and document decisions in Maxient and communicate outcomes to all involved parties
 - Review data and trends based on academic appeals and share emerging themes and concerns with relevant stakeholders
-

Role of Individual(s) Responsible for Decisions

- Review the academic appeal and all supporting information provided by the student and, if applicable, previous reviewers.
 - Render a decision and provide any necessary supporting information to the Provost Office, prior to the Provost Office-provided deadline to do so.
-

Hearing Committee Role (Step IV only)

- Hear Step IV appeals, as recommended by the Provost's Office
- Render a decision, including any supporting information, using the academic appeals response form and appropriate letter template

Step I

Instructor Review

- **Student** - initiate formal appeal by completing the [Academic Appeals Form](#) within 15 business days from date of the initial decision.
- **Provost Office** - review the appeal to determine if it's eligible (i.e., within the timeframe and an academic issue covered under the academic appeals policy).
 - Eligible appeals will be routed to the individual responsible for the decision.
 - Ineligible appeals will be routed to the Provost's Office to determine if the appeal should immediately denied
- **Individual Responsible for Decision** - within 10 business days, review the appeal and render a decision, using the [Academic Appeals Review Form](#) and appropriate letter template (**templates further below in the guide**). Return all completed forms and decisions to the Provost Office designee.
- **Provost Office** - upload all documents to the case management system (Maxient) and communicate the decision to the student.
 - If the student is satisfied with or does not challenge the outcome of the academic appeal, the appeal will be closed in Maxient by the Provost Office designee.
 - If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome and wishes to escalate their appeal, they can do so by notifying the Provost Office designee who will contact the next individual(s) responsible for the decision to review the appeal.

Step II

Academic Program Administrator (Chair/Director) Review

- **Student** – if dissatisfied with decision at Step I, file for Step II review within 10 business days of Step I decision.
 - *Note: When students wish to escalate an appeal, they will not need to submit a new form as the original appeal (case) will remain open for the designated amount of time. However, students will be required to notify the Provost Office designee of their intent to escalate an appeal in writing.*
- – will review student request following the same actions described in Step 1
- **Individual Responsible for Decision** - within 10 business days, review the appeal and render a decision, using the [Academic Appeals Review Form](#) and appropriate letter template (**templates further below in the guide**). Return all completed forms and decisions to the Provost Office designee.
- **Provost Office** – document the decision and notify the student following the same actions described in the previous step.

Step III

College Level Review

- **Student** – if dissatisfied with decision at Step II, file for Step III review within 10 business days of Step II decision (refer to note in Step II as the student will not need to initiate a new appeal).
- **Provost Office** – will review student request following the same actions described in Step 1.
- **Individual Responsible for Decision** - within 10 business days, review the appeal and render a decision, using the [Academic Appeals Review Form](#) and appropriate letter template (**templates further below in the guide**). Return all completed forms and decisions to the Provost Office designee.
- **Provost Office** – document the decision and notify the student following the same actions described in the previous step.

Step IV

University Level Review

- **Student** – if dissatisfied with decision at Step III, file for Step IV review within 10 business days of Step III decision (refer to note in Step II as the student will not need to initiate a new appeal).
- **Provost Office** – will review student request following the same actions described in Step 1
- **Provost's Office** - within 10 business days, the Provost's Office designee may sustain, mitigate or reverse the action/remedy taken at Step III; or submit appeal to a formal hearing.
 - If a committee is convened for a hearing, within 5 business days, Provost's Office designee will provide instructions to all involved parties.
 - **Hearing committee** – hear appeal and make good faith effort to provide a written report within 10 days of the first hearing date to the Provost's Office designee. Within 5 days of committee decision, either party may appeal to the Provost's Office designee.
 - **Provost's Office** - render a final and binding decision within 10 business days of the hearing

Step 1: Appeal Process and Procedures

Best Practices for Step 1 Reviewers:

The student and instructor, or individual responsible for the Step I decision should work together informally to find a reasonable and acceptable resolution to the student's appeal, whenever possible. When a resolution cannot be reached, the instructor

The instructor shall review the student's written appeal and:

1. Decide the appeal on its merits.
 - a. When deciding an appeal on its merits, there is an expectation that the instructor will review and make decisions regarding student appeals of faculty and staff decisions within their departments.
 - b. Appeals that may require exceptions to customary practice (i.e., situations that are unique or uncommon) should be forwarded to Step II for review by the appropriate college governance unit.
2. Complete and return the [Academic Appeals Review Form](#) , appropriate letter template, and supporting documentation to the Provost Office designee at Provosts.Office@nl.edu. The Provost Office designee will upload all completed documents into the case management system (Maxient) and communicate the decision and next steps to the student.

After receiving their Step I decision, if the student wishes to escalate to Step II, The Provost Office designee will review a student's written request and route the appeal to the appropriate Step II reviewer.

Instructor's Step I Decision Letter:
Student Name (Student ID# _____; Case# _____)

{{Insert Date}}

Dear {{Student Name}}:

As your Instructor for {{Course's Title}}, and the individual designated to decide Step I Academic Appeals, I write to inform you of my decision. {{state decision}}

This decision was based on the review of the following criteria and rationale:

- {{item 1 to support above}}
- {{item 2 to support above}}
- {{item 3 to support above, continue as needed}}

If you wish to appeal my decision, you must follow the Step II grade appeal procedures (see [NLU's Academic Appeals policy](#) for more details). To do so, you are required to submit a written appeal to Provosts.Office@nl.edu within ten (10) business days of receiving this decision letter. The Provost's Office will then notify the appropriate party responsible for reviewing your Step II appeal.

If you would like additional assistance and guidance in pursuing Step II of Academic Appeals, you may contact the Provost Office at Provosts.Office@nl.edu.

Sincerely,

{{Name}}

{{Title}}

Step II: Appeal Process and Procedures

Best Practices for Step II Reviewers:

If a reasonable effort by the student and the instructor, or individual responsible for the Step I decision, does not result in a resolution of the grievance, the student may submit a written request for review to the responsible academic unit department head or administrator within 10 business days of the Step I decision date. *When students wish to escalate an appeal, they will not need to submit a new form as the original appeal (case) will remain open for the designated amount of time. However, students will be required to notify the Provost Office designee of their intent to escalate an appeal in writing.*

The academic program administrator (typically program chair or director) shall review the written appeal and:

3. If they deem it necessary or helpful, seek to meet informally with the student and others involved in the decision to identify possible solutions and seek resolution AND/OR
4. Serve as a mediator as part of the unit's informal review process.
5. Implement any informal agreement that is reached with the student and instructor OR
6. Decide the appeal on its merits.
 - a. When deciding an appeal on its merits, there is an expectation that the department head (or administrator responsible) will review and make decisions regarding student appeals of faculty and staff decisions within their departments.
 - b. Appeals that may require exceptions to customary practice (i.e., situations that are unique or uncommon) should be forwarded to Step III for review by the appropriate college governance unit.
7. Complete and return the [Academic Appeals Review Form](#) , appropriate letter template, and supporting documentation to the Provost Office designee at Provosts.Office@nl.edu. The Provost Office designee will upload all completed documents into the case management system (Maxient) and communicate the decision and next steps to the student.

After receiving their Step II decision, if the student wishes to escalate to Step III, The Provost Office designee will review a student's written request and route the appeal to the appropriate Step III review committee.

Program Administrator's Step II Decision Letter:
Student Name (Student ID# _____; Case# _____)

{{Insert Date}}

Dear {{Student Name}}:

As department head (or administrator responsible) and Step II Academic Unit Respondent, I have met with {{Instructor Name}} and conducted a review of the rationale and supportive documents you submitted, and have concluded my findings:

- {{Findings 1}}
- {{Findings 2}}
- {{Findings X}} if needed, cite use of reasonable and customary academic judgment as last finding.

If you wish to appeal my decision, you must follow the Step III grade appeal procedures (see [NLU's Academic Appeals policy](#) for more details). To do so, you are required to submit a written appeal to Provosts.Office@nl.edu, no later than 4:00 pm CST on {{Provide Date}}, ten (10) business days from the date of this decision letter. The Provost's Office will then notify the appropriate party responsible for reviewing your Step III appeal. If you do not wish to continue your appeal to Step III, no further action is required.

If you would like additional assistance and guidance in pursuing Step II, you may contact the Provost Office at Provosts.Office@nl.edu.

Sincerely,

{{Name}}

{{Title}}

Step III: Appeal Process and Procedures

Best Practices for College Committee and Student Meeting:

If a reasonable effort by the student and department head, or individual responsible for the Step II decision, does not result in a resolution of the grievance, the student may submit a written request for review to the responsible college governance unit or administrator within 10 business days of the Step II decision date. *When students wish to escalate an appeal, they will not need to submit a new form as the original appeal (case) will remain open for the designated amount of time. However, students will be required to notify the Provost Office designee of their intent to escalate an appeal in writing.*

Committee:

- Investigate the student's claims by interviewing the Instructor, and Chair, who supported the Instructor, and both concluded the decision stands.
- Review the evidence/documentations that support their claims.
- Decide if the Committee needs to interview the student, and review any other evidence, in addition to what the student submitted
- Make a decision based on the findings.

There is an expectation that the faculty governance committee will review and make determinations regarding student appeals of academic administrators, faculty, and staff decisions within their college within 10 business days following receipt of the written appeal.

Each college governance committee may develop a specific process (procedure) for implementing its decision-making process.

The appellant will have the right and option to go on to Step IV - University Level Review, when dissatisfied with a Step III decision.

The college governance unit will complete and return the [Academic Appeals Review Form](#), appropriate letter template, and supporting documentation to the Provost Office designee at Provosts.Office@nl.edu. The Provost Office designee will upload all completed documents into the case management system (Maxient) and communicate the decision and next steps to the student.

Reasonable and Customary Academic Judgment

Faculty and academic administrators are said to be exercising "reasonable and customary judgment" when they are faithfully following published criteria and procedures. Reasonable and customary judgments also include those academic decisions made within a faculty member's recognized areas of expertise.

When a department head (or administrator responsible) decides at Step II that a faculty member's decision was "reasonable and customary," and thus not qualifying for appeal, the student will be so advised. A student may appeal the administrator's decision by complying with Step III of this policy. The faculty governance units at that level may sustain the Step II decision or ask the administrator to review the initial appeal.

Table 1: Step III College Referrals

College / Academic Unit	Step III Referral
Accelerate U	Vice President of Workforce Pathways
College of Psychology and Behavioral Science	Academic Standards and Admissions Council
Graduate School of Business and Leadership	Academic Standards Committee
Kendall College	Associate Dean of Kendall College
National College of Education	Academic Policies Committee
Undergraduate College*	Curriculum & Instruction Committee
University Library	Undergraduate College's Curriculum & Instruction Committee

** Nursing students and PACE student academic appeals will be governed under the Undergraduate College*

College Committee Step III Decision Letter:
Student Name (Student ID# _____; Case# _____)

{{Insert Date}}

Dear {{Student Name}}:

The {{Committee's Full Name}} received your request for a Step III appeal on {{date}}. Prior to our decision, with deliberate care and due diligence, the committee took the following steps:

- {{action 1, thorough review of materials submitted}}
- {{action 2, such as met with student}}
- {{action 3, such as met with instructor and department chair}}

Accordingly, the {{Committee's Full Name}} has concluded the following:

- {{Findings 1}}
- {{Findings 2}}
- {{Findings 3}}

Recommendation:

It is our recommendation that you will need to {{insert recommendations and action items such as ... retake the course, or a substitute course approved by his program chair, in order to receive credit for the successful completion of this course}}

If you wish to appeal the committee's findings, you may request a final Step IV University Level Review with the Provost (or designee) for appeals of academic decisions (see [NLU's Academic Appeals policy](#) for more details). To do so, you are required to submit a written appeal to Provosts.Office@nl.edu, no later than ten (10) business days from the date of this decision letter. If you do not wish to continue your appeal to Step IV, no further action is required.

We value you as a National Louis University student and wish you well in continuing your studies.

If you would like additional assistance and guidance in pursuing Step IV, you may contact the Provost Office at Provosts.Office@nl.edu.

Sincerely,

{{Name}}

{{Title}}

Step IV: Appeal Process and Procedures

Best Practices for Step IV Academic Affairs and Student Meeting:

If a student wishes to continue an appeal of the decision determined at the college level, the student may submit a formal written appeal to the Provost (or designee) within 10 business days from the date of the Step III decision. When students wish to escalate an appeal, they will not need to submit a new form as the original appeal (case) will remain open for the designated amount of time. However, students will be required to notify the Provost Office designee of their intent to escalate an appeal in writing.

The Provost (or designee) shall, within 10 business days following receipt of the written appeal, review the document to determine if they deem that the student has made a reasonable attempt at resolution at the college level following published procedures and timelines (the appeal may be remanded to the college if warranted)

The Provost (or designee) will complete and return the [Academic Appeals Review Form](#), appropriate letter template, and supporting documentation to the Provost Office designee at Provosts.Office@nl.edu. The Provost Office designee will upload all completed documents into the case management system (Maxient) and communicate the final decision to the student.

Suggested Academic Affairs Step IV Decision Letter:

{{Use relevant institutional letterhead}}

{{Insert Date}}

Dear {{Student's Name}}:

My office received your Step IV appeal submitted on {{DATE}}. You are appealing a decision made by the {{Name of Step III Committee}} for {{Grade}} in {{Course Title, Instructor, & Term}}.

To inform my decision, I reviewed the following:

- {{action 1, thorough review of materials submitted}}
- {{action 2, such as met with student}}
- {{action 3, such as met with instructor and department chair}}

Accordingly, I have concluded the following:

- {{Findings 1}}
- {{Findings 2}}
- {{Findings 3}}

This is a final decision on this matter, and you have exhausted the NLU Academic Appeals process. No further appeals may be made. If you have any questions, you may contact the Provost Office at Provosts.Office@nl.edu.

We value you as a National Louis University student, and I do wish you well in continuing your studies.

Sincerely,

{{Name}}

{{Title}}