

GRADING DISPUTES

Students may from time to time approach you as DUS to complain about a grade they received in a course in your department. Your role in such disputes is, for the most part, to try to facilitate an exchange of information between the student and the instructor so that they each come out with a clearer understanding of the reasons for the difference in their evaluation of the work in question. Whenever a student brings a complaint about a grade to you, it is important to ascertain whether the student has already spoken with the instructor of the course about the matter; the usual expectation is that the student should already have done so before coming to the DUS. You should make clear to the student that you have no authority to assign a grade in any courses other than your own, but you may offer to help mediate disputes about grades in courses in your department.

With good will on all sides, most student complaints about grades for particular assignments or examination questions will result in a frank and non-antagonistic conversation between the student and the instructor. These discussions may be opened up usefully into fuller explorations not just of the standards for grading the particular assignment, but also of substantive matters covered by the course. Even for those lecture courses in which there is a grader or other teaching fellow, it is best to refer the student directly to the instructor of record, who then in turn may consult with those assisting with the grading in the course. In a seminar-style course for which there are many sections, such as ENGL 125 or FREN 110, the student may, when appropriate, be directed to speak with the course director in addition to the instructor. If you happen to be the instructor who assigned the grade in dispute, you should refer the student to the chair of the department or program if the student is still dissatisfied after speaking with you.

The authority and responsibility for determining term grades and reporting those grades to the registrar belong to the instructor of record for the course. All coursework submitted by students for grading and the records of grades assigned in evaluation of this work are under the management and ultimate control of the instructor of record, even in courses in which others such as teaching fellows assist the instructor. In the event of the death of an instructor or an instructor's extended incapacitating illness, you and the chair should consult to designate another member of the department, or of a closely related program or department, to take on the uncompleted grading.

A term grade, once reported to the registrar, is final. Yale College policy prohibits the registrar from changing that record unless the grade that had been reported proves to be the result of an administrative, clerical, or computational error. If an instructor believes that there are grounds for an exception to the faculty legislation prohibiting the change of a reported term grade, the instructor should petition the Committee on Honors and Academic Standing with a full explanation of those grounds. The chair of the Committee on Honors and Academic Standing is Dean George Levesque (george.levesque@yale.edu).

The faculty legislation that established the Committee on Honors and Academic Standing categorically bars the committee from considering a petition from a student for a change of term grade. A student may, however, petition the committee for

permission to submit an assignment or take an examination after end-of-term deadlines. The committee's decision in such cases will, on occasion, result in an invitation from the committee to the instructor to report a new term grade for the student. Under no circumstances does the committee itself assign grades. The chair of the committee will contact the instructor directly about the outcome of any petitions from students that might result in an invitation to report a new term grade.

If a student believes that their grade in a course resulted from discrimination based on race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, veteran status, or disability, they may formally file an allegation with the Office of Institutional Equity and Accessibility. If OIEA determines a grade was the result of discrimination, that determination will be shared with the Yale College Committee on Honors and Academic Standing to determine any change in the grade and to identify an appropriate member of the faculty to evaluate the student's work.