

AC204: Academic Appeals Policy

Policy Title:	Academic Appeals Policy
Policy Number:	AC204
Owner:	Student Success
Approved by:	College Executive Team
Effective Date:	September 2022
Reference:	
Links to Other Policy:	

St. Lawrence College is committed to making our resources fully accessible to all persons. This document will be made available in alternative format upon request.

BACKGROUND

Definitions:

Academic Appeal Committee: The Director of Wellness, Accessibility & Student Success, or designate, will choose a Level Three Appeal Committee, as needed to provide an independent, internal review of academic appeal decisions in order to ensure that College policy and procedures have been followed, and that fairness has been achieved in arriving at the decision in question. The Appeal Committee acts within the limits of the College’s mandate and existing policy

Assigned Dean: At Level Two, Formal Appeal, a Dean, Associate Dean, or designate from outside the student’s Academic School and Academic portfolio will be chosen to hear the appeal.

Day / Business Day: For the purpose of this policy, “day” means any day that includes Monday to Friday, excluding holidays, as defined in the St. Lawrence College academic calendar.

Dean: An academic administrator who oversees the student’s program of study. For the purpose of this document, “Dean” may refer to a Dean, an Associate Dean, or a Campus Dean who oversees the Academic School the student belongs to.

Faculty Member: For the purposes of this document, the faculty member may be a professor, a placement supervisor, or a preceptor, that is an employee or agent of the College.

Student: For the purpose of the Academic Appeal Policy, a student is anyone who is currently enrolled in a program or course of study or who was enrolled in the previous semester. This includes students enrolled in OntarioLearn courses and students registered in partnership programs between other post-secondary schools and St. Lawrence College.

Support Person: While not required, a support person may be chosen by a student involved in an appeal. The support person will not be permitted to advocate for or speak on behalf of the student. The use of an interpreter or accessibility support person is permitted and treated as separate and apart from the role of a support person.

Written Notification: Personal communication to the student of an academic decision may take the form of a hard copy or electronic form (includes a transcript, college email, Blackboard or other course management program posting).

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the expectations of the student, faculty and staff with respect to the steps that must be taken should a student feel an academic decision was not fair or accurate. Academic appeals provide a mechanism for reasonable review of academic decisions. Students at St. Lawrence College have the right to a positive, enriching learning environment where learning outcomes are impartially assessed using evidence-based teaching methodology and where academic decisions are made in a manner that is free of bias, prejudice, unfairness or other inappropriate personal or systemic influences.

St. Lawrence College is responsible for maintaining standards that promote academic integrity and student success. The St. Lawrence College Academic Appeals Policy is based upon the concept of collegiality and seeks to find common ground and build consensus leading to a mutually satisfactory resolution. Should a student perceive that their learning experience or an academic decision has not been fair or accurate, the faculty and staff share a common interest in resolving the dispute in a professional, transparent, and timely manner through the academic appeal process outlined in this policy.

A student may appeal an academic decision when the grounds for appeal outlined in this policy are met.

Scope:

This policy applies to all students registered with St. Lawrence College including OntarioLearn students and students registered in partnership programs between Laurentian University and St. Lawrence College. Concerns related to the provision of

academic accommodations are not covered through this policy; students with questions, concerns or complaints regarding their academic accommodations should consult with Student Wellness & Accessibility. Matters relating to non-academic misconduct are addressed under the College's Student Code of Conduct policy. In some cases, there may be multiple proceedings, if appropriate.

POLICY STATEMENTS

1. There are three primary grounds for appeal under which a student may launch an appeal:
 - Merit of work (e.g., An assessment which may have been unfairly graded, Academic Misconduct allegation)
 - Personal or compassionate reasons (e.g., Unforeseen significant event or circumstance which affected the ability of the student to meet course requirements); and
 - Course outline and/or testing discrepancy (e.g., Management of course shows significant departure from course outline)
2. All appeals must adhere to at least one of the following criteria:
 - Individual academic decisions only (i.e., not final grades);
 - Academic decisions which have no numeric grade (i.e., Requirements Met/Requirements Not Met); and/or
 - Academic decisions pertaining to probation or withdrawal.
3. The academic appeal process at St. Lawrence College includes three levels:
 - Level One – Faculty Decision Review
 - Level Two – Formal Academic Appeal
 - Level Three – Procedural Appeal

Level One, Faculty Decision Review

The Level One, Faculty Decision Review, is an initial, less formal process involving direct dialogue between the student and the faculty member who issued the grade. The student is responsible for initiating this process within five (5) business days of receiving Written Notification of the grade. Level One is intended to allow for constructive dialogue between the parties to attempt to resolve the issue under consideration. With the agreement of both parties, a member of the Student Rights & Responsibilities Office (SRRO) will attend this meeting to support the resolution process.

Level Two, Formal Academic Appeal

If there is no agreeable resolution at Level One, the student may initiate the Level Two, Formal Academic Appeal by indicating their intent to move forward to the SRRO. The SRRO reviews the appeal to ensure it meets criteria, and if so, the student pays an administrative fee and an Assigned Dean is appointed to hear the appeal. Level Two is a structured, formal process where an Assigned Dean: reviews all documentation submitted by the student and faculty member; reviews all relevant documentation including program manual, policies, course outline, placement guides, clinical handbooks, or any other relevant documents; hears rationale from both parties; consults with the program Dean and attempts to identify a resolution (See Appendix A for detailed procedures).

A student may request a rehearing at Level Two if new documentation or information becomes available that, through no fault of the student, was not available at the time that the Level Two appeal was heard. An appeal can be re-opened under this condition as long as the student is still active in the program in which the appeal originated.

Level Three, Procedural Appeal

Decisions at Level Two are binding unless the student believes a procedural error has occurred in the appeal process which warrants a third level review. Level Three appeals are reviewed by the SRRO for eligibility. In most cases, the appeal process is complete at Level Two, however a Level Three appeal may be initiated when one of the following conditions are met:

- A substantial procedural error occurred during the Level Two, Formal Academic Appeal Process.
- The sanctions imposed through an academic decision, and upheld at Level Two, are perceived to be unreasonable or substantially disproportionate to the circumstances or offence.

Level Three appeals are heard by an Academic Appeal Committee. The Committee is responsible for reviewing, and providing a judgement on, whether College policy and procedures were followed, and reasonably applied, in arriving at an academic decision. Decisions rendered by the Academic Appeal Committee are final.

4. Whenever possible, the Academic Appeal Procedure hearings will take place on the campus from which the appeal originated. Parties involved in the appeal reserve the right to utilize telephone or video conferencing such as Microsoft Teams.

5. It is the responsibility of the student, faculty and Dean to initiate each phase of the appeal process within established timelines as outlined in Appendix A, Procedures. If the student does not initiate a step within the stated timelines, the appeal will be considered abandoned. If a faculty member or Dean does not follow stated timelines, a student may progress to a Level Three – Procedural Appeal. Formal timelines may be extended with agreement from all parties.
6. If a matter under appeal is being heard through another internal review mechanism or is taken to an agency outside the College for resolution, the College may suspend the Academic Appeal Procedure. If necessary, an appeal can be continued at the conclusion of the other process, if the student is not satisfied with the resolution.
7. A student is allowed to have a support person present at any level of the appeal process. The support person will not be permitted to advocate for or speak on behalf of the student. The use of an interpreter or accessibility support person is permitted and treated as separate and apart from the role of a support person.
8. If a student is launching an appeal due to medical or disability-related accommodations, the appeal will be suspended and referred to Student Wellness & Accessibility for review. All medical documentation should be received and stored within Student Wellness & Accessibility.
9. Group appeals may be pursued by students who participated in a group assignment/assessment and received the same grade. All group members must agree to pursue the appeal and sign the appeal form. Appeals launched by one member of a group project without the consensus of all members will not be accepted. A group appeal may be made following the same process as an individual appeal.
10. While an appeal is in process, the student may continue in the course, program of study or placement and clinical unless prohibited by the Dean in cases where there are issues of liability, safety or the learning of others may be at risk.
11. Students and faculty may access the Student Rights & Responsibilities Office at any point in the appeal process for guidance. The role of the SRRO is to provide unbiased guidance on process. The SRRO will not advocate on either faculty or students' behalf.
12. Once an appeal is granted and the student accepts the resolution, the appeal process is complete. The student may decline a Level One alternate resolution proposed by the faculty and opt to move to Level Two, Formal Appeal.
13. If a student accepts an appeal outcome and completes a re-assessment or supplemental test (for example) and performs poorly, they cannot launch a new appeal, nor appeal the outcome.

14. If a Level One appeal is granted, while there is no guarantee of successful outcome, the approach to resolution determined between faculty and student must be unbiased, intrinsically equitable and cannot result in academic disadvantage.
15. Supporting documentation should accompany appeal submissions
16. See AC832 Procedures for additional information.

MONITORING

Student Affairs and the Student Rights & Responsibilities Office will be responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of this policy and its implementation.

NEXT POLICY REVISION DATE

September, 2027

SPECIFIC LINKS

AC832 Procedures

Appendix A - PROCEDURES TO AC832: ACADEMIC APPEALS POLICY

Level	Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
Level One: Faculty Decision Review	An appeal is initiated by submitting the completed Academic Appeal Form to the faculty who made the decision. Students may choose to contact the SRRO for guidance.	Within five (5) days of receiving Written Notification of an academic decision.	Student
Level One: Faculty Decision Review Meeting	A meeting takes place between the Faculty and Student – SRRO may attend as neutral third party.	Within five (5) days of the Academic Appeal Form being submitted.	Student and Faculty

Level	Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
Level One: Faculty Decision Review result	The Faculty completes Section A of the Academic Appeal Form and sends it to the student and SRRO.	Within two (2) days after the Faculty Decision Review meeting takes place	Faculty
		**Within five (5) days for OntarioLearn courses	Manager of Distance Education
Level Two: Initiation of Formal Appeal	The student indicates their interest to move forward in the appeal process to the SRRO.	Within two (2) days after receiving Faculty response from the Faculty Decision Review meeting.	Student
	The SRRO will meet with the student and review the appeal to ensure it is eligible to move forward. If eligible, the student will electronically sign Section B of the Academic Appeal form, pay a \$25 fee and an Assigned Dean will be appointed.	Within two (2) days of the student indicating their interest to move forward.	SRRO
Level Two: Academic Appeal Hearing	A hearing takes place between the student and Assigned Dean with the SRRO as a neutral facilitator. The Assigned Dean will meet with relevant stakeholders and review relevant documentation.	Within five (5) days after Assigned Dean receives package from SRRO.	Assigned Dean

Level	Actions	Timeline	Responsibility
Level Two: Academic Appeal Response	The Assigned Dean will complete Section B of the Academic Appeal Form and send it to the Student, SRRO, Dean and Faculty.	Within two (2) days after the Level Two Academic Appeal hearing	Assigned Dean
Level Three: Procedural Appeal Launch	The student indicates their interest to move forward to Level Three to the SRRO. The SRRO reviews the appeal to ensure it meets criteria for Level Three.	Within two (2) days after receiving the outcome of the Level Two Academic Appeal.	Student
Level Three: Procedural Appeal Hearing	A Level Three hearing is organized by the Director of Wellness, Accessibility & Student Success, or designate.	Within ten (10) days of the student's submission of the Academic Appeal Form with Level Three Appeal section signed.	Academic Appeal Committee
Level Three: Procedural Appeal Response	The Chair renders their final and binding decision to all parties involved in the appeal.	Within three (3) days of the Appeal Committee Hearing.	Academic Appeal Committee

**OntarioLearn courses require inter-institutional vetting so Faculty Decision Review timelines may be extended.

Documentation

Supporting documentation should accompany appeal submissions. The following chart details examples of grounds for appeal along with associated appropriate documentation. Note: The listed “sample appropriate documentation” is not intended as a comprehensive list, other documentation may be considered.

Grounds	Supporting Documentation (optional)
<p>Merit of Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An assessment which may have been unfairly or inaccurately graded Academic Integrity allegation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific and detailed reasons, in writing, as to why the original grade was inaccurate
<p>Personal/Compassionate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unforeseen significant event or circumstance which affected the ability of the student to meet course requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any documentary evidence from course outline, learning plan, textbooks, etc. Academic Misconduct Form Presentation of a note from a medical professional if appropriate Death certificate Funeral announcement Travel itinerary Letter from counsellor, therapist, or religious leader Notice of hearing or subpoena
<p>Course Outline/ Testing Discrepancy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of course shows significant departure from course outline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record of where the departure occurred and explanation of how this has affected the student's success Course outline/learning plan

The Academic Appeal Procedures include the following steps:

- A. Level One – Faculty Decision Review
- B. Level Two – Formal Academic Appeal
- C. Level Three – Procedural Appeal
- D. Appeal Procedures for Partnership Degrees or Continuing Education Programs

A. Level One – Faculty Decision Review

- i. To initiate an appeal, a student must first submit an Academic Appeal Form (available on SLC.me and the St. Lawrence College Website) to the faculty member and schedule a Faculty Decision Review meeting with the faculty member who issued the grade. The appeal must be launched within five (5) days of receiving Written Notification of the grade. The appeal is considered launched once the

student has submitted the appeal paperwork to the faculty member and requests an appeal meeting. The student may contact the Student Rights and Responsibilities Office (SRRO) for guidance at any time.

- ii. If a student is launching an appeal due to medical or disability-related accommodations, the appeal will be suspended and referred to Student Wellness & Accessibility for review. All medical documentation should be received and stored within Student Wellness & Accessibility.
- iii. This meeting must occur within five (5) days of the student contacting the professor. Timelines may be extended with the agreement of both parties. The student must submit the completed Academic Appeal Form and relevant documentation prior to this meeting. It is the student's responsibility to substantiate their grounds for appeal following the guidelines in the Academic Appeal Policy. It is expected that both parties will make reasonable efforts to resolve the concern at this step. If requested by either party, a member of the SRRO can be present as a neutral facilitator.
- iv. Following the meeting, the faculty member will complete Section A of the Academic Appeal Form (Faculty Decision Review) and return it to the student via email within two (2) days, copying the SRRO for tracking purposes. Arrangements for any supplemental assessments and timelines should be made and agreed upon between the faculty and student and outlined clearly in the faculty's response.
- v. If the approach to Level One resolution determined between faculty and student is re-evaluation of an existing submission, the Program Associate Dean will assign an impartial faculty with subject matter expertise to complete the re-evaluation. All student identifiers and the previous grade and evaluation feedback will be redacted from the document prior to re-evaluation.

B. Level Two – Formal Academic Appeal

- i. If a resolution is not achieved through the Level One - Faculty Decision Review, the student may pursue Level Two, Formal Academic Appeal. The student must contact the SRRO Office within two (2) days of the faculty member's decision to discuss eligibility to move forward in the appeal process to Level Two, the Formal Academic Appeal.

- ii. The SRRO will review the appeal, supporting documentation, and the Academic Appeal Form completed by the faculty member. The SRRO will determine whether the appeal meets the criteria to proceed.
If the appeal meets criteria, the student must electronically sign Section B of the Academic Appeal Form and pay the \$25 administrative fee.
- iii. In order to avoid perceived, or actual, bias in the Level Two hearing, the SRRO will identify and coordinate the Assigned Dean from outside the student's Academic School to hear the appeal. The SRRO will notify the program Dean and relevant stakeholders of the progression of the appeal.
- iv. The SRRO will send the appeal package to the Assigned Dean for review and will coordinate a hearing with the student and Assigned Dean. The hearing must take place within five (5) days of the student submitting the Level Two appeal documentation.
The Assigned Dean will approach professors, staff, students, placement supervisors, preceptors, or others who can contribute information to assist in the decision making or resolution of the appeal. The Assigned Dean may meet with others either separately or as a group, to hear and discuss the appeal.
The Assigned Dean will review all submitted documentation by the student, as well as the program manual, policies, course outline, placement guides, clinical handbooks, or any other relevant documents that will help inform their decision.
- v. Following the Level Two hearing, the Assigned Dean will complete Section B of the Academic Appeal Form with their response to the appeal within two (2) days of the hearing.
- vi. The response is distributed to the student, the SRRO, the program Dean and the faculty member. If the academic appeal is granted, the appeal process is complete, and the administrative fee will be refunded.

C. Level Three – Procedural Appeal

- i. If the appeal is denied and the student feels they meet criteria to move forward, they have two (2) days after receiving the response from the Assigned Dean to initiate a Level Three procedural appeal by indicating their intention to the Student Rights & Responsibilities Office and electronically signing Section C of the Academic Appeal Form.

A Level Three appeal can only be initiated if the following conditions are met:

- A substantial procedural error occurred during the Level Two, Formal Appeal.

- The sanctions imposed through an academic decision, and upheld at Level Two, are perceived to be unreasonable or substantially disproportionate to the circumstances or offence.

The Committee has no jurisdiction where the sole question raised in an appeal turns on the exercise of academic judgement of a student's work or performance by a faculty member.

- ii. The SRRO will ensure the appeal is eligible to move forward and submit the appeal package to the Director of Wellness, Accessibility & Student Success, or designate, and the program Dean and Assigned Dean from the Level Two Hearing.
- iii. The Director of Wellness, Accessibility & Student Success, or designate, will choose a Level Three Appeal Committee, as needed. The Committee will be made up of one faculty member, two administrative academic members (at least one Dean) and one student. Committee members must not have been involved previously with any aspect of the student's appeal and must not be from the same Academic School as the student. The Dean chosen for the Committee will act as the Committee Chair. The Committee will provide an independent, internal review of the decisions and procedures of the Level One and Level Two meetings.
- iv. The Procedural Appeal Hearing must occur within ten (10) days of the notification of the student's submitted request to move to Level Three of the Appeal Procedure. The Director of Wellness, Accessibility & Student Success, or designate will distribute all relevant material to the Appeal Committee members in advance of the hearing. The student, the Assigned Dean, and the SRRO attend the Level Three hearing. The faculty member may also be invited to attend at the discretion of the Chair.
- v. If the student wishes to have a support person in attendance, they must advise the SRRO within 24 hours of the hearing and provide the identity of that person. This support person may not speak on behalf of the student.
- vi. Level Three Hearing Procedures
 - a. In advance of the hearing, the Committee will be provided all documentation that has been reviewed at Level One and Two of the appeal process. The student launching the Level Three appeal may challenge for cause the neutrality of any member of the Committee scheduled to hear their appeal. If the challenge is upheld, the member shall be replaced by another Committee member.
 - b. Subject to the rulings of the Committee, the following procedures should be followed.
 - The student may make an opening statement.

- The student may call and examine witnesses.
 - The Assigned Dean may cross-examine any of the witnesses called by the student, including, where appropriate, the student.
 - The Assigned Dean may make an opening statement.
 - The Assigned Dean may call and examine witnesses.
 - The student may cross-examine any of the Assigned Dean's witnesses.
 - The Committee will break to formulate questions.
 - The Chair will ask questions to either party on behalf of the Committee.
 - The student may make a closing statement.
 - The Assigned Dean may make a closing statement.
 - The Student may respond to any matters arising out of the Assigned Dean's statement to which they not yet spoken.
 - The Committee may impose reasonable time limits for the hearing of witnesses and statements.
- c. If, after a hearing, the Committee requires further information in order to reach a decision, it may either ask that the additional information be supplied at a further hearing or, without a hearing. Both the student and Assigned Dean must be given the opportunity of commenting on the new information before the committee reaches a final decision.
- d. In rendering a decision, the Committee may:
- Reverse the decision and grant such academic standing to the appellant as the committee thinks fit in the circumstances;
 - Quash the decision and send the matter back to the Assigned Dean to be dealt with in accordance with proper policy and procedures; or
 - Uphold the decision of the Assigned Dean.
- vii. Within three (3) days of the Appeal hearing, the Appeal Committee Chair will distribute the written decision using Section C of the Appeal form, to the student, the faculty member, the SRRO, the program Dean, Assigned Dean, the Director,

Wellness, Accessibility & Student Success or designate, and the Sr. Vice President Academic.

- viii. The decision of the Academic Appeal Committee is final and binding.

D. Appeal Procedures for Partnership Degrees or Continuing Education Programs

- i. For students registered in partnership programs between Laurentian University and St. Lawrence College, appeals are heard at students' home institution, including Academic Integrity appeals. If the appeal process is being contested by the student, the LU Registrar will be notified by the College Registrar and the appeal process will be examined by LU and a final decision rendered by the LU Registrar. All cases of Academic Integrity will be dealt with by following the LU Senate Approved Academic Integrity Policy at the student's home institution (Campus) in consultation with LU.
- ii. Appeals for OntarioLearn courses require inter-institutional vetting so timelines may be extended. These appeals will be managed by the Program Officer, Distance Education at St. Lawrence College.

PROCEDURES REVISION DATE

September, 2022