

Grade Appeal Policy

COMS 210—Jonathan Sterne

Please read all of this carefully. McGill policy is that students have a right to know why they received a particular mark.

If you receive a grade on an assignment that was lower than you'd expected or hoped for, here is what you should do.

1. If it's a calculation error (ie, we made an addition or division error), just show us. We will happily change your grade.
2. Look over the assignment. Try to see the aspects that could be improved. Keep in mind that an "A" grade is for superior work, not merely for meeting expectations.
3. If you are still unclear as to why you received the grade you did, schedule a meeting with the person who marked your assignment. Ask how you could have done better on the assignment and where you fell short. We strongly suggest you arrive at this meeting with an open mind and a humble demeanor.
4. If you received the grade from your TA and still have questions, you are welcome to meet with your prof *after* you have met with your TA. Please note that I cannot explain or defend a TA's reasoning. That is up to him or her to do. However, I can make suggestions for improvement on your next assignment.

At this point, consider your options carefully.

- A. Accept the mark and take steps to do better next time.
- B. Dispute the mark.

If you choose to dispute the mark, keep in mind that most grade appeals are without merit.

Professors value published work that has been peer-reviewed because we believe that authors are not the best judges of the intellectual quality of their own work. In fact, there is no appeal process for peer review: we *must* accept the judgments of a journal or publisher to whom we submit our work. Therefore we hold students to the same standard—we assume that you are not the best judge of the quality of your own writing.

In over a decade of teaching and over 3100 undergraduate students, I have only ever elevated a student's grade on an assignment for one of two reasons:

- The student was not held to the same standards as everyone else
- A calculation error was made in the mark

I strongly recommend that you have an iron-clad case before proceeding further.

If you dispute the mark:

1. No sooner than 48 hours after receiving the mark and no later than 1 week (5 working days) after receiving the mark, you must submit a 1-2 page letter (typed, double spaced and on paper, not by email) to me. It should detail the grounds for the appeal. Your letter should be accompanied by the original, graded paper and any evidence to which you refer. It should arrive in my mailbox no sooner than 48 hours after the assignment was handed back and no later than 1 week (5 working days) after the assignment was handed back. Please provide the address at which you'd like a response. I can respond to you by email or by regular mail.

If I agree to review the assignment and mark, I will grade it *sui generis*, which means that the grade could go up or it could go down.

2. Alternatively, you may choose to use the university's standard appeal process (which does not involve me or the TAs). Please note that if an appeal is heard at the university level, it is also considered *sui generis* (i.e., your mark could go down or up).

3. Regardless of #1 above, we will not consider written appeals received after the 8th of December, except for those concerning mathematical errors in the calculation of a grade.