

English Department Grade Grievance Policy Updated September 2023

The English Department upholds a standard of fair and consistent grading in all of its classes. English instructors are expected to announce their policies and criteria for grading and to apply them equitably for all enrolled students. When a student receives a grade that seems significantly out of line with announced expectations, it is appropriate for the student to make inquiries into how an instructor determined that grade. While some students may learn that a disappointing grade was fairly assigned, others may find that their grade was not supported by policy and criteria or that they were evaluated in ways different from others in the class. In such cases, students may decide to file a grade grievance, following the [guidelines](#) established by LSA for all of its units.

The [LSA grade grievance process](#) is designed to carefully study an unresolved situation, and it is designed both to protect students from arbitrary or inequitable grading and to protect instructors from baseless complaints. Note that a grievance case may not be opened if 1.) the student does not present evidence of arbitrary or inequitable grading, and instead cites “tough” or high standards of evaluation that were applied to the entire class, or if 2.) the student requests arbitration between A and A+ grades, as the Department of English regards the grade of A (4.0) to be the highest grade in the university system. We recommend that students take time to carefully read the LSA grade grievance page to understand the process in full. The [LSA grade grievance process](#) also outlines the steps to take should a student wish to consider pursuing a grade grievance.

Michigan students have personal histories of academic success and a well-earned sense of achievement based on instructors’ evaluation. While it can be difficult to accept a disappointing grade, it can also be difficult to experience unfair or inconsistent evaluation or to engage with the University as a complainant. And it can be difficult to undertake the labor required for a grade grievance, including communication with the instructor, meeting with university administrators, and collecting evidence for a case. Such tasks can be especially daunting for students who come from underprivileged backgrounds or minoritized groups. For these reasons, the English Department encourages students to seek help from others when considering and carrying out a grade grievance. Advisers in the Newnan Advising Center, in programs such as Comprehensive Studies, and in majors including English can provide advice and assistance for students who choose to file a grievance.

If you have concerns not addressed by the grade grievance process, you may wish to email or meet with the Director of Undergraduate Studies in English or, if the concerns issue from English 124,125, or 225, with the Director of the English Department Writing Program. (Contact the undergraduate office, undergraduate.english@umich.edu, to learn the email address of the Directors.) To discuss concerns that reach beyond typical undergraduate

course matters, you may wish to contact the Chair of the English Department (english.chair@umich.edu).

Finally, as noted in the LSA grade grievance guidelines, instructors are given final authority for determining course grades. It is important for students to recognize that this evaluative authority is balanced against professional and workplace expectations for instructors to grade fairly and consistently. While grievance cases are laborious for students to undertake, they are given serious and deliberative attention by department administrators and faculty committees. A standard of fair and consistent evaluation is fundamental to the [English department's purpose](#) and integral to its community of scholars and educators.