

ACADEMIC APPEALS PROCESS

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Grades

Grades are issued by faculty members teaching approved courses in adherence to the relevant [academic policies](#) of Verto's Academic Provider, the University of New Haven (UNewHaven), and as outlined in [Verto's academic policies](#).

Faculty hold authority in the assessment of participant academic performance, and follow established academic policies and performance expectations as outlined in course syllabi and discussed in class. It is expected that faculty and participants make an effort to resolve grade disputes directly via participant and faculty communication.

Academic Eligibility For Additional Semesters With Verto

Academic eligibility decisions that impact a participant's ability to continue with Verto for an additional semester are made at the end of the semester based on the participant's final semester GPA. All participants' final semester GPAs are reviewed by the Academic Affairs Headquarters Team to determine if they meet the required GPA threshold for academic eligibility as outlined in [Verto's Academic Eligibility - Continuing Students](#) policy.

Verto adheres to FERPA (Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and requires all communications about student academic records to be directly between the participant and key stakeholders (faculty or relevant staff). Participants must have an updated

[Verto Participant FERPA Form](#) on file with UNewHaven to authorize the release of any type of educational records or related communications to parents, guardians, or other educational institutions.

This document provides additional information to support participants in navigating the appeal processes and preparing an appropriate appeals letter.

Definition & Conditions

Routine Grade Appeal

A routine grade appeal refers to requests initiated by the participant to the faculty for questions about a specific grade awarded on an assignment or final overall course grade. In the event of a grade dispute or appeal, routine grade appeals are restricted to grades awarded on assignments during the final part of term, finals, or final cumulative grades issued after the program end date.

Participants must initiate an appeal inquiry via email **directly to faculty** within 30 days of the program end date, but no more than 45 days after the grade has been issued.

Escalated Grade Appeal

Escalated grade appeals are limited to cases in which the participant has previously pursued a routine grade appeal with their faculty, but the participant and faculty are unable to resolve the issue.

After program completion, participants initiate an escalated grade appeal via email directly to deanofstudents@vertoeducation.org, which will be directed to the respective academic program leader onsite. Participants must request escalated appeals within one week of receiving a faculty decision from the routine grade appeal OR within two weeks of contacting the faculty and receiving no response to the initial routine grade appeal outreach.

Grade Appeal Conditions

Grade appeals (routine or escalated) will only be considered if participants have made good faith efforts to respectfully engage their faculty in a review and discussion about the grade(s) in question. Upon this review, evidence is provided that demonstrates:

- The contested grade is incorrectly calculated or reported;
- The contested grade does not accurately reflect participant achievement or performance based on the assignment criteria;
- The application of academic policies or academic accommodations differed from stated policies or other official Verto communication channels or authorities;
- Materials from the course Canvas site, course syllabus, and/or written communications from the professor support the appeal

Grade appeals will not be considered for cases based on these types of issues:

- The difficulty of the course material;
- General disagreements with the grading, without specific merit;
- Grade deductions based on attendance policies that are published on the Verto website and in course syllabi;
- Academic policies required by UNewHaven and published on the Verto website and in course syllabi;
- Policies and expectations otherwise communicated in advance with participants during pre-departure, onsite academic orientation, and/or in classes.

Academic Eligibility Admissions Appeal

An academic eligibility Admissions Appeal refers to the decision made regarding a participant's academic eligibility to continue with Verto for an additional semester based on their end-of-semester GPA from the preceding term. Academic Eligibility appeals must be submitted within 5 days of when the decision letter was sent.

Eligibility Appeals Conditions

Eligibility appeals will be considered if participants can demonstrate extenuating circumstances that impacted their grades, including any supporting documentation. All Verto policies are upheld in the review. Participants who do not meet admissions requirements, including GPA, are subject to dismissal, and appeals are not guaranteed if the participant does not meet the eligibility criteria as outlined on the website and in relevant [Verto policies](#).

Some common reasons for appeals include:

- Health-related issues: Illness, medical conditions, or mental health struggles that affected academic performance.
- Academic Accommodations - Known or Undiagnosed learning disabilities impacted learning. This could be that approved academic accommodations were not available or utilized for reasons beyond a participant's control. Or this could be in relation to undiagnosed learning disabilities that emerged or were diagnosed during the semester. In either case, there is sufficient evidence that this was a known concern, and conversations with onsite staff or medical professionals are documented in relation to these concerns.
- Family emergencies: Situations such as a major incident or death of an immediate family member, or other personal crises related to a participant's immediate family/guardian.
- Disruptive life events: financial struggles or other significant personal challenges impacting learning. This could also include if an incident occurred while onsite, such as a participant being robbed or assaulted, that was reported and impacted participant learning.

- 'Rocky Start' or 'Isolated Academic Difficulty': This may relate to the participant experiencing difficulty at the beginning of the semester, recognizing challenges and taking direct action, and demonstrating significant improvement throughout the rest of the term, even if grades did not fully reflect the effort. Efforts are documented by key stakeholders, including onsite program staff and faculty. Isolated Academic Difficulty relates to a participant who struggles in a specific academic area or subject, such as a language course, or Math or STEM courses, but the participant was unable to withdraw from the course and maintain full-time status. The participant performed well in other academic courses or subject areas, but the GPA impact was significant as a result.

What does the Appeals Committee review?

- Overall portfolio of academic performance across all courses.
- Overall holistic participant experience, including student life and non-academic experiences.
- Feedback from onsite faculty and staff.
- Evidence submitted by relevant stakeholders.

Factors that may support an appeal:

- Participant accountability and ownership of the challenges experienced, with honest reflection about what happened and why.
- Program fit - the program a participant wants to attend is appropriate to the participant's academic and personal needs.
- Positive support from faculty and onsite staff that demonstrate participant ownership of challenges and effort to improve.
- Academic standing can be improved to support transferability. A positive additional semester is sufficient to improve academic records. This may mean that the participant is pursuing course retakes, if available, and calculations demonstrate the participant can reasonably attain a GPA that will support post-Verto transfer or academic continuation.
- Academic records demonstrate improvement over time: A noticeable upward trend in the participant's grades, demonstrated efforts such as regular and continuous meetings with program academic staff, successful completion of a student success plan or attendance reintegration plan, or recent improvements in academic performance.

Step-By-Step Instructions: How To Make A Grade Appeal

1. Review the conditions listed above regarding the timing and requirements for grade appeals and related processes.
2. Next, you, the student, must submit a written message directly to the instructor of the course, via email, within 30 calendar days of the program end date. Always be courteous and professional. Provide materials and questions to support your inquiry.
3. Wait for a reply from the instructor (within 14 calendar days).

- a. Send a reminder email within 3 business days if you have not heard back from the instructor.
 - b. If you do not receive a response from the instructor within 14 calendar days of submitting your appeal, you may escalate your appeal to deanofstudents@vertoeducation.org which will be directed to the local onsite academic program leader.
4. Depending on the instructor's response, different actions may be necessary:
 - a. **Grade Change Approved:** In the event that instructor decides that a grade change is warranted, they will work with UNewHaven to submit a Grade Change Request. All requests are reviewed by UNewHaven. If approved, you will receive a notification from UNewHaven directly. This can take up to 14 business days to process.
 - b. **Grade Change Denied:** In the event that the instructor decides that a grade change is not warranted, the instructor will provide rationale and notify Verto academic leadership.
 - i. If you understand the reason that the grade change was denied, and all information has been provided to support the appeal, no further action is needed.
 - ii. If you have additional information that was not available during the review, or evidence that supports an escalation, you must initiate your escalated appeal to deanofstudents@vertoeducation.org within 7 calendar days of the instructor's response.
5. Verto staff typically will require you to:
 - a. Supply correspondence you had with the faculty, evidence of your work, or other information as relevant for the review
 - b. Submit a detailed statement of impact or appeals information with evidence
 - c. Participate in a Listening Session with Verto staff and/or faculty
6. Final Appeals Decisions
 - a. If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeals process with the onsite academic leadership and have further evidence to support the appeal; you may write to deanofstudents@vertoeducation.org to inquire about your options for a final appeal.
 - b. Depending on the nature of the appeal, evidence provided, and academic impact to you - appeals may be submitted to the University of New Haven for final review and considerations.
 - i. This typically is engaged when there is evidence of significant impact that may have resulted in academic ineligibility, such as expulsion or non-continuation from an academic program; there are non-academic circumstances that significantly impacted your academic performance; or other circumstances that may be considered extenuating circumstances that would prevent a resolution of grade appeal directly with faculty or staff support.

- ii. The decision made is solely that of the University of New Haven and this may take 30 business days or longer, depending on when appeals are submitted, as this is escalated to a comprehensive committee for review and discussion.

How To Prepare An Appeals Letter

1. Collect documentation that supports your claim that, in terms of assessment and final grade, your grade was miscalculated or does not reflect the stated performance expectations.
2. Write your appeal in the form of a letter addressed to the appropriate stakeholder (faculty, academic staff, UNewHaven). This must be written and submitted by you, the student.
 - a. Use your opening paragraph to present a clear statement that summarizes the basis for your appeal.
 - b. Clearly, completely, and concisely state any facts that support your grade appeal.
 - c. Include relevant dates, specific communications, or examples from the course syllabus/Canvas site or assignments to corroborate your appeal.
 - d. Be specific, professional, and respectful. Provide a clear request - what assignment, evaluation or grade are you appealing and why? If your appeal is successful, what is the expected outcome? Avoid general negative commentary or extraneous information.
3. Attach copies of documentation that support your claim. These may include
 - a. copies of assignments/graded work with feedback from the instructor,
 - b. Assignment instructions, rubrics or details from the course syllabus or Canvas site,
 - c. email communication with the instructor,
 - d. other relevant information.
4. Submit within the specified timeframe, no more than 45 days from program completion.

Tip: Ask a trusted person to review your appeal documentation before sending.

Step-By-Step Instructions: How To Make An Academic Eligibility Appeal

5. Assess Whether You Have a Strong Case
 - a. Consider whether you have legitimate reasons for not meeting the GPA requirement. Some common reasons for appeals include:
 - i. Health-related issues: Illness, medical conditions, or mental health struggles that affected academic performance.
 - ii. Undiagnosed learning disabilities that were diagnosed during the semester, with appropriate documentation

- iii. Family emergencies: Situations such as the death of a family member or other personal crises.
 - iv. Disruptive life events: financial struggles, or other significant personal challenges.
 - v. Improvement over time: A noticeable upward trend in your grades or recent improvements in academic performance.
- 6. Gather Supporting Documents: You need to provide documentation that explains why your GPA did not meet the required threshold. This may include:
 - a. Medical records or doctor's notes (if health was a factor)
 - b. Letters from counselors, therapists, or onsite program staff that explain extenuating circumstances
 - i. Personal statements or essays describing the challenges you faced
 - ii. Updated transcripts showing recent academic improvements, if applicable
 - iii. The more specific and detailed your documentation, the better your chances of your appeal being considered.

How To Prepare An Appeals Letter

- 1. Write your appeal in the form of a letter addressed to the appropriate stakeholder (academic appeals committee, academic staff, UNewHaven). This must be written and submitted by students.
 - a. Use your opening paragraph to present a clear statement that summarizes the basis for your appeal.
 - b. Clearly, completely, and concisely state any facts that support your academic eligibility appeal.
 - c. Include relevant dates, specific communications, or examples from work and meetings with your program staff to corroborate your appeal.
 - d. Be specific, professional, and respectful. Provide a clear request that articulates your academic challenges over the semester, and actions you took to address those challenges and rebound from them. Potential factors to consider include:
 - i. Were there factors that prevented you from fully engaging in your academics, such as academic accommodation needs that were not identified?
 - ii. Identified struggles with learning, but you made a clear effort to ask for help, etc.
 - iii. Specific changes in your academic performance that demonstrate your recognized struggles with learning and your commitment to working on your academic skills.
 - e. If your appeal is successful, what is the expected outcome? Avoid general negative commentary or extraneous information.

2. Attach copies of documentation that support your claim. See above in the “how to make an appeal” section for examples of supporting documentation.
3. Submit within the specified timeframe. Once your letter is finalized and you have all necessary documents, submit your appeal via [this link](#). You may also confirm receipt of your appeal submission by emailing deanofstudents@vertoeducation.org.
4. Submit the appeal within 5 days of the send date of the letter, as appeals submitted late may not be considered.

Tip: Ask a trusted person to review your appeal documentation before sending.

5. Prepare for Any Outcome
 - a. While you hope for a positive response, be prepared for any outcome. If your appeal is successful, be ready to accept the offer and fulfill any additional requirements. If your appeal is denied, consider other options such as attending a community college in your hometown or exploring alternative academic paths.
 - b. If your appeal is unsuccessful, take time to reflect on your academic journey and consider seeking academic support, such as tutoring or counseling, to help you improve your performance in the future.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I make an escalated appeal?
 - a. Contact deanofStudents@vertoeducation.org to initiate an escalated appeal, **only after** you have communicated with your faculty about your grade.
2. When will I receive a resolution to my appeal?
 - a. The process may take 2-4 weeks to render an appeal decision, with additional time for a final decision from UNewHaven, if relevant.
3. I missed class, and my grade was deducted due to the attendance policy. Can I submit an appeal?
 - a. The appeal process is not for general appeals about Verto and UNewHaven academic policies. All faculty track and record attendance and report it daily. If you have evidence that your attendance records or a specific date of attendance were in error and have evidence to substantiate your records, you may submit an appeal.
4. I didn't get into my post-Verto institution because of my grades or GPA. Can I submit an appeal?
 - a. The appeal process is for specific assignments and grades, and you must meet the established process and reasons for allowed appeals. Please contact the onsite staff to discuss alternative post-Verto plans.
5. I'm the parent/guardian of a student and want to appeal on behalf of my student; or can my parent/guardian submit an appeal on my behalf?

- a. Appeals must be initiated by students, as students are the legal owners of their educational records under FERPA. Appeals initiated by parents/guardians or anyone other than the student will not be accepted unless a valid reason is provided. FERPA forms must be on file for any parent/guardian to be included in discussions regarding academic records.
- 6. How do I submit a FERPA form to authorize my parent/guardian to be included in the discussion of my academic records?
 - a. Complete the [Verto Participant FERPA Form](#)
- 7. I'm not sure if my reason to submit an appeal is valid. What are the criteria?
 - a. Is your appeal related to your final grade or a grade you received in the last part of term, no more than 4 weeks prior to the program end date?
 - i. Yes - your grade may be valid for an appeal
 - ii. No - this is not valid for an appeal
 - b. Do you believe the grade was recorded in error or reflects an administrative error?
 - i. Example of a valid appeal: You received a 0 on your final paper and a note from the professor saying you did not complete or submit the assignment, but you submitted your paper on time via Canvas and can provide evidence of this.
 - c. Do you believe that your final grade does not reflect your academic performance or the established criteria for the assignment?
 - i. Example of a valid appeal: You followed the assignment or the rubric your professor provided, and discussed the assignment with classmates and your onsite support staff. You believe that you met all of the criteria and that the grade doesn't reflect your performance and the stated requirements of the assignment. You can submit a copy of your assignment, the professor's feedback, and the outline of the assignment from Canvas or your syllabus.
 - d. Do you believe that your grade does not reflect established academic policies or was subject to inaccuracies, discrimination or bias?
 - i. Example of a valid appeal: You received all B+ or B letter grades on all assignments, did not miss any classes, but have an overall grade of C. When you look at Canvas, you do not see any missing assignments or grade deductions, and you did not receive any penalties for attendance.
 - ii. Example of a valid appeal: You felt that you were discriminated against by your professor for your identity / any of the equal opportunity reasons as listed on the [University of New Haven website](#). You reported your concerns to the local academic staff while you were onsite or addressed your concerns directly with your professor. Please note that any appeals based on discrimination will be mandatorily reported to UNewHaven and investigated as part of a separate review process.

- e. Did you have specific, approved accommodations from UNewHaven on file that impacted your ability to complete the assignment or grade in question?
 - i. Example of a valid appeal: You had approved accommodations for additional test-taking time, but were not able to utilize additional time on your final exam, which you believe impacted your final grade. You had discussed the accommodations in advance with your professor, and have documentation from UNewHaven of your approved accommodations. Please note that any appeals based on accommodations will be reported to UNewHaven and may be reviewed separately by UNewHaven.

If you have any questions about the appeals process, please contact:
deanofstudents@vertoeducation.org