

Academic Grievance Procedure

(Revised 10/2010)

Philosophy of Policy Application

The purpose of the student academic grievance procedure is to provide a mechanism for exchanging information between student and instructor in cases of grade dispute and to provide a safeguard against unfair-grading practices. When properly applied, the procedure should facilitate reconciliation between the student and the faculty member and avoid embarrassment or injury to either party. The intent is to provide an informal forum in which differences of opinion can be discussed and resolved in an expedient and constructive manner at the lowest administrative level possible. For cases involving academic integrity refer to the Student Academic Integrity policy, OIT-14-030.

Academic Disputes Appealable by Policy

Student claims that final course grade resulted from:

1. Unfair or prejudicial treatment by instructor, or
2. Unusual or irregular procedures that impacted an individual student's grade in a disproportionate manner.
3. Student is dismissed from a professional program because of failure to meet prerequisite or sequential course requirements.
4. Student is dismissed from a professional externship component because of failure to meet standards of conduct or performance as required by the professional program and/or the externship site, as published in the student handbook for that program.

Note: The student should initiate appeals of final grades or professional academic standing within **three weeks** after final course grades are distributed or notices of dismissal is sent by the department. Appeals will not be considered by the appropriate Academic Dean after that time limit unless:

1. The student was incommunicado with the campus or unable to obtain grades after distribution because of academic assignment; or
2. Unusual events associated with grading procedure or completion of assignments made it impossible for the student to receive or appeal the grade in a timely manner.

Academic and Related Disputes not Appealable by Policy

1. Grades assigned to tests, quizzes, homework, papers, projects or other components of a course.
2. Final grades based on failure to meet published (via syllabus) standards for the course, in which no unusual or prejudicial treatment is claimed.
3. Disciplinary or other student conduct matters not specifically covered above.
4. Challenges to the instructor's grading system or components thereof, as long as the system was made available to students at the beginning of the academic term.

Procedure

1. Student reads policy to determine if a legitimate grievance can be appealed.
2. Student makes appointment to discuss dispute with course instructor. Since reconciliation of the dispute at this level is in the best interests of all parties, instructors and students are urged to engage in an honest and open-minded effort to resolve the problem.
3. Failing to resolve the dispute with the instructor, the student makes an appointment with either the program director (if one exists) or department chair, as appropriate.
 - A. The student and the instructor document the dispute in writing.
 - B. Department chair should confer with instructor, either before (preferred) or after consultation with student.
 - C. Department chair either refers matter back to instructor for resolution or decides dispute based on information available.
4. If there is a disagreement with the department chair decision, the student may request an appointment with the appropriate Dean. The student should indicate that the appointment concerns a grade dispute and the department, course and instructor involved.
 - A. The appropriate Dean will not see students unless the preceding steps have been followed. An exception to this is when the course instructor is the department chair. Then, the second level of appeal is the appropriate Academic Dean.
 - B. The appropriate Dean contacts the department chair, and when appropriate, the course instructor to obtain information on the dispute.
 - C. After consultation with the department and the student, the appropriate Academic Dean offers the student the choice of a summary decision by the Academic Dean or the opportunity for a hearing by the Student Hearing Commission.

Summary Decision by Academic Dean

If the appropriate Academic Dean summarily decides the dispute, either for or against the student, the grievance is terminated and the department chair, instructor, and the student are notified in writing. If there is a grade change, the Registrar's Office is also notified in writing.

Student Hearing Commission

If the student elects to have the dispute referred to the Student Hearing Commission:

1. The student must prepare a written request, which summarizes the reasons for a hearing and the requested intervention (e.g., change of grade, reinstatement) should the appeal be granted, documents that support the student's claim should be attached. The request is presented to the Academic Dean within three (3) academic days after discussion with the Dean.
2. A hearing is scheduled at the earliest time that is mutually available to the student and the Commission, normally within five (5) academic days after the Academic Dean receives the request.
3. A copy of the student request is forwarded to the department chair and supporting documentation requested for the hearing.
4. The chair of the Commission convenes the hearing and considers the presentations of student and instructor. Witnesses can be called by either the student or the instructor to offer supporting information. The student has the right to be accompanied to the hearing by an advisor (may be an attorney). The advisor is free to be at the student's side and the student is free to consult with the advisor, but the advisor is not free to address the Commission or ask questions of them.

6. The Commission formulates and transmits a recommendation to the Academic Dean. The decision should be supported by a rationale and it may include a majority and minority report, if appropriate.
7. After careful consideration of the Commission's findings, the Academic Dean renders a final decision and notifies the Commission, department chair, instructor and student. If the outcome is a grade change, the Academic Dean notifies the Registrar's office.

Summary of Sequential Steps in Grievance Procedure

