

**ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE**

The College has a grievance procedure available to hear students' academic complaints and to render decisions. The procedure seeks to insure that a student's complaint is heard promptly, equitably, and informally.

At times students may present their case to an Academic Grievance Committee, but hopefully the conflict can be resolved in the initial steps of the process when the student discusses the matter with the instructor, the division chairperson, and the Vice President for Student Learning.

See following pages for procedure.

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## ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE

When students have a grievance with a faculty member concerning instructional or academic issues, they may follow the procedure described below to resolve the conflict. Non-academic student grievances are handled via procedures outlined in Policy 5430C.

Hopefully the conflict can be resolved in the initial steps of the process when the student discusses the matter with the instructor, the division chairperson, and the Vice President for Student Learning. However, if the grievance is not resolved in these meetings, students may present their case to an Academic Grievance Committee.

### Procedure for Pursuing a Grievance

The student is urged to begin the process by first discussing the problem with the instructor and trying to resolve it. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached or if the student feels there is a communication barrier between the student and the instructor, the student must discuss the matter with the appropriate division chairperson (in Outreach, with the coordinator). If a grievance is not resolved with the chairperson, the student may take the grievance to the Vice President for Student Learning. The Vice President for Student Learning will meet with both the student and the instructor and if appropriate, the chairperson, to try and resolve the grievance.

### Time Limit

The student must submit a written statement of the student's complaint to the Division Chair or Student Learning Vice President no later than 45 calendar days after the end of the semester in which the grievance occurred. Students may not pursue grievances after this time limit.

### Presentation of a Grievance to the Committee

If the student or the faculty member remains dissatisfied after meeting with the Vice President for Student Learning, either may appeal to the Academic Grievance Committee. This Committee is the last step in this grievance procedure. The Committee's decision is final.

For up to fifteen days after the meeting with the Dean of Academic Affairs, the student or instructor may request in writing to the Vice President for Student Learning a hearing before the Academic Grievance Committee. This written request for a hearing should include the specific grievance and the requested remedy. Breaks between the fall, spring or summer semesters will not be included in this 15-day period.

After any alternates are appointed, the Vice President for Student Learning will assemble the Academic Grievance Committee within a week unless there are extenuating circumstances. At this initial meeting, the Vice President will give to the Committee all available written materials



pertaining to the grievance. At this meeting the Committee elects a Chair. Also, at this first meeting, the Committee will review the request for a hearing and determine if a hearing is warranted. If the Committee determines that a hearing is warranted, the Chair will set a date for the hearing and contact both parties. All information, lists of witnesses, statements and other relevant material must be submitted to the Chairperson by both parties no later than 2 weeks prior to the hearing.

Any information regarding the grievance gathered by either party and submitted to the Committee as evidence must be made available to the other party. It is the Chairperson's responsibility to see that both parties receive all pertinent information.

### Academic Grievance Committee

The Academic Grievance Committee is a standing Committee available to students to provide an informal, but fair and prompt forum for hearing students' complaints about instructional or other academic issues. It has the authority to render decisions, including changing grades.

It is composed of 3 students (currently enrolled in credit classes) and an alternate, appointed by the ASG at the beginning of each academic year for one year terms; 3 faculty members, one elected each spring semester to serve for the next three academic years by the Faculty Association; and 1 professional or administrative member of Student Services appointed by the Vice President for Student Learning.

### Appointing Alternates

For any of these positions, alternates can be appointed for any of the following reasons:

If the student or instructor believes that a particular Committee member might have a conflict of interest, either party may request in writing that one member be excused and an alternate will be appointed.

A list of Committee members will be submitted to both parties (instructor and student(s)). Either party has 5 days to submit a written request for replacement of Committee members to the Vice President for Student Learning.

If one of the Committee members is out of town or unavailable because of a scheduling conflict, an alternate will be appointed.

If alternates are needed, the timelines will be extended until all are appointed. Within one week after all alternates are appointed, the first meeting will be held and a Chairperson chosen from the three faculty by a majority vote of all Committee members.

The following offices will appoint alternates when necessary: The Chair of the Senate or next available officer will appoint alternates for faculty members, the Vice President for Student Services for the Student Services Committee member, and the ASG President or next available



student officer for student alternates. In the event no ASG officer is available, the student alternate will be appointed by the ASG advisor.

#### Committee Hearing Proceedings

All members of the Committee must be present in order to conduct the hearing. Both the student and the instructor or their representative must be present either in person or via teleconference. Attendance is limited to those invited by the faculty members or student(s), unless both parties agree to have an open hearing.

Either the student or the instructor may choose a representative, although this may not be an attorney.

The formal hearing will be recorded on a tape. The Chairperson will appoint someone to record the hearing.

The student and instructor or their representative can cross-examine any witnesses presented at the hearing. Members of the Grievance Committee may also ask questions of either the student, the instructor or any representative or witnesses present. The formal hearing is the last opportunity either party will have to present his or her side of the grievance. After the formal hearing, no member(s) of the Grievance Committee will accept additional information regarding the grievance from any source.

#### Decision of the Committee

Within one week of the hearing, the Committee will present its decision in writing. The decision will include a finding of facts associated with the grievance, a decision, and a written rationale for the decision. This decision can include the changing of grades.

Consulting with the Committee, the Chairperson will prepare the rationale and include the important supporting and detracting factors in the case. The written decision must be signed by all Committee members who support the decision.

The Chairperson will send copies of this decision and its rationale to the student, the instructor, the division chairperson, and the Vice President for Student Learning. The Committee's decision is final.

If the Committee agrees that a grade should be changed, the Chairperson will complete, sign and attach a change of grade form. This form will be filed with the Registrar's Office.

The Vice President for Student Learning's office will keep an official record of the grievance and the tapes.



No one shall intimidate, threaten, coerce, discriminate or defame against any individual because he/she has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in the grievance process.

The official record will be kept in the Vice President for Student Learning's office. Information, however, obtained from the complainant or other individuals may be exempt.

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