School of Arts and Sciences Academic Grievance Procedure

An academic grievance is a claim that a specific academic decision or action, including the assignment of a grade, is unfair or violates relevant policies and procedures.

The purpose of this policy is to provide students who are taking classes in the School of Arts and Sciences, as well as faculty teaching those courses, with an opportunity for objective review of facts and events pertinent to academic grievances. Such reviews will be conducted in a collegial, non-judicial atmosphere rather than an adversarial one, and shall allow all of the parties involved to participate. All parties will be expected to act in a professional and civil manner.

A grade appeal is unlikely to hold merit unless it can be shown that the assigned grade was the result of a mathematical error; false or undocumented allegations of academic dishonesty; discriminatory, threatening, abusive, or other improper conduct towards the individual student; or violations of course-specific or College-wide academic policies as set forth in the course syllabus, the Student Handbook, and the Academic Catalog.

A student who believes that he or she has a legitimate academic grievance must seek to resolve the issue with the faculty member involved before initiating the grievance procedure.

If it is not possible to resolve the issue directly with the faculty member, the student must next contact the relevant program chair, who will seek to mediate a resolution.

If it is not possible to resolve the matter with the help of the program chair, the student may submit a written appeal with supporting documentation (e.g., course syllabus, graded essay or exam, timeline of events, etc.) to the Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences. The written appeal and all supporting documentation must be submitted within four weeks after grades are posted for the academic term in which the contested grade, decision, or action occurred (including grades for work submitted for incomplete classes carried over from previous terms), the Dean will attempt to resolve the grievance in a meeting with the student and the faculty member involved.

If the issue cannot be resolved by the Dean, he or she will refer the matter to the A&S Hearing Committee, which shall consist of three A&S faculty members and two student representatives, all appointed by the Dean. Whenever possible, the student representatives shall be members of the ASWC Senate. However, no member of the hearing committee shall have prior knowledge of the grievant or the grievance. All five members shall be entitled to vote on the Committee’s decisions.
The Committee shall conduct a hearing at which the student and the faculty member will be asked to testify and to present whatever evidence may be appropriate.

The A&S Hearing Committee will select a Chair who will schedule the hearing, moderate the deliberations of the committee, and ensure that full and fair consideration is provided to all parties.

Unless previously approved by the Chair, no representatives, observers, or third parties to the complaint shall attend the hearing. All Committee deliberations shall be held in private and shall be kept confidential by all members of the Committee and the parties to the grievance. The use of recording devices shall be prohibited.

The recommendation of the Committee shall be based on the factual evidence and documentation presented to it. The burden of proof shall rest with the grievant, who must demonstrate that the decision or action being appealed was unfair or discriminatory or that it violates relevant policies and procedures.

Within two weeks of receiving the written grievance, the Chair of the A&S Hearing Committee shall deliver a written report of the Committee’s decision and its recommended resolution to the student, faculty member, program chair, and Dean.

Within one week of receiving the Committee’s report, the Dean shall determine the final disposition of the appeal and communicate his or her decision to student, faculty member, and program chair.

If the Dean’s decision is not acceptable to the student, the student may file a subsequent appeal with the Office of the Provost within five (5) school days of receiving notification of the Dean’s decision. See the Student Handbook for more information.

rev. 4/3/2014