



## Academic Grievance Policy, Procedure and Petition

The moral center of a university is the relationship between teacher and student. The expertise of each faculty member is evaluated by peers in his or her discipline and that peer review forms the basis of the faculty member's moral authority to assign grades. It is the responsibility of the university to protect the integrity this academic evaluation process. At the same time, the University recognizes its responsibility to protect and promote student rights and freedoms in the classroom:

*The professor in the classroom and in conference should encourage free discussion, inquiry, and expression. Student performance should be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards.*

### A. Protection of Freedom of Expression

*Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.*

### B. Protection Against Improper Academic Evaluation

*Students should have protection through orderly procedures against prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation. At the same time, they are responsible for maintaining standards of academic performance established for each course in which they are enrolled (AAUP, 1995; p. 228).*

It is the policy of the College of Liberal Arts & Education that instructors are solely responsible for assessing and evaluating student work. Instructors have the authority to create grading criteria. Nevertheless, students have the right to appeal faculty decisions where they believe they find evidence of capricious academic evaluation.

The instructors' criteria may contain objective standards for grades (i.e., accumulation of points, deductions for absences, etc.). However, the grading of essays and research papers are necessarily based on subjective standards (i.e., quality is judged by the instructor's standard of quality rather than the student's). Other academic evaluations are also based upon faculty judgement, such as thesis or dissertation acceptance, or a decision about the readiness of a student to begin internship experience. **Capricious** academic evaluation is defined only as the following:

1. The assignment of a grade to a particular student on some basis other than performance in the course;

2. The assignment of a grade or evaluation to a particular student by resort to more exacting or demanding standards than were applied to other students in a course or program;
3. The assignment of a grade or evaluation by a substantial departure from the instructor's or program's previously announced standards.

When charges such as these arise, discussion and investigation can bring out the facts to ascertain whether an error occurred. Such procedures in no way dispute the instructor's right to evaluate a student's work. The burden of proof in any grievance rests with the person filing the grievance, and must be met by presenting clear and substantive evidence of capricious evaluation. The following guidelines serve to advise students, faculty, and administration as to the CLAE grade grievance procedure.

## Steps in the Grade Grievance Procedure

A student who disputes an assigned grade must follow the listed procedures in order.

1. The student must discuss the grievance with the faculty member involved. Every effort should be made to resolve the disagreement with the faculty member. The student may seek advice and counsel from the academic advisor or another faculty member about how to approach this discussion.
2. If no agreement can be reached, the student must obtain the CLAE Academic Grievance Petition Form and, following its instructions, file two copies of a written grievance within **30 days** of the beginning of the Fall or Winter term following the term in which the disputed grade was awarded. This written grievance should contain the reasons for the grievance as well as a description of the outcome from Step 1, including all appropriate documentation. The written grievance must be delivered to the Dean's office of the College of Liberal Arts and Education in Briggs 120.
3. The Dean's office will transfer the grievance to the appropriate Department Chair, or designate<sup>1</sup>. The Chair/designate will attempt to facilitate a resolution between the instructor and the student. The Chair will request a written response from the faculty member upon giving the faculty member a complete copy of the grievance materials submitted by the student. Investigation by the department chair typically would entail meeting with the student and with the instructor to review the circumstances and/or materials submitted by the student and the faculty member. Within **thirty (30) days** of receiving the student's written complaint, the Chair/designate will submit his/her recommendation to the Dean's office with copies to the student and the faculty member being grieved.
4. The student may request an appeal to the CLAE Academic Grievance Committee. To **appeal**, the student must notify the Dean's office in writing, within **fifteen (15) days** of the Department Chair's written report.

5. A standing CLAE Academic Grievance Committee composed of faculty, administration, and 2 students will review all formal submissions in the case and may meet with the student and faculty member to review relevant issues. The committee may hold a grievance hearing. There may be a separate meeting with the student and faculty member, unless both parties agree to a joint meeting.

6. The Committee will prepare a written recommendation, which shall be regarded as the **final resolution** of the matter within the college<sup>2</sup>. The written Committee recommendation must be submitted to the Dean within **thirty (30) days** of receiving the student's written appeal. This recommendation will be communicated by letter the student and the faculty member within **fifteen (15) days** of the conclusion of the committee's hearing(s).

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>If the Department Chair is grieved and the department does not have a procedure in place for reviewing grievances against the chair, the Dean selects a faculty member (designate) for the Department.

<sup>2</sup>Because of the faculty's moral accountability and contractual responsibility for academic evaluation, the Grievance Committee may recommend but cannot compel a change of grade.

### Reference

American Association of University Professors (1995). Policy Documents and Reports. Washington, DC: AAUP.



College of Liberal Arts & Education

# Academic Grievance Petition Form

## Grade Grievance Overview

In some instances a student may believe that the final grade received in a particular course is unjustified. In such cases the student may choose to appeal the grade received. In the College of Liberal Arts & Education, students are advised to consult with the instructor concerned prior to beginning the appeals process. All appeals must be filed in a timely manner, within 30 days after the final grade is issued.

**Student Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student Number** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home phone number** \_\_\_\_\_ **Alternate phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

Course	Instructor	Term	Grade

**Before beginning the official grievance process, attempt to meet with the faculty member or program director/chair.**

Date of meeting with faculty member or director/chair: \_\_\_\_\_

The CLAE Academic Grievance Policy describes the steps in a grievance process for an academic evaluation. Please read the policy carefully before proceeding. **To initiate a grievance, file 2 copies of this petition form and the necessary documentation with the CLAE Dean’s office in Briggs 120.** The Dean’s office will maintain the official record of the progress of the grievance.

For a course grade grievance, the documentation should include:

- Cover Letter including description of why/how the grade being grieved
- Course Syllabus
- Copies of examinations and/or materials graded
- Copies of correspondence with the instructor

For other academic evaluation, the documentation should include:

- Relevant information or descriptors from the program manual
- Copies of materials graded
- Copies of correspondence with the instructor

Please Sign: Student Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Academic Grievance Process Checklist

Step	Date	Responsible Party
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 1. Meeting with faculty member		Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 2 Grievance filed with Dean		Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Documentation complete?		Student and Dean's Office
<input type="checkbox"/> Transferred to Chair/Designate		Dean's Office
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 3 Chair's recommendation filed		Dept. Chair/Designate
<input type="checkbox"/> Student and Instructor informed		
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 4 Student Appeal filed with Dean		Student
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 5 Appeal transferred to CLAE Grievance Committee		Dean's Office
<input type="checkbox"/> Committee recommendation filed		Committee Chair
<input type="checkbox"/> Step 6 Committee recommendation mailed		Dean's Office