

Academic Grievance and Grade Appeal Based on Unfair Treatment

The academic grievance process is intended to resolve academic or related differences concerning academic fairness which may arise between a student and a faculty member within a particular course during a single semester/term. The student should use this process to

- Appeal a course grade;
- Exercise his/her rights as defined in the course syllabus, the CSU Student Handbook, university policy, or policies of the University System of Georgia;
- Refute academic dishonesty charges;
- Compel a faculty member to fulfill his/her instructional responsibilities as defined in the CSU Faculty Handbook and published department or college policy; and/or
- Plead for a less severe penalty in case of an acknowledged incident of academic dishonesty.
 - *Institutional policy gives the instructor the prerogative of determining the penalty for academic dishonesty, including the assignment of an F as the course grade. An appeal for a lesser penalty should explain why the penalty is excessive, that it somehow constitutes disparate treatment by the instructor, or how the penalty violates a policy of the institution or the University System of Georgia.*

This process is not available to challenge university policy; although an alleged improper application of policy may be considered

Students are first encouraged to seek an informal resolution by speaking with those closest to the problem - the faculty member, department chair, and/or dean of the college in which the course was offered. If you are uncomfortable pursuing this route, or if it does not prove fruitful, you may seek mediation or file a formal grievance.

Formal Process

The student commences a grievance by completing the [Grade Appeal and Academic Grievance Form](#). The grievance will be routed to the chairperson who oversees the course involved in the appeal. If the chairperson is unavailable within three university working days, or if the faculty member named in the grievance is a department chairperson, the grievance will go to the chairperson's dean for review. If a dean is the faculty member named in the grievance, the grievance will go to the Office of the Provost for review. The appropriate recipient of the grievance is hereafter referred to as The Reviewer. Communications with the student will be sent via the student's CSU email address unless the student has submitted a written request for an alternative form of contact.

Unless an extension is approved by the dean of the appropriate college or the Provost, the grievance should be submitted by the student not more than ten university working days after the start of the term immediately following the term in which the course was taken.

Ordinarily, The Reviewer will acknowledge receipt of a written grievance and notify the faculty member of the grievance within three university working days of its receipt. The faculty member named in the grievance must provide a written response to the charges within ten university working days of the date on which the grievance was submitted. The Reviewer will ordinarily send a decision to the student not more than twenty university working days after the grievance was filed; when more time is required, The Reviewer will notify the principals within the 20-day deadline that an extension is required. Upon a request by the instructor named in the grievance, The Reviewer may suspend the process to allow time for the principals (student and faculty) to discuss the dispute or participate in mediation.

The Reviewer may require the student and/or the faculty member to appear to discuss the case before rendering a decision. Either principal may also request a meeting with The Reviewer to discuss the grievance before a decision is reached.

The Reviewer will write a decision that articulates the relevant facts of the case and the outcome. The document must include: Specific Charges, Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Actions To Be Taken. Decisions made by the faculty and chair are limited to course specific outcomes. Possible outcomes, dependent on the types of grievance submitted, at the university administrative level include the following:

- An appropriate change in grade
- Referral - may include referral to agencies or individuals for specific evaluation, treatment, assistance or action.
- Expulsion - permanent forced withdrawal from the University
- Suspension - forced withdrawal from the University for a specified period of time.
- Forced withdrawal from the course and/or department within which the offense occurred, either with or without credit for the course as may be adjudged
- Reprimand - an admonition which may be either verbal or written
- Restitution - compensation to the person or University body whose property rights have been violated by the offender
- Probation - placing the student under restrictions for a specified period of time

Copies of the appeal decision will be sent to the principals, the chairperson, the dean, and the Office of the Provost. When it has been determined that a student is guilty of multiple incidents of academic dishonesty, the Office of the Provost will initiate an administrative review that may result in additional sanctions against the student.

A decision by a department chair may be appealed to the appropriate dean. A dean's decision may be appealed to the Provost. Filing an appeal of a decision represents an opportunity to rectify a failing that occurred within the appeal review. Therefore, the filing of an appeal must focus on: (1) a request to introduce new and compelling evidence which was not available at the time of a hearing and which could apparently result in a different final decision, (2) the documentable failure of the decision to comply with specific Columbus State University or University System of Georgia policies, or (3) the documentable error of facts substantial enough to apparently result in a different final decision. All decision appeals must be made in writing and received by the appropriate party not more than 5 university working days after the decision was issued. The burden of proof falls on the principal making the appeal.

[View the Grievance Process FAQ](#)