

Student Academic Grievance Resolution Procedures

The Academic Grievance policy protects student freedom of expression in the classroom and protects each student from improper, arbitrary, or capricious academic evaluation as evidenced by the student's final course grade.

Conditions

A student filing an academic grievance:

1. Cannot grieve any disciplinary action or proceeding.
2. Cannot grieve federal and state laws, rules, and regulations, in addition to policies, regulations, and procedures adopted by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.
3. Shall use Policy 235 Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment for grievances pertaining to any discrimination, including sexual discrimination or discrimination based upon disability.

Academic Grievance Defined

An academic grievance shall refer to a claim by a student that an instructor:

1. Assigned a specific grade that is the result of an arbitrary application of otherwise valid standards of academic evaluation, or
2. Employed arbitrary standards in evaluating the academic progress of the student, or
3. Took an improper action or made a decision which adversely affects the student's academic standing in an arbitrary or capricious manner, or
4. Reached a clearly erroneous decision or took a clearly erroneous action that adversely affects the student's academic standing.

Summary

A student with an academic complaint shall follow the procedures and timelines listed below and document the informal academic resolution steps taken on the **Student Academic Grievance Petition form (forms.lowercolumbia.edu/forms/student-academic-grievance-petition)** which is available in the office of the Vice President of Student Services or online at forms.lowercolumbia.edu/forms/student-academic-grievance-petition. The full text of the Student Academic Grievance Procedure follows below.

If the informal academic grievance resolution process is unsuccessful, the formal resolution process must be initiated no later than fifteen (15) academic calendar days from the start of the subsequent academic quarter, excluding summer quarter.

Informal Student Academic Grievance Resolution Procedures

Step One: Meet with Faculty Member

1. Use this informal academic resolution procedure as a first step in all academic complaints.
2. Meet with the instructor of the class to attempt resolving the dispute promptly and fairly during the quarter in which a class is being taken and/or upon receipt of the grade for the course.
3. Meet with the instructor who assigned the grade, and use the meeting to clarify the perceived problem and request specific action designed to resolve it.
4. Take no further action if the result of the meeting is acceptable.

Step Two: Meet with the Dean

1. If there is no resolution at step one, the student meets with the appropriate division Dean.
2. At that meeting, the Dean will attempt to find a resolution to the academic complaint.
3. Take no further action if the result of the meeting is acceptable.

Step Three: Facilitator Assigned

1. If there is no resolution at step two, the Dean notifies the Vice President of Student Services of the pending academic grievance.
2. The Vice President of Student Services verifies all informal academic resolution steps have been taken and assigns a Facilitator to assist the student through the formal academic resolution process.

Formal Student Academic Grievance Resolution Procedures

Step One: Meeting with The Facilitator

1. The Facilitator helps the student through the entire academic grievance process.
2. The Facilitator meets with the student to assist the student in understanding the academic grievance procedure and timelines.

3. The Facilitator helps the student prepare a written academic grievance to begin the formal academic grievance procedure.
 - a. The student's written academic grievance must be submitted to the Facilitator within fifteen (15) academic calendar days of the initiation of the formal academic grievance.
 - b. The student's written academic grievance indicates the grade received and the reason for the academic grievance, specifying all necessary performance scores and attendance data as appropriate.
 - c. The student's written academic grievance provides a summary of actions taken by the student to resolve the academic grievance prior to meeting with the Facilitator.
 - d. The student's written academic grievance provides a possible solution as proposed by the student.
4. The Facilitator and student must submit the student's written academic grievance to the Vice President of Student Services to begin the formal resolution process within the first fifteen (15) academic calendar days of the subsequent academic quarter the grieved grade was assigned, excluding summer quarter.
5. Within three (3) days of receipt of the Student Academic Grievance Petition, the Vice President of Student Services informs the faculty member and the appropriate division Dean that a formal academic grievance has been filed and the name of the Facilitator.
6. The Facilitator provides the faculty member with a copy of the student's written academic grievance.
7. The faculty member submits to the Facilitator a written response to the academic grievance within ten (10) academic calendar days of receipt of the student's written academic grievance.
8. The Facilitator provides a copy of the faculty member's written response and any additional documentation provided by the faculty member to the appropriate division Dean and the Vice President of Student Services upon receipt from the faculty member.

Step Two: Grievance Meeting with Faculty Member and Division Dean

1. The Division Dean:
 - a. Attempts to resolve the problem within ten (10) academic calendar days of notification from the Facilitator by arranging a meeting with the student, the faculty member, the facilitator, and the dean to bring about a resolution satisfactory to all parties.
2. The Facilitator informs the Vice President of Student Services of the outcome of the meeting.

3. The Vice President of Student Services:
 - a. Determines if the content and/or procedure merit a formal student academic grievance meeting.
 - b. If the student's written academic grievance moves to a meeting, the Vice President of Student Services directs the chair of the Academic Standards Committee to convene an academic grievance meeting.

Withdrawal of Grievance

Having filed an academic grievance, a student:

1. May officially withdraw the grievance in writing to the Facilitator, who informs the Vice President of Student Services, who informs the Academic Standards Committee Chairperson, who cancels any steps remaining in the academic grievance process.
2. Failing to appear without prior notification for scheduled proceeding effects a withdrawal of the academic grievance.

Formal Student Academic Grievance Meeting Procedures

Step One: Preliminary Committee Meeting

1. The Preliminary Committee Meeting provides background information and ensures that committee members understand the student's written academic grievance and procedures to be followed at the Student Academic Grievance Meeting.
2. The Chair:
 - a. Establishes the time and place of the meeting.
 - b. Directs the committee secretary to ensure that the student and the faculty member receive copies of the student's written academic grievance, the faculty member's written response, and the report from the dean.
 - c. Schedules a Preliminary Committee Meeting of the Academic Standards Committee within ten (10) academic calendar days of being directed to convene the Formal Academic Grievance Meeting.
 - d. Ensures through the Facilitator that, if there are questions the committee wants clarified by the student and/or faculty, the student and/or faculty have a chance to respond in writing prior to the Formal Academic Grievance Meeting.
3. The Facilitator:
 - a. Provides the documentation that then becomes the complete academic grievance file.
 - b. Attends this meeting and provides a step-by-step briefing of the student's academic grievance procedure.

4. The Secretary:
 - a. Supplies each committee member with a copy of the complete academic grievance file, which is confidential.
 - b. Collects the file at the end of the meeting.
 - c. Reading copies will be made available to committee members in the Office of the Vice President of Student Services or through other secure methods.
5. All committee members:
 - a. Are expected to attend all meetings related to the academic grievance.
 - i. A quorum of the members must be present to proceed.
 - ii. If a member cannot attend all meetings or has a conflict of interest, that department sends a surrogate.
 1. The surrogate becomes the department representative for the academic grievance meetings and any subsequent student appeal meetings.
 2. The surrogate is defined as someone who has read and understands the student academic grievance file.
 - b. Are informed of the nature of the formal academic grievance. Questions may be prepared for the Academic Grievance Meeting.
 - c. Review the procedures used in the assignment of the grade but not the actual grade assigned.

Step Two: Student Academic Grievance Meeting

1. The Formal Student Academic Grievance Meeting is held within five (5) academic calendar days of the Preliminary Committee Meeting at a time that considers the needs of the student, faculty member, facilitator, and the committee members.
2. The meeting is a closed meeting and is not considered a formal hearing. The proceedings of the student initiated academic grievance remain closed unless all parties agree to an open proceeding. No recording of the proceeding is allowed.
3. Attending the meeting are: all members or surrogates of the Academic Standards Committee who were present at the Preliminary Committee meeting, Facilitator, student, faculty member concerned (if the faculty member chooses to attend), any supporting witnesses to the event being grieved as requested by the student, the faculty member, or the committee, and any additional people called to assist the committee in reaching a prompt, fair resolution of the academic grievance, will also attend during their testimony.
4. The committee secretary provides each committee member with a copy of the complete academic grievance file. The files are returned to the secretary at the conclusion of the meeting.
5. All committee members who attended the preliminary committee meeting are to attend this meeting.
6. The Facilitator updates the committee on the academic grievance and remains to assist the student through the process.
7. The student is invited in to explain the academic grievance. The committee may ask questions for clarification. Upon completion of the question and answer period, the student and facilitator are excused.

8. The faculty member [if present] is invited in to respond to the student's academic grievance. The committee may ask questions for clarification. Upon completion of the question and answer period, the faculty member is excused.

Step Three: Academic Grievance Decision

1. After the committee has heard the academic grievance, it arrives at a decision prior to adjournment.
2. Each member of the committee votes as the representative of their area. The chair votes as the representative of their department.
3. The vote is by secret ballot.
4. A decision passes by a simple majority vote of members present.
5. A tie vote means the same number of members has voted in the affirmative as in the negative. Since a majority vote is required to pass a motion, an equal or tie vote means that because it failed to receive a majority vote the motion is lost [Sturgis 128].
6. The Vice President of Student Services writes the letter informing the student and the faculty member of the committee's decision within five (5) academic calendar days of the decision.
7. Copies of the decision are provided to the student, named faculty member, Academic Standards Committee Secretary, Facilitator, Department Chair, Division Dean, Vice President of Student Services, and Vice President of Instruction.

Step Four: Academic Grievance Solution

When the committee finds in favor of the student:

1. In accordance with the LCC Faculty Contract: Faculty Rights Section; faculty members of the Academic Standards Committee consult with the instructor of record and determine a grade.
2. Subsequently, the Chair acting as the representative of the faculty members of the Academic Standards Committee directs the Registration Office to change the grade on the student's transcript.
3. The Registrar sends the student an updated transcript.

Step Five: Student Appeal of Committee Decision

1. Students may not appeal a decision of the committee by resubmitting a Student Academic Grievance Petition form without additional new information that may affect the previous decision.

Step Six: Student Appeal of Due Process

1. A student with an appeal of due process:
 - a. Appeals the due process of the committee to the Vice President of Instruction within five (5) academic calendar days of receiving the letter from the Vice President of Student Services.
 - b. Informs the Vice President of Student Services of the decision to appeal.
 - c. Prepares a written appeal to the Vice President of Instruction stating why the decision of the Academic Standards Committee did not provide due process during the academic grievance meeting.
2. The Facilitator assists the student through the appeal process.
3. The Vice President of Student Services:
 - a. Informs the previously assigned Facilitator who assists the student through the appeal process.
 - b. Informs the Vice President of Instruction of the appeal and provides the Vice President with a copy of the student's academic grievance file.
 - c. Acts as the liaison between the Vice President of Instruction and the Academic Standards Committee.
 - d. Reviews the Academic Grievance Meeting proceedings to ensure that the student received due process through the academic grievance proceedings.
4. The Vice President of Instruction determines whether due process has been met and so informs the Vice President of Student Services. If the Vice President of Instruction determines due process has not been met, the Vice President of Instruction informs the Vice President of Student Services, who informs the chair of the Academic Standards Committee.
5. The chair reconvenes the committee within ten (10) days of being informed that due process has not been met.
6. The committee reviews the academic grievance and takes the appropriate steps to correct the due process deficiencies.
7. The Vice President of Instruction reviews the actions of the committee.
8. The Vice President of Student Services informs the student and the faculty member of the decision within five (5) academic calendar days.
9. Copies of the decision are provided to the student, named faculty member, Academic Standards Committee, Facilitator, Department Chair, Division Dean, Vice President of Student Services, and Vice President of Instruction.
10. Upon resolution of student's right to due process, no further student appeal within the college is provided.