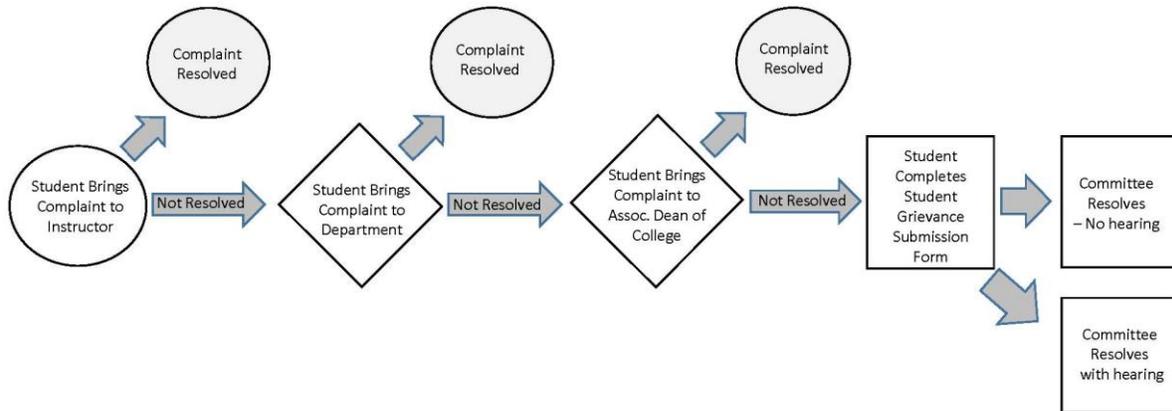


Auburn University  
Student Academic Grievance Policy



## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this procedure shall be to resolve academic grievances of students, which result from actions of faculty or administration. This resolution should be achieved at the lowest level and in the most equitable way possible. The burden of proof rests with the student complainant who is filing the academic grievance against the faculty/administrator respondent.
- 1.2. The Student Academic Grievance Committee has the responsibility to evaluate each case carefully and make specific recommendations, in accordance with University policies and the Faculty Handbook, to redress any grievances to the Office of the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs

## 2. Steps Toward Redress—Informal Process

- 2.1. When a student believes he or she has an academic grievance, he or she should first seek to resolve that grievance by discussions with the faculty member or administrator involved. If these discussions are not satisfactory, the complaint should be taken to the next highest level listed in the following procedure. If the grievance arises from a classroom situation, the student should take the following steps in seeking redress.
  - 2.1.1. The student should consult with the faculty member involved, in person or by written contact, no later than within the **first five working days** of the semester following that in which the grievance occurs.
  - 2.1.2. If a resolution to the problem is not achieved, the student should meet with the faculty member's department chair/head to discuss the grievance. The chair/head should attempt to work with the student and the faculty member to resolve the grievance. If the grievance arose in a course that is not administered by a traditional academic department, the student should meet with the course coordinator in lieu of the department chair/head.
  - 2.1.3. If the student is still not satisfied that a fair and equitable solution has been found, he or she should take the grievance to the academic associate dean of the respondent's school or college (for undergraduate students). The academic associate dean should work with the student and faculty member to resolve the grievance. Graduate students must concurrently contact the academic dean of the respondent's school or college and the dean of the graduate school. If the grievance arose in a course that is not administered by a traditional academic department, the student

should meet with the course coordinator's supervisor in lieu of the college/school associate dean.

- 2.2. No faculty member or administrator shall be allowed to delay the resolution of a grievance by failing to hold a consultation with a student within a reasonable length of time of the initial request. Normally such consultation should occur within two weeks after the student request unless bona fide reasons such as illness, personal emergency or campus absence for professional reasons make this time limit unreasonable. If a faculty member is unable to meet with a student during the summer to resolve a spring semester issue, the process may be initiated at the beginning of the fall semester.
- 2.3. In some instances when the personalities or problems involved would make starting at the lowest level of the complaint too awkward or embarrassing, the student may initiate a complaint at the next higher level listed, e.g., for a faculty member within an academic department, the department's head or chair.
- 2.4. If the informal process described in steps 2.1.1-2.1.3 does not produce resolution the student should follow the steps of the formal grievance process described below.

### 3. The Formal Student Academic Grievance Process and Kinds of Grievances

- 3.1. The student should read this entire "Student Academic Grievance Policy" carefully before beginning the formal grievance process.
- 3.2. The Committee chair must be notified of the filing of a grievance no later than the 30<sup>th</sup> class day of the semester following that in which the grievance occurred.
- 3.3. Types of Grievances
  - 3.3.1. Allegations that university policies and procedures have been improperly applied in specific instances may be brought forward through the formal Student Academic Grievance process. These include, but are not limited to,
    - 3.3.1.1. practices that contradict the written course syllabus,
    - 3.3.1.2. errors in grading,
    - 3.3.1.3. failure of a faculty member to provide timely graded feedback on assigned work, and
    - 3.3.1.4. faculty behavior that is capricious, intimidating, or discriminatory.
  - 3.3.2. Actions that are related to the exercise of academic freedom are not appropriate grounds for a formal Student Academic Grievance. Such actions may include differences in grading by faculty members teaching separate sections of the same course, personal habits of the faculty member, and fine distinctions between any two grades, which may be appealed only to the faculty member.
  - 3.3.3. Allegations of sexual harassment or discriminatory treatment as covered by federal law should be directed to the AA/EEO/Title IX Coordinator.

### 4. Procedures Filing a Grievance

- 4.1. Formal Grievances must be filed in writing, using the online reporting form, with the Committee chair no later than the 30<sup>th</sup> class day of the semester following that in which the grievance occurred.
- 4.2. Complainants (students) and respondents (faculty / instructors) are encouraged to communicate and cooperate with the chair of the Student Academic Grievance Committee regarding the preparation of support materials related to the allegations of academic grievance.
- 4.3. At no time (outside of the formal hearing process) should any person directly or indirectly

involved in the academic grievance case communicate with any of the voting or alternate members (with the exception of the chair) of the Committee about the grievance.

## 5. Pre-hearing Review

- 5.1. Within five (5) business days of receipt of the stated grievance, the chair will inform the faculty member that a grievance has been filed. The faculty member will then have 10 business days to submit a written response using the online reporting system.
- 5.2. The only persons present at reviews of complainant and respondent academic grievance materials by this Committee shall be Committee members.
- 5.3. The Committee, as a whole, shall arrange for a swift and comprehensive review of the grievance and may request from the parties involved and from resource persons additional information.
- 5.4. The Committee shall then decide, on the basis of this evidence, whether to
  - a. dismiss the case
  - b. seek additional information from the complainant and the respondent, or
  - c. proceed to a hearing. If the Committee determines a hearing is appropriate, the Committee must further decide whether it will accept written statements in lieu of personal appearances or not.
- 5.5. If the Committee decides that there are not sufficient grounds to hear a case and closes the case, it shall convey its decision as a recommendation to the Provost's Office, who will review the recommendation and transmit the grievance outcome to the student, the instructor, the instructor's supervisor, and the instructor's dean.
  - 5.5.1. As a closed case, neither the Committee nor the Provost's Office is obligated to provide faculty responses to the complainant.

## 6. The Hearing Process

- 6.1. If the Committee determines that the case merits further consideration in the form of a hearing, the parties involved shall be informed in writing at least five (5) business days prior to the committee meeting and shall be advised of the scheduled time and place of the hearing. Complainants will access the Respondent's materials using the online reporting system. Respondents will access the Complainant's materials using the online reporting system.
- 6.2. At the hearing, the complainant, respondent, and material witnesses may testify and may be questioned by the opposite party and Committee members. Only evidence previously presented to the committee and presented in the hearing may be considered in the final judgment.
- 6.3. Written statements by material witnesses in lieu of personal appearance will not be allowed except under justifiable circumstances, to be determined by the Committee (see 5.4c).
- 6.4. Conducting a Hearing
  - 6.4.1. Complainant will state the grievance(s) and introduce as evidence any documentation he/she feels supports his/her claim. Testimony may be questioned by respondents and Committee members.
  - 6.4.2. Respondent will state the response to the charges and introduce as evidence any documentation he/she feels supports his/her counterclaim. Testimony may be questioned by complainants and committee members.

- 6.4.3. Any material witnesses the complainant wishes to introduce to give verbal testimony may be presented. Testimony may be questioned by complainants, respondents, and Committee members.
  - 6.4.4. Any material witnesses the respondent wishes to introduce to give verbal testimony may be presented. Testimony may be questioned by respondents, complainants, and Committee members.
  - 6.4.5. Complainants and respondents may make additional comments and may be questioned by complainants, respondents, and Committee members.
  - 6.4.6. All parties except the Committee will be dismissed.
  - 6.4.7. The Committee will develop recommendations and transmit said recommendations to the Provost's Office.
  - 6.4.8. A record of the hearing, tape recorded or otherwise preserved, shall be preserved for reference and may be reviewed until the case has been finally resolved. However, Committee deliberations will not be subject to this requirement.
  - 6.4.9. Proceedings shall be conducted in accordance with the AAUP's Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students proposed in 1967 and revised and updated in 1992. The AAUP's Statement on Graduate Students, which was adopted in 2000, will serve as an additional reference source for complainants who are graduate students.
  - 6.4.10. The only persons present at full academic grievance hearings of this Committee shall be committee members, the complainant and the respondent(s), and material witnesses actually testifying before the Committee.
- 6.5. Judgment
- 6.5.1. Committee members shall arrive at a judgment in consultation among themselves after the parties have been dismissed. Only members of the committee who have been present during all the meetings and who have heard all testimony relating to the alleged grievance may vote on the case.
  - 6.5.2. A majority vote of such qualified members shall constitute a judgment.
    - 6.5.2.1. A decision of the Committee relating to redress of a particular case is final. A course of action deemed appropriate by the Committee will be recommended.
    - 6.5.2.2. The Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs has the power to veto the proposed course of action. However, in the case of such veto, the case must be returned promptly to the committee for further consideration.
  - 6.5.3. The Provost's Office should transmit only the final decisions to the appropriate persons. The results of the intermediate steps in decision-making process outlined under 6.5. should not be reported and should remain confidential to the committee.
  - 6.5.4. If redress requires a policy change, or if a policy change appears advisable or necessary, the committee shall make such a recommendation to the Executive Committee of the University Senate, or President of the University, as appropriate.
  - 6.5.5. Should any person, whether directly involved in a complaint or not, allegedly suffer some disadvantages, discrimination, or reprisal as the direct or indirect result of any complaint, testimony, or statement in connection with committee action, the committee shall, upon request or upon its own motion, exercise original jurisdiction and take all necessary steps to verify the facts and render justice.

## 7. University Student Academic Grievance Committee

## 7.1. Membership

7.1.1. There shall be nine (9) voting members of the Committee to be appointed by the President of the University as follows:

- 7.1.1.1. Three (3) students [two (2) undergraduate students and one (1) graduate student] two (2) alternates [one (1) undergraduate and one (1) graduate alternate], to be recommended to the University President under procedures established by the Student Government Association. Not more than one (1) of the voting members may be a graduate student. Undergraduate students serving on this Committee must be regularly enrolled students in good standing and must have attained sophomore ranking at the time of appointment. Graduate students must have been admitted to an authorized advanced degree or certificate program. Student members shall be appointed in May of each year and serve a one (1) year term. Their terms of service shall begin with the summer semester each year and continue through the spring semester.
- 7.1.1.2. Four (4) full-time faculty members and one (1) alternate to be recommended by the Rules Committee of the University Senate. Department heads or department chairs and members of the administrative faculty shall not be names to those positions. Faculty members shall serve three (3) year terms, and their appointments shall be arranged so that at least one (1) faculty member and not more than two (2) faculty members will be replaced each year. Their terms of service shall start in fall semester of the year of their appointments. The chair of the Committee shall be appointed from among these faculty members nominated by the Senate Rules Committee in consultation with the President of the University. No person shall serve as the chair for more than three (3) years.
- 7.1.1.3. One (1) full-time member of the Administration (i.e., central administration, deans, associate deans, or assistant deans) and one (1) alternate to be appointed by the President.
- 7.1.1.4. One (1) representative of the Administrative and Professional employee group, who is currently teaching or has taught a class at AU within the past two years, and one (1) alternate, who shall meet the same requirements, to be recommended by the Nominations and Elections Committee of the Administration and Professional Assembly, in consultation with the Steering Committee of the University Senate. The Administrative and Professional representative shall serve a three (3) year term. The term of service shall start in the fall semester of the year of the appointment.

7.1.2. Five (5) voting members, including a minimum of three faculty members, shall constitute a quorum. Decisions shall be reached by a majority of those present and voting.

7.1.3. The duties of the chair of the Committee shall include:

- 7.1.3.1. Arranging for appropriate times and places for Committee meetings and hearings;
- 7.1.3.2. Informing, in writing, those individuals listed in 6.2 of the times and places of Committee hearings that they are requested to attend, and supplying them with a statement of alleged grievances;
- 7.1.3.3. Informing those listed in 6.2 that a grievance is pending;
- 7.1.3.4. Securing and distributing to the Committee written materials or other documentation appropriate for its consideration;
- 7.1.3.5. Arranging for the recording of Committee proceedings;

- 7.1.3.6. Maintaining Committee records that are to be kept on file according to the guidelines established by the University Archivist in the Office of the Provost/ Vice President for Academic Affairs; and
- 7.1.3.7. Informing, in writing, the Provost's Office of the recommendations of the Committee.
- 7.1.4. Any member of the Committee may at any time disqualify himself of herself from consideration of any given case or cases because of conflict of interest.
  - 7.1.4.1. Should a Committee member be unable to hear a particular case, for any reason, another member of the Committee shall be appointed by the chair to serve for the course of the particular grievance.
- 7.1.5. Either party to the hearing may request of the chair in writing that any member or members of the Committee be excluded from consideration of a case. Such a request must be for cause and be brought to the chair's attention as the first step in the hearing.

## 8. Revisions in the Procedures

During the spring semester of each year, the committee may propose revisions of these procedures which will become effective upon ratification by the Student Senate, University Senate, and the President of the University.

# Student Academic Grievance Submission Form

Student Name:

Student Banner Number:

Student GID:

What faculty/instructor/administrator decision are you concerned about ?:

Which Auburn University policies or student rights were allegedly violated?:

Which faculty/instructor/administration made this decision that concerns you ?:

If the decision is related to a course grade, provide the following information:

Course Prefix:

Course number:

Section number:

Term in which the incident occurred:

Instructor's Name:

Instructor's Department

Instructor's E-mail address:

Date of the Decision (or the date you became aware of it):

What specific action are you seeking?

## Informal Resolution Attempts

1. Meeting with faculty/instructor/administrator Respondent:

Date:

Outcome:

2. Meeting with faculty/instructor/administrator Respondent's Supervisor:

Date:

Outcome:

3. Meeting with faculty/instructor/administrator Respondent's Dean:

Date:

Outcome:

## Formal Grievance Information

1. Witnesses in support of your concern :

Name:

GID:

2. Please upload documents in support of your grievance:
3. Please provide a concise summary of the nature of your grievance (250 words maximum).

## Formal Grievance Procedure Outcome

1. Resolution by Committee Chair Intervention. Y N
2. Dismissal by Committee after review of documents. Y N
3. Outcome of full Grievance Hearing:

4. Resolution conveyed to parties involved:

Date: