

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, University of Houston

College-Level Grievance Policy and Appeal Procedure

CLASS Academic Grievance Policy

In the normal conduct of education at the University of Houston, justifiable grievances may arise concerning the violation of university, college, or department academic policies or procedures. CLASS is committed to resolving these grievances in a fair, orderly, and expeditious manner. To that end, the college has established informal and formal procedures beginning at the department level for settling academic grievances.

An academic grievance refers to an action taken against a student by a member of the faculty (including part-time instructors and teaching assistants), staff, or administration that either violates a university, college, or department academic policy or procedure or prejudicially treats the student on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, handicap, veteran status, or any other nonacademic status.

Because assigning a grade or evaluating a student's work performance involves the faculty's professional judgment and is an integral part of the faculty's teaching responsibilities, disagreement with an instructor concerning a grade or evaluation per se is not a justifiable grievance to be considered under this policy unless factors such as those mentioned in the previous paragraph can be shown to have affected that grade or evaluation. Cases involving nonacademic status categories (noted above) will be referred to the UH Office of Equal Opportunity Services. [<http://www.uh.edu/equal-opportunity/>]

Every effort shall be made by a graduate student and the faculty member(s) involved to settle their differences amicably and informally to redress a grievance. Should the difference not be resolved informally, the student may initiate a formal grievance with the department chair according to departmental policies and procedures.

In the event that the grievant or respondent is unsatisfied with the decision at the departmental level, that party may file an appeal with the Office of the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, according to established college procedures. This must be done within 10 working days of the final determination of the grievance at the departmental level. The College procedures for graduate academic grievances can be found in detail below.

In the event that the grievant or respondent is unsatisfied with the outcome of the appeal at the college level, the party may file an appeal seeking university-level review according to established procedures as outlined in the Graduate Catalog.

Procedure for Grievance Appeal

Student grievances must begin at the level of a student's department or program, following departmental or program policies and procedures. In the event that a resolution of a

student grievance at the department or program level is not possible or is not satisfactory to the parties, the decision on the grievance may be appealed to the College, as follows:

1. Appeal to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies

The grievant may submit an appeal to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies of the College for a decision. The grievant should submit a written appeal stating his/her complaint and including the department chair's or director's written decision to the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies within 10 working days* of the final departmental or program decision. The documentation in the complaint should state (a) the student's name and PeopleSoft ID number (b) when he/she discovered the issue being grieved, (c) what issue is (or issues are) being grieved and the evidence to support the grievance, (d) the desired resolution, (e) a valid email address and postal address to which written communication may be sent. The grievant may include in his or her notice of appeal copies of any documentation he or she considers germane, but shall retain possession of the originals.

The associate dean shall review all materials submitted by the grievant and also request and review information from the relevant faculty member(s) or administrator(s) in the department or program, as appropriate. The associate dean may suggest to the parties informal solutions that might resolve the matter without resort to a formal procedure. If all parties agree in writing to this informal resolution, the associate dean shall notify both parties in writing that no further action is being taken.

If the associate dean does not resolve the matter informally, as described above, he or she shall undertake a formal review and make a determination within 10 working days of the receipt of the appeal. The determination shall be communicated in writing to both the grievant and the chair or director of the department or program. The grievance will be considered completed at this point, unless further appeal is requested as described below.

2. College Grievance Committee Review

If the grievant, involved faculty member, or department is not satisfied with the decision of the Associate Dean in step 1 (above), that party, within five working days of the Associate Dean's decision, may request that the grievance be referred to a college grievance committee for consideration. The request for referral to the college grievance committee should be submitted in writing to the Dean of the college.

As soon as possible but within 10 working days of receiving the notice from the student grievant, the Dean shall refer the appeal to the CLASS Grievance Committee. The Grievance Committee shall operate as specified in the College Bylaws. For the purposes of hearing the graduate grievance, the CLASS Grievance Committee will designate three of its current members, with the addition of two (2) current CLASS graduate students, to serve as a Grievance Panel (hereafter "the Panel") to review the grievance. The Panel shall not include any faculty member or graduate student from the involved department or the department of the student who filed the grievance. The Panel may work by its own established procedure, as guided by the chair of the college Grievance Committee.

Once the Panel is constituted, the members shall review all written materials submitted by

all involved parties and may, at its own discretion, request to hear the parties in person. All members of the Panel must meet at least once to discuss the appeal and then make a recommendation to the Dean regarding the outcome of the appeal. The recommendation may be to uphold the decision of the Associate Dean for Graduate Studies or to recommend a specific alternative resolution.

The Panel shall send its recommendation in writing to the Dean of the College within 15 working days of their designation as members of the Hearing Panel, or within 20 working days, if part of that time period falls within the break between semesters or during the summer. The Dean shall make a final decision, taking into consideration the recommendation of the Panel, within five working days from the date of the recommendation from the Panel.

The Dean shall inform all parties of a decision in writing within five working days of the Panel's recommendations. The Dean's decision shall be the final action at the college level.

The Dean's decision may be appealed further to the Graduate School as specified in university procedures. These procedures can be found online in the Policies section of the University of Houston Graduate Catalog.

*For the purposes of this document, a working day is defined as a day the University of Houston is open (excluding Saturdays) as posted in the university calendar.