

## **College of Liberal Arts Dean's Office procedure for responding to academic complaints**

(Undergraduate students only. Graduate students should be referred to the Dean of the Graduate School)

Upon receiving an academic complaint from a student involving grading for a course, the Associate Dean for Curriculum and Students will determine whether the student is following the university's Academic Complaint Procedures (Rule 104). The associate dean will forward a copy of the procedure or the following link to the student. (<http://www.registrar.wsu.edu/Registrar/Apps/AcadRegs.ASPX>)

If the student presents a grade appeal to the associate dean after discussing the complaint with the instructor and receiving a decision from both the instructor and the department chair (that is, the student is following the Academic Complaint Procedures), the associate dean will ask the student to present the following materials to support the consideration of the appeal:

- A written appeal specifying the nature of the grievance, the faculty member involved, and the class title and number (along with the semester and year when the course was taken). According to the Academic Complaint Procedures, "The written statement should describe the complaint, indicate how it affects the individual or unit, and include the remedy sought from the dean." The student must submit the written appeal "within 20 business days of the chair's decision."
- *Copies* (student should retain all originals) of the following: 1. The course syllabus, 2. All course assignments (both the instructions/exams and the student's answer sets) with instructor's grades, and 3. All written/email communication between the student and the course instructor and department chair, including the decisions of the instructor and department chair with regard to the student's complaint.

Under the Academic Complaint Procedures, the associate dean has 20 business days to review the student's written appeal, along with supporting materials, and render a decision. The associate dean will notify the student, in writing, of the decision and will forward the decision to the course instructor and department chair. A record of the associate dean's decision and the materials provided by the student in conjunction with an academic complaint will be filed at the College of Liberal Arts Dean's Office in accord with university records regulations.

The associate dean cannot change a grade for a course. If the associate dean determines that a change of grade might be warranted, then the associate dean will refer the appeal to the university's Academic Grade Appeals Board. See the following link for a description of the composition and the role of the board: <http://president.wsu.edu/office/presidential-committees/academic-grade-appeals-board.html>

If the associate dean denies the appeal, then the student's only recourse is to discuss the complaint with the university ombudsman who will likewise render a judgment. A student cannot take an appeal to the Grade Appeals Board directly.

It is the student's responsibility to gather supporting evidence for consideration of the appeal at the Dean's level. Likewise, the burden of proof lies with the student, since the student is the one bringing forth the complaint. The associate dean will refer cases to the Grade Appeals Board when the preponderance of evidence suggests that a grade was rendered unfairly or in a biased fashion. The Academic Complaint Procedures specify that the Grade Appeals Board will recommend a grade change to the Registrar's Office "should the majority of the University Grade Appeals Board subcommittee determine that the evaluation of the student's work in a course was not made solely on the basis of a professional and ethical judgment of a student's academic performance." The decision of the Board is final.

Students should supply a postal service mailing address and an email address when submitting an academic complaint packet.

Student grade appeals to the College of Liberal Arts Dean's Office, along with required supporting documentation, should be submitted to the following (in person or through U.S. postal service delivery):

**Associate Dean for Curriculum and Students  
College of Liberal Arts  
Thompson Hall 309  
Box 642630  
Washington State University  
Pullman, WA 99164-2630**