Graduate Student Grievance Procedure

These procedures have been developed for students who wish to appeal an academic matter, including final course grades, comprehensive or preliminary exam results, or dismissals. Appeals beyond the department may go to the Vice Dean for Graduate Affairs and the CLA Graduate Committee and then to the Graduate School level (see “Academic Appeals to the Graduate Board”).

Procedures for Appealing Academic Matters

Students should first attempt to resolve academic matters in which they feel they have been unfairly treated through communication with the instructor, advisor, and/or Graduate Director. These attempts should be initiated within twenty (20) class days* from the time at which the student was initially notified of the action being grieved (e.g., receipt of a final course grade, preliminary exam results, academic dismissal from program).

If a student wishes to file a formal grievance, he or she must do so within forty (40) class days, regardless of the status of the informal attempts at resolution.

Initiating the Appeal

A student must initiate the formal grievance procedure at the department level within forty (40) class days from the time the student was initially notified of the action being grieved. To file a formal appeal, the student should submit a signed, written statement to the department’s chairperson or, if that person is involved in the grievance, to the Graduate Director. The statement should include the following:

- Contact information (name, TUid, address, phone number)
- A thorough statement of the specific action being grieved along with the student’s understanding of the rule, policy, or practice that was violated
- Supporting documentation
- A description of efforts at resolution
- The remedy being sought

Department Level

Upon receipt of the statement and supporting evidence, the Chairperson or Graduate Director will, when possible, appoint a committee of three department graduate faculty, with one member designated as the Appeals Officer who will chair the committee. The committee members cannot be a party to the dispute, and must act to ensure confidentiality of all materials and conversations surrounding the grievance. The committee reviews all submitted documentation, and asks all interested parties to provide relevant written and oral information related to the grievance. When necessary, the committee may seek additional information from other sources. The Appeals Officer is responsible for maintaining copies of all written documentation as well as an accurate account of any information provided orally.

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*Class days include only those days when the University is in session during the Fall and spring semesters. Grievances are not processed during weekends, University holidays, or during the summer.
Within 15 (fifteen) class days of receiving the initial documentation, the Appeals Officer will provide a written report that explains the committee’s findings, conclusions, the decision rendered, and the justification for that decision. This written report will be sent to the student, the Chairperson, and the Graduate Director. The Appeals Officer will inform the student of the procedure to appeal the department’s decision to the college level.

**College Level**

If the student is not satisfied with the outcome within the department and wishes to appeal further, he or she must appeal within ten class days of notification to the Vice Dean for Graduate Affairs. All documentation previously submitted at the department level, with the addition of the department’s findings should be sent electronically and in hard copy.

The Vice Dean will designate one of the two students serving on the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) Graduate Committee as the grievance ombudsperson. The ombudsperson must not be in the appealing student’s home department. The ombudsperson will attempt to ascertain the facts of the case through the review of submitted documents and interviews with any relevant parties involved at the department level. The ombudsperson will submit a summary to the Vice Dean and to the Graduate Committee within twenty-one class days of assignment to the case.

The Graduate Committee will decide whether to conduct a further review of the case, with the option of calling in parties to the dispute. The Vice Dean for Graduate Affairs, or his or her designee, will be present at meetings. The pertinent documentation will be provided to the members of the Graduate Committee’s Subcommittee on Appeals and Grievances, which shall consist of at least three members of the Graduate Committee who may not be in the student’s department. The Subcommittee will decide within fifteen class days of its decision to review a case whether to uphold the department’s decision. The Vice Dean will notify the student, the department chair, and the Dean.

**Addenda**

- Any member of the CLA Graduate Committee who is also a member of the department from which the grievance arises shall withdraw from consideration of the grievance.
- All documents in the grievance or appeals process shall be treated confidentially. All records shall be cumulative and shall be forwarded to the next higher level of appeal.
- Records of all conversations and transactions should be kept by the Department, the Student Ombudsperson, and the relevant Committees.
- The Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in CLA, with the advice of the CLA Graduate Committee, is the final authority on academic grievances and appeals, except in cases of academic dismissal, where the student may appeal the CLA decision to the Dean of the Graduate School.

A student may rescind the grievance at any point by submitting a written request to the same administrator who received the original request. Upon receipt, the administrator will notify all involved parties that the grievance has been withdrawn.

All appeals are in accordance with the general principles set forth in the Graduate School policies.

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University Level

In cases of academic dismissal, if the student is not satisfied with the outcome of an appeal, he or she must (within ten class days) forward the appeal in writing to the Vice Provost of the Graduate School. Petitions may be forwarded without departmental approval. Accumulated records shall be forwarded by the Vice Dean, together with an explanation of the recommendation. The Vice Provost of the Graduate School will make a decision regarding the grievance, which decision shall be final and binding on all parties.

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