

F.4.6.1 (Procedure) Academic Grievances

Responsible Department: Vice Chancellor for Academic Success

Based on Board Policy: F.4.6 Academic Grievances

Adopted: 6-30-25

Purpose of Academic Grievance

In the educational process, faculty are responsible for classroom management, teaching strategies, testing, and assessment of student performance, and a student is responsible for his/her academic success. Complaints or issues may arise when students feel or think they have been treated unfairly or arbitrarily by a faculty instructor in matters pertaining to or affecting the student's academic success. If the student alleges that the complaint or issue was the result of treatment based on the student's membership in a legally protected class, then the complaint will be processed under Board Procedure H.1.2.1 on Civil Rights Complaints and Resolution.

This Academic Grievance Procedure provides students an opportunity to informally resolve complaints or issues regarding academic success with the instructor and/or also address unresolved complaints or issues formally through specified steps with the faculty instructor, Department Chair, and the Dean for Academic Success., until a consensus is reached at any step or a final decision affirming or denying the grievance made. Each step of the student Academic Grievance process allows the student an opportunity to be heard and present a case for granting the remedy requested. If the grievance is not resolved in favor of the student, the student does not need to appeal the decision; the grievance is automatically referred to the next step.

A student academic grievance may involve a final grade dispute but also may concern, for example, an interim grade, the treatment of a student's absences or tardiness to class, or an instructor's failure to provide an approved academic accommodation, such as providing extra time to complete an exam.

With regard to a final grade dispute, a student may use this Academic Grievance Procedure to challenge a final grade appeal only where there is clear and convincing documented evidence which demonstrates at least one of the following: an error was made in calculating the end-of semester grade; there was a significant deviation from the syllabus or applicable policies or procedures that would affect a final grade; or documentation exists, demonstrating the instructor treated the student unfairly, arbitrarily, or capriciously in assigning an end-of semester grade without regard to the student's legally protected status, if any. A student academic grievance may not be used to complain of mere dissatisfaction with scholastic performance in a course or to complain of disagreement with the instructor's professional judgment of the quality of the student's class work or performance.

This Academic Grievance Procedure applies to students enrolled in academic and workforce programs. The student utilizing this procedure may be referred to as the "grievant" or "complainant." The term "faculty" means "instructor," and the two terms are synonymous. This procedure applies to faculty instructors, regardless of academic rank and how they teach (face-to-face, online, virtual, hybrid or otherwise).

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Informal Resolution

Before the formal Academic Grievance process is initiated and whenever possible, students are encouraged to address a complaint or issue regarding academic success informally through conversation with the faculty instructor within five (5) business days of the event or action that is the subject of the complaint or issue. If a student does not pursue discussing the complaint or issue with the instructor or the student does not resolve the complaint or issue informally in discussion with the instructor, a student may submit an Academic Grievance under this Procedure within ten (10) business days of the event or action that is the subject of the complaint or issue., except a student has a maximum of one (1) year from the end of the semester or term in which the final grade was issued to request a review of the final grade or petition for a change of grade.

Initiating the Formal Grievance

The Academic Grievance form may be accessed on the webpage of each Alamo College. A student may initiate the formal Academic Grievance process by completing and submitting the form electronically. The form will be received by the College and directed to the faculty instructor to commence hearing the grievance, with a copy to the Vice President for Academic Success who is a college's chief academic affairs officer.

The Academic Grievance form requires the student (a) to identify the semester, course, instructor, and college at which the events or action which are the subject of the grievance arose; and (b) to describe the grievance by specifying the academic concern or issue, any efforts made to resolve the academic concern or issue, the remedy or resolution requested by the student, and why the requested remedy or resolution is appropriate. The student also may attach any documents to be considered.

The Academic Grievance form also requires the instructor or administrator who hears the grievance (a) to state and sign whether the grievance is resolved at that step or the grievance is not resolved and is denied; and (b) to state the reasons for either outcome. This and all other documentation in the Academic Grievance process will be uploaded and maintained in the Guardian system and be accessible to the student. The student must be notified of the action taken or not taken at each step of the Academic Grievance process.

Grievance Step One – Student Conference with Instructor

When the instructor receives the electronic grievance form, the instructor will schedule a conference with the student within five (5) business days from receiving the grievance to hear the grievance. The outcome of the conference/hearing (*i.e.*, how the grievance was resolved or reason for denying the grievance) shall be documented on the Academic Grievance form. If the grievance is resolved at Step One, the Academic Grievance process ends and is closed. If the Grievance is not resolved with the instructor at Step One, the instructor will refer the grievance to the Department Chair for hearing at Step Two and copy the Vice President for Academic Success.

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Grievance Step Two – Student Conference with Department Chair/Program Director/Coordinator

When the Department Chair/Program Director/Coordinator receives the electronic grievance form from the instructor, the Department Chair will schedule a conference with the student within five (5) business days from receiving the grievance to hear the grievance. The outcome of the conference/hearing (*i.e.*, how the grievance was resolved or reason for denying the grievance) shall be documented on the Academic Grievance form. If the grievance is resolved at Step Two, the Academic Grievance process ends and is closed. If the Grievance is not resolved with the Department Chair/Program Director/Coordinator at Step Two, the Department Chair/Program Director/Coordinator will refer the grievance to the Dean for Academic Success for hearing at Step Three and copy the Vice President for Academic Success.

Grievance Step Three – Student Conference with Dean

When the Dean for Academic Success receives the electronic grievance form from the Department Chair/Program Director/Coordinator, the Dean will schedule a conference with the student within five (5) business days from receiving the grievance to hear the grievance. The outcome of the conference/hearing (*i.e.*, how the grievance was resolved or reason for denying the grievance) shall be documented on the Academic Grievance form. The Academic Grievance process ends at Step Three with the Dean. There is no further step, appeal or review internally. The Academic Grievance process will be closed.

Conduct of Conferences/Hearings

The conferences/hearings of a student's Academic Grievance are internal, administrative, non-adversarial meetings. The student is not entitled to have a representative, advisor, advocate, or attorney present. The Vice President for Student Success is responsible for identifying whether the student is a minor. If the student is a minor, one or both parents or legal guardians may attend the conferences/hearings with the minor student, provided the FERPA consent/waiver is on file. If not on file, the student and parent or legal guardian will be given a reasonable opportunity to submit an executed FERPA consent/waiver to the Vice President for Academic Success who will notify the instructor and/or the administrators hearing the grievance.

Under Board Policy F.6.2, a student is responsible for his/her success, academically and otherwise. Therefore, a student is expected to act and speak for himself/herself in the learning and academic environment. A student may not have a representative advisor, advocate or attorney listen to any conference or hearing by electronic means, including a cell phone, other than an approved parent/legal guardian. If the student fails to appear at a scheduled conference for the hearing of an academic grievance, the grievance will be denied and the grievance process will be closed, unless good cause exists for rescheduling the conference or hearing. The College has sole discretion in

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making this determination. If at any step the person hearing the grievance is unavailable to meet with the student, the grievance will proceed to the next step.

Time Periods

“Business Days” means days on which the college and College District are open for business. Holidays, weekend days, December-January break days, spring break, and Fridays in June and July are not “business days.” Time periods discussed in this procedure are maximums and, whenever possible, the specified action should be taken within a shorter period of time. Time periods may be extended at the discretion of the Vice President of Academic Success for circumstances, such as unavailability of the persons hearing the grievance. The student will be notified through the student’s Alamo Colleges’ email address of any extensions. All communications involving the Academic Grievance process shall be by Alamo Colleges email addresses or in person.

A college will make every practicable attempt to administer the Student Academic Grievance process in a timely manner. Should it fail to do so, however, its untimeliness shall not constitute a violation of the student’s rights, and the college’s failure to administer the process in a timely manner cannot be used against the college to resolve any ultimate matter of fact.

Related Board Policy: F.6.2 Student Responsibility for Success