

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR  
LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY AT ALEXANDRIA

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SUBJECT: STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

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PURPOSE: The student grievance procedure was developed to deal with disputes between students and their instructors. The student grievance policy defines a formal procedure by which disputes that have not been amenable to informal resolution can be resolved.

#### INFORMAL PROCEDURE

Although the primary purpose of this policy statement is to clearly describe the formal steps and procedures of the student grievance policy, there are important steps that must be taken to attempt to resolve issues before they escalate to the need for a formal grievance. The University encourages informal resolution of problems. Several things may be done by the student to clarify questions and concerns: 1) Review the course syllabus. 2) Review any course assignments that relate to the area of concern. 3) Investigate any concerns immediately. Before a formal grievance will be considered, a student must 1) Schedule an appointment with the faculty member to discuss concerns. 2) If a meeting with the faculty member does not resolve the issue, meet with the department chair and the faculty member. 3) If an informal discussion with the faculty member and department chair is unsuccessful, schedule a meeting with the dean.

Filing a formal grievance should be viewed as a last resort. Take this step only when all other avenues for resolution have been exhausted. The grievance process is not designed to address cases where students simply made a grade lower than desired in a particular class.

Authority of campus administrators over disputes between students and faculty is limited to cases involving violation of University policies, criminal or unethical mistreatment, or clearly prejudicial treatment of a student. Campus administrators do not have the authority to change grades, except as determined by the Student Grievance Committee as a result of a formal hearing described later in this policy. The basic role of campus administrators in the informal and formal grievance process is to assure fair and equitable treatment under existing University policies and to assist in conflict resolution.

## FORMAL POLICY

### I. BASIC PRINCIPLES

- A. The formal grievance procedure in no way infringes upon the important traditional informal channel of communications by which students and instructors may discuss any matter of interest to either. Practically speaking, it is the student's responsibility to attempt to resolve a problem with the instructor prior to the initiation of a formal grievance procedure.
- B. This procedure will not infringe upon students' rights; however, the student who has brought the grievance will have the responsibility at each stage of the proceeding for supporting and proving the accusation. A low grade in itself is not the basis for an appeal, nor is the difficulty of a course or test or specific test items.
- C. This procedure will not infringe upon the academic freedom of the instructor, including the right of the instructor to evaluate students fairly and properly and assign grades in the class. Only the instructor is empowered by the University to assign grades, unless a grade change is recommended by the Student Grievance Committee as a result of Step #4 of the grievance procedure.
- D. At each formal stage, a written summary will be made (respectively by the faculty member, the department chair, the dean, and the chairman of the student grievance committee -- if used) including a statement of reasons for any action or revision rendered. A copy of the formal documents will be retained by the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs who has overall supervision of the process.
- E. Privacy rights of both students and faculty members will be respected. Access to the summaries for all legitimate purposes will be afforded to all principals until the grievance is resolved. Copies may be retained only by those parties against whom a grievance is alleged and by the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. Neither students nor faculty members will have these records made part of any permanent record.

### II. STAGES OF THE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

- A. **Step #1:** The student must come to the Office of Academic Affairs to obtain the forms necessary to initiate the grievance procedure. The formal grievance procedure is initiated when the student completes and returns to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs the LSUA Student Appeal Form for Implementation of the Student Grievance Procedure.

The Student Appeal Form along with all supporting documentation including, if any, a list of witnesses and a synopsis of their anticipated testimony must be submitted to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs no later than five class days after the first class day of the next regular semester or summer session

regardless of whether the student re-enrolls. The Vice Chancellor's office will date stamp the document upon receipt and forward a copy to the instructor named in the grievance. The instructor will sign the Record of Appeal Process form (hereinafter referred to as the RAP) indicating receipt of the student grievance materials. The instructor will return the grievance materials in person along with a written response to the Vice Chancellor's office by the end of the fifth class day after receiving the Student Appeal form and again sign the RAP indicating whether the appeal was granted or denied.

The Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs will notify the student when the instructor's decision has been made. The student will go to the Office of Academic Affairs to review the instructor's decision and sign the RAP form indicating his or her acceptance or rejection of the instructor's decision.

For appeal involving courses taught the first half of a semester, the Student Appeal Form must be submitted to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs no later than ten class days after the first class day for courses taught during the second half of the semester, regardless of whether the student is enrolled in such a course.

- B. **Step #2:** If the student is not satisfied with the instructor's decision, the student must submit to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs a written request for continuation of the appeal to the department chair within five class days of the date the instructor's decision was rendered. A student's failure to timely initiate Step #2 precludes that student from seeking further relief pursuant to this process.

The Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs will deliver the request for continuation of the appeal to the student's department chair and obtain the department chair's signature on the RAP indicating receipt of the appeal packet. The student and the faculty member will meet simultaneously with the department chair to present their viewpoints, at which time the instructor must provide his or her documentation, witness lists, and a synopsis of anticipated witness testimony. A written decision will be rendered by the department chair within five class days following completion of deliberations with the student and delivered along with all appeal packet materials including those submitted by the instructor to the Office of Academic Affairs, where the department chair will again sign the RAP indicating whether the appeal was granted or denied, unless the department chair determines that additional evidence needs to be presented. The Office of Academic Affairs will notify both the student and the instructor that the department chair's decision has been made. Both the student and the instructor will go to the Office of Academic

- Affairs to review the decision and sign the RAP indicating their acceptance or rejection of the decision.
- C. **Step #3:** If either party is not satisfied with the department chair's decision, the dissatisfied party must submit a written request that the grievance proceed to the next step outlining the reasons for his/her dissatisfaction. This request must be submitted to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs within five class days of the date the department chair's decision was rendered. The Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs will deliver the student's request and the appeal packet to the appropriate dean and secure the dean's signature on the RAP indicating receipt of the appeal. The student, faculty member, and department chair will all meet simultaneously with the dean to present viewpoints. The dean will render a written decision within five class days following the completion of deliberations, unless the dean determines that additional evidence needs to be presented and will return the appeal packet to the Vice Chancellor. The Vice Chancellor will notify all parties involved and obtain their signatures on the RAP indicating acceptance or rejection of the dean's decision.
- D. **Step #4:** If either party is not satisfied with the dean's decision, the dissatisfied party may appeal to the Student Grievance Committee by submitting a written request to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. This request must be filed within five class days of the date the dean's decision was rendered. The Vice Chancellor will obtain the signature of the chairman of the Student Grievance Committee on the RAP indicating receipt of the appeal. The Student Grievance Committee will render a decision within five class days following completion of deliberations and will return the appeal packet to the Vice Chancellor.

The Student Grievance Committee will consist of 7 members. Two faculty members will be elected from each of the colleges for one-year terms. The term of each elected member shall begin in August and run for one calendar year. The faculty members and an alternate from each college will be elected by the faculty of the respective college at the beginning of each fall semester. The student members of the committee will be the president and legislative vice president of the Student Government Association. The SGA must annually elect an alternate for each representative. If an alternate is forced to serve for any reason, he or she must serve throughout the duration of a case. The registrar will also serve as a member of this committee. A faculty member will be elected chairman of the committee.

The functioning of the committee will include:

1. receipt and study of the original grievance and the written summaries of each preceding step;
2. solicitation of testimony from the student, faculty member, and administrators who have been involved in the grievance;

3. authority to "call" other witnesses.

The operating procedure of the committee will include a recorded vote to be taken on the issue; taping of the session (to be retained by the Vice Chancellor); and the right of legal representation (for student and faculty member).

The committee may, at its discretion, decide to grant the student some relief other than the "relief requested" by the student on the Student Appeal Form, if the committee believes that the student's grievance has merit, but that the relief requested by the student is inappropriate.

Operational Guidelines:

1. A majority of the committee will rule.
2. Attorneys/advisors will be limited to speaking only to their client(s)/advisee(s) and are not permitted to ask questions or otherwise make statements to the committee or to any witnesses called before the committee.
3. Since, prior to the hearing, each committee member receives and reads large amounts of evidence submitted by each party, the committee will limit redundant information.
4. An audio recording will be made of portions of committee meetings when witnesses are present before the committee, including any questions asked by committee members and/or testimony presented by witnesses or parties to the grievance. Committee deliberations will not be recorded.
5. Each party to the grievance will be allowed to submit witnesses on their behalf, however, the committee will determine whether testimony from those witnesses will be heard.
6. Attorneys/advisors are not allowed to be present for any part of the process other than when their client/advisee is before the committee.
7. All documents to be considered by the committee, including any supporting statements, must have been submitted by the student at the time the original appeal was made. Copies of all documentation must be made available to all parties of the grievance.
8. Students may wish to call witnesses to present relevant testimony to the committee. A list of such witnesses and a synopsis of their anticipated testimony must have been submitted along with other documentation at the time the appeal was initiated.
9. If either the student or the instructor wishes to submit additional supporting documents, the request must be made in writing at the same time the appeal's committee hearing is requested. If the request is granted, copies of the material must be made available to the other parties

- to the grievance and the other parties must be allowed to provide additional documents if they wish to do so.
10. Both parties to the grievance must be present before the committee during any presentation or testimony. Parties to the grievance will be limited in their statements to an opening statement, direct testimony, and responding to any questions that may be posed by the committee. Neither party to the grievance is permitted to examine or cross-examine witnesses; however, the student and the instructor may submit written questions to the committee which he or she would like a witness to answer. The committee has discretion whether to ask any such questions.
  11. The committee reserves the right to disallow testimony from any witness whose testimony is deemed to be irrelevant to the issues included in the grievance. Character witnesses will generally not be permitted, unless they have personal knowledge relevant to an issue raised in the grievance.

The scope of the Student Grievance Committee will be to submit to the Vice Chancellor a formal written account of the grievance proceedings including the committee's final decision. The committee may specify reassessment measures or other remedies as deemed appropriate. The chairman will communicate the committee's decision to the Vice Chancellor who will notify all principals involved. The Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs will be responsible for obtaining the signatures on the RAP of both the student and faculty member(s) named in the grievance indicating their acceptance or rejection of the committee's decision.

- E. **Step #5:** If either party to the appeal feels that a serious procedural error occurred or that there was an abuse of discretionary authority in reaching the decision, he or she may file a written petition for review with the Vice Chancellor. Such a request will include a copy of the original grievance and the summaries of all earlier steps, and will be made in writing within five class days after the date the committee's decision was rendered.

In making a decision, the Vice Chancellor may rely solely on written and taped documentation of the grievance proceedings. The Vice Chancellor may remand the matter to the Student Grievance Committee for further proceedings.

The Vice Chancellor's decision is final.

### III. GRADE CHANGES

The authorization for any change of a grade which might result from this decision resides with whomever presides over the last unchallenged step in the grade appeal process. The remaining signatures on the Student Grievance Grade Change Form merely acknowledge that the grade has been changed as a result of the student grievance procedure except that the change must have the approval of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs. The Student Grievance Procedure Grade Change Form must be properly completed and distributed to accomplish any change of a grade that might result from a student appeal.

**LSUA STUDENT APPEAL FORM  
FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE  
(LSUA POLICY STATEMENT 207)**

Please read the Student Grievance Procedure which appears in the LSUA Handbook (or is attached) before completing this form. When this form is completed and submitted to the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, the formal student grievance procedure is initiated. **If additional space is needed to answer any item below, you may attach additional sheets.**

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE:

1. Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ 2. SSN: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (Middle)
3. Student's academic major at the time the problem occurred: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Course Name and Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sem/Yr course was taken

Instructor of the course: \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION OF THE GRIEVANCE:

5. Relief requested:
6. Statement of reasons supporting the relief sought. Attach a list of all witnesses and/or all the documents supporting the student's position.
7. I certify that I have read the Student Grievance Procedure, that I have sought an informal resolution of this grievance, and that I wish to initiate the formal Student Grievance Procedure.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SUBMIT THIS COMPLETED FORM (AND ANY ADDITIONAL SHEETS) TO THE PROVOST AND VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS (101 ABRAMS HALL).**

**RECORD OF APPEAL PROCESS**

(To be completed as indicated)

Date received in Vice Chancellor's office \_\_\_\_\_ Accepted by \_\_\_\_\_

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**STEP #1: INSTRUCTOR - Must return a written decision and this form to the Vice Chancellor's office by the end of the fifth class day after receipt of the form.**

Instructor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date Instructor received appeal \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor's Decision:**

Appeal Granted\* \_\_\_ Appeal Denied \_\_\_ Instructor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Decision \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Instructor's decision received in Vice Chancellor's office:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student's reaction to Instructor's Decision:**

Accepted \_\_\_ Rejected \*\* \_\_\_ Student's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**STEP #2: DEPT. CHAIR - Must receive written request for continuation of the appeal from the Student within 5 class days after Instructor's decision is rendered. Department Chair must render a decision within 5 class days following deliberations with Student and Instructor.**

Dept. Chair Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date Dept. Chair received appeal \_\_\_\_\_

**Dept. Chair's Decision:**

Appeal Granted\* \_\_\_ Appeal Denied \_\_\_ Dept. Chair's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Decision \_\_\_\_\_

**Student's reaction to Dept. Chair's Decision:**

Accepted \_\_\_ Rejected \*\* \_\_\_ Student's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor's reaction to Dept. Chair's Decision:**

Accepted \_\_\_ Rejected \*\* \_\_\_ Instructor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Louisiana State University at Alexandria  
Faculty Handbook

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PS 207 (continued)

207-10

**STEP #3: DEAN**      **Must receive written request for continuation of appeal from the dissatisfied party (Student or Instructor) within 5 class days after the Department Chair's decision is rendered. Dean must render a decision within 5 class days after deliberations with the Student, Instructor, and Department Chair.**

Dean's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date Dean received appeal \_\_\_\_\_

**Dean's Decision:**

Appeal      Appeal      Dean's      Date of  
Granted\* \_\_\_ Denied \_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Decision \_\_\_\_\_

**Student's reaction to Dean's Decision:**

Accepted \_\_\_ Rejected \*\* \_\_\_      Student's  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor's reaction to Dean's Decision:**

Accepted \_\_\_ Rejected \*\* \_\_\_      Instructor's  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**STEP #4: GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE -**

**Vice Chancellor must receive written request for continuation of appeal to the Grievance Committee from the dissatisfied party (Student or Instructor) within 5 class days after the Dean renders his decision. The Vice Chancellor will convene the Grievance Committee. The Grievance Committee must render its decision within 5 class days after completion of deliberations.**

Vice Chancellor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Vice Chancellor received appeal \_\_\_\_\_

Grievance Committee  
Chairman's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Chairman received appeal \_\_\_\_\_

**Grievance Committee Decision:**

Appeal      Appeal      Committee Chairman's      Date of  
Granted\* \_\_\_ Denied \_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Decision \_\_\_\_\_

**Student's reaction to Committee's Decision:**

Accepted \_\_\_ Rejected \*\* \_\_\_      Student's  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructor's reaction to Committee's Decision:**

Accepted \_\_\_ Rejected \*\* \_\_\_      Instructor's  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:**      **If either party feels that a serious procedural error occurred or that there was an abuse of discretionary authority in reaching the decision, he or she may file a written petition for review with the Vice Chancellor. (STEP #5.)**

Louisiana State University at Alexandria  
Faculty Handbook

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PS 207 (continued)

207-11

**STEP #5: PROVOST AND VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS**

To be pursued **ONLY** if either party feels that a serious procedural error occurred or that there was an abuse of discretionary authority in reaching the above decision. The dissatisfied party's written appeal to the Vice Chancellor must be made within five class days after the Grievance Committee's decision was rendered. The Vice Chancellor's decision is final and must be rendered within 5 class days after receipt of the request.

Vice Chancellor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date Vice Chancellor received appeal \_\_\_\_\_

**Decision:**

Vice Chancellor's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Decision \_\_\_\_\_

\* If granting of the appeal involves a change of grade, the Student Grievance Procedure Grade Change form must be completed properly and distributed by the appropriate personnel.

\*\*The dissatisfied party must submit a written request to have this form forwarded to the next step of the appeal process explaining the position relative to this decision.

