

## Allen University Student Academic Grievance/Complaint and Appeal Process

We acknowledge that:

- Students deserve a positive educational experience.
- There may be times when a student's experience is not what they anticipated.
- A student can submit a complaint or grievance.
- We ensure that a complaint or grievance will be addressed fairly and promptly.
- If a student's complaint relates to the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), it must be filed with the institution first for resolution.
- SARA consumer protection requires that an institution's home state and its SARA portal, investigate and resolve allegations of fraud or dishonesty, including claims related to false or misleading information.
- A student must begin a complaint process with the institution. If no resolution is reached, the student can contact the institution's home state SARA portal.

Our SARA state portal is listed here: SARA Student Complaint Process & Reports - <https://nc-sara.org>

### Grade Appeals

Complaints or Grievances filed in connection with assigned grades represent a special case within the Grievance procedure. Grading reflects careful and deliberate assessment of a student's performance by the instructing professional(s). As such decisions are necessarily judgmental the substance of those decisions may not be delegated to the Grievance process. Nevertheless, the university recognizes that in rare cases the process of grading may be subject to error or injustice.

A student who alleges an error or injustice in the grading process may file a Grievance under the Student Grievance Procedure. A grade appeal Grievance shall proceed no further than Level Two, Step Two. For purposes of a grade appeal, the Senior Academic Officer of the university, or his/her designee, shall serve as the Student Grievance Officer throughout the grade appeal process.

If the faculty member who assigned the challenged grade is no longer employed by the university, or is not available within the timelines specified (see "Time" definition), the student may initiate his/her Level One complaint with the chief administrator of the appropriate instructional division (who shall be identified by the Senior Academic Officer).

If at any level substantial evidence of error or injustice is produced, the grading process may be remanded to the instructor of record for reassessment. If after reassessment, the dispute remains unresolved, the matter shall be referred to the Senior Academic Officer, or his/her designee, for final review. If the instructor of record is no longer available, the Senior Academic Officer or his/her designee shall instead reassess the grading process.

## **Level One – Informal Procedure**

This is the informal stage where most complaints are resolved. The Grievant shall first present his/her complaint orally and informally to the Responding Party. In the case of a grade appeal, the Responding Party is the course instructor. This shall be done in a reasonable period of time, not exceeding thirty (30) calendar days following the instructional period when a grievable act or omission occurs.

The Responding Party must respond to the Grievant complaint within ten (10) days. Though this phase of the process is informal, the parties may present their positions in writing. If the matter is not resolved informally within ten (10) calendar days from the date a response to the complaint was due, the Grievant may proceed to Level Two.

## **Level Two – Formal Procedure**

Prior to filing a written Grievance at Level Two, a Grievant who is disputing an assigned grade must consult with the Chair of the Division in which the course is housed. The Responding Party (faculty member) should also consult with his or her Chair.

### **Level Two – Step 1**

The Chair of the Division in which the grievance for an assigned grade has taken place shall notify the parties in writing when a complaint is not resolved informally at Level One.

The Grievant may, within ten (10) calendar days after receipt of the Division Chair's written notice, file a formal written grade appeal or complaint (see Appendix One: Grade Appeal Form, Student/Faculty Complaint Form and Student Statement Form) with the Vice President of Academic Affairs or his/her designee.

The Grievance shall contain the following information: the name and title of the person(s) against whom the Grievance is directed, a statement of all known facts, documents and materials supporting the grievance, a list of individuals who have information pertinent to the grievance, and the relief sought by the Grievant. All supporting documents, if any, shall be attached to the grievance as part of the Grievance. The Grievance shall also state the date it is filed and that it is being filed at "Level Two, Step One."

The Grievance may be filed with the Vice President of Academic Affairs or the Dean of Students depending on the grievance by email, regular mail, certified mail, or in hand. Thereafter, the assigned official shall deliver the completed form with all supporting documents, if any, to the Responding Party within five (5) calendar days. If the Responding Party is unavailable at the time the Grievance is filed, the Vice President of Academic Affairs or Dean of Students or the designated person shall use reasonable means to deliver the Grievance within a reasonable period of time.

The Responding Party shall forward a written Level Two – Step One response to the assigned Grievance Officer within ten (10) calendar days of his/her receipt of the Grievance. The assigned person then shall deliver the written response to the Grievant within five (5) calendar days of receipt.

### **Level Two – Step 2 (Supervisor Level)**

If the Grievance is not resolved to the satisfaction of the Grievant within ten (10) calendar days after his/her receipt of the Step One response, or if no written response is submitted, the Grievant may within ten (10) calendar days after the written response was received or due, request a hearing/meeting with the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the student, the named faculty member and the Division Chair to reach a resolution to the ascribed grievance.

The decision of the Vice President, or his/her designee, shall be final and binding on all parties.

### **Withdrawal**

A student may withdraw his/her complaint or Grievance at any time. Withdrawal must be accomplished in writing or by oral agreement confirmed in writing.

### **Retaliation**

No member of the College community shall retaliate or threaten to retaliate against, interfere with, restrain, or coerce any student in the exercise of his/her rights under the Student Grievance Procedure or his/her participation in any Grievance proceedings.

### **Collateral Rights of Person Grieved by Student**

If the recommendations made at any level of the Grievance procedure result in sanctions against a college employee, the sanctions shall be regarded as administrative actions subject to all conditions of applicable collective bargaining agreements and College or Board of Higher Education personnel policies.

### **Alternative Forums**

Filing a Grievance in accordance with the Student Grievance Procedure in no way abrogates a student's right to file a complaint with an appropriate state or federal agency or in another forum.