



**Name of Policy:** Grievance Policy for Academic Matters  
**Responsible Department:** Vice President for Academic Affairs  
**Responsible Administrator:** Vice President for Academic Affairs  
**Effective Date:** August 9, 2019

## **POLICY**

The Elms College goal is to preserve the college as an institution in which a supportive personal relationship among students and faculty exists. Every effort should be made to maintain such relationships. However, if a relationship breaks down and efforts to communicate fail, the following grievance procedure will be followed.

### Academic Grievance

An academic grievance is a claim by a student that a specific academic decision (such as a dispute over grades, plagiarism, cheating, or dismissal/failure of a student) that affects a student's academic status has violated published policies and procedures, or has been applied to the student in a manner different from that used for other students. If the grievance is course related, the student is obligated to first discuss these concerns with the course instructor.

### Procedural Steps

#### Step 1: Initial Presentation of Grievance

If a student has a serious grievance of an academic nature, he/she will present his/her grievance in writing to the party or parties involved and they will attempt to resolve the grievance at this level. The procedure herein defined must be initiated by filing the written grievance no later than one month after the final grade for the course has been released by the Registrar's Office.

#### Step 2: Presentation of Grievance to Division Chairperson, Dean, or Vice-President of Academic Affairs (VPAA)

If the grievance is not resolved, it should be presented in writing to the Dean or Chairperson of the school or division involved, who will review the grievance between the parties and attempt to resolve the grievance at this level. If the grievance is against the Dean or the Division Chairperson, the VPAA will review the grievance. This review will occur within one week of the initial written grievance presented to the Division Chairperson, Dean, or VPAA.

#### Step 3: Presentation to the VPAA

If the review by the Dean or Chair is unable to resolve the conflict, the student will in writing, within a week, present the grievance to the VPAA. If the VPAA is unable to resolve the conflict, then the VPAA will notify the Chair of the Committee on Faculty and Academic Standards (FAST), and forward the grievance and any related materials to the Chair within one week of receiving the grievance. If the grievance is against the VPAA, then the written petition should be submitted directly to the Chairperson of FAST.

#### Step 4: Preliminary Hearing of FAST

The chairperson of FAST shall convene a preliminary hearing with the petitioner and two FAST committee members chosen by the petitioner and FAST committee chairperson to evaluate the merits of the petition and to recommend further action. At least one of the FAST members chosen will be a faculty member. Within one week after the notification by the VPAA, this preliminary meeting will be called.

#### Step 5: Hearing of FAST

If the sub-committee recommends a meeting of the full committee, this meeting shall be held within two weeks of the preliminary hearing. All pertinent information will be submitted in writing by the party submitting the grievance to the Chair of FAST a week in advance of the scheduled meeting. At the meeting(s), the grieving party may be accompanied by one person of her/his choice. The invited extra person may not speak during the meeting. A quorum of a simple majority of FAST members and at least one student member must be present. If possible, a satisfactory resolution will be a result of this meeting. If a satisfactory resolution of the grievance is not reached at the full hearing, one or more additional meetings must be held within a week at which both parties have the option to attend. It is hoped that a mutual agreement between the parties may be reached at this point.

#### Step 6: Recommendation of FAST and Presentation of Appeal to the President

The VPAA will communicate FAST's recommendation to both parties. The committee's recommendation shall be final, subject only to the parties' right of appeal to the President via the VPAA. The petitioner must present the appeal in writing to the President within one week of the recommendation of FAST. If the student uses the right to appeal to the President, FAST will be informed of the decision, by the VPAA, within two weeks of the presentation of the written appeal to the President. The decision of the President is final.

### **Procedures: Written Record**

The following steps should be taken to properly communicate in writing with all of the parties involved during the grievance process:

Step 1: The grieving party informs the party involved they have a procedural, academic dishonesty, or quality of work grievance.

Step 2: The Division Chair, Dean, or VPAA will inform the grieving student and the party involved of their assessment of the review.

Step 3: The VPAA will communicate to the Division Chair, Dean or VPAA, the grieving student, and the party involved of their determination if the grievance merits further attention.

Step 4: If the grievance merits further attention, the sub-committee of FAST will inform the VPAA of their recommendation to hold a meeting of the entire FAST committee. The VPAA will then inform the grieving student, the party involved, and the Division Chairperson or Dean that the grievance will be heard by the entire FAST committee.

Step 5: At the conclusion of the entire FAST committee meeting, the FAST committee will report their recommendation to the VPAA.

Step 6: The VPAA will communicate FAST's decision to the Division Chair or Dean, the grieving student, and the party involved.

If the grieving party appeals, then the VPAA will present the appeal to the President. The VPAA will also inform FAST, the Division Chair or Dean, and the original party involved the student has appealed to the President.

All minutes and material of the formal process should be kept by the chairperson of FAST and filed in the office of the vice president of academic affairs no later than two weeks after the grievance process has been completed