

## **School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS) Process for Resolving Student Grade Grievances**

The purpose of this process is to resolve student assertions of “cases of Alleged Arbitrary or Capricious Academic Evaluation” in the form of a course grade in the School of Engineering and Applied Science (SEAS) and in accordance with the GW Guide to Student Rights and Responsibilities.

***Nature of grievances covered:*** under this process. This policy and procedure pertains to a student assertion of arbitrary or capricious assignment of course grade (a “grade grievance”). Cases of academic dishonesty are not included here (see *Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities: Code of Academic Integrity*), nor are allegations of illegal discrimination (see *Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities: Student Grievance Procedures*).

***Materiality:*** Grade disagreements of two grade levels or more may be submitted by a student. The grade levels are, from lowest to highest, F, D-, D, D+, C-, C, C+, B-, B, B+, A-, A. For example, a student assertion that a course grade of B+ should be changed to A- is not material and will not be reviewed by the Department Chair or Associate Dean, while an assertion that a B+ course grade should be an A is material.

***Instructor responsibilities:*** It is the responsibility of the course instructor to provide a syllabus (or course outline) to each student in a course at the beginning of the semester that clearly sets forth the instructor’s grading policy in the course. It is also the responsibility of the instructor to adhere to the grading policy stated in the syllabus, or, if changes are made, to announce and implement them in a manner that is not prejudicial to the evaluation any student receives from the course instructor. It is also the responsibility of the instructor to respond to a student’s communication of a grade grievance within a reasonable period of time (normally within 10 working days except in the summer or during academic breaks and holidays). Finally, faculty are reminded that the *Faculty Handbook* requires instructors to retain graded examinations and papers not returned to students for one year after the semester during which the work was submitted.

***Student responsibilities:*** It is the responsibility of the student to communicate clearly with the instructor and on a timely basis about any grading issues in a course. If the student is not clear about the syllabus, the grading policy or a grade on a student assignment or other work product, the student should immediately initiate a discussion with the instructor.

**Confidentiality:** Students, faculty, instructors, academic administrators, and university employees shall maintain the confidentiality of matters related to grade grievances, in a manner consistent with university policies, including the Privacy of Student Records policy, and applicable privacy laws.

**File retention:** It shall be the responsibility of the SEAS Departments and Dean's Office to retain files regarding disputes beginning with a student's "Notification of Grade Grievance" filing. These files shall be retained for two academic years, and then discarded. No materials will be placed in individual student files in program offices, nor will notations be made on academic transcripts. See section above for instructor record retention requirements.

**Precedence:** These policies and procedures amplify the *Guide to Student Rights and Responsibilities*. In the event of conflicts between these documents, the *Guide to Student Rights and Responsibilities* shall prevail.

Section II. B. Protection Against Improper Academic Evaluation, Guide to Student Rights and Responsibilities (2016-2017), states:

*Except in instances that involve a student grievance based on allegations of illegal discrimination for which other remedy is provided under "Student Grievance Procedures," a student who alleges an instance of arbitrary or capricious academic evaluation shall be heard and the allegation reviewed through faculty peer review procedures established by the dean and faculty of the school in which the contested academic evaluation took place. Should the peer review processes find in favor of and uphold the complaint of the student, yet the faculty member were to persist in refusing to alter the academic evaluation at issue, the Dean's Council and the dean shall afford the student an appropriate remedy after consultation with the peer review body.*

**SEAS Process:** Consistent with the University documents, the peer review procedure for cases of alleged arbitrary or capricious academic evaluation in the School of Engineering and Applied Science is a 4 step process as described below. In order to assure the availability of relevant materials, and unless a specific deadline is listed, each step should be pursued as expeditiously as possible.

- I. The student contacts the course instructor/faculty member and academic advisor to discuss thoroughly the manner and substance of the academic evaluation. The student must make such contact within the first four weeks of the semester following the semester for which the grade was issued (excepting summers).

- II. If resolution is not achieved in step I, the student contacts the Department Chair who undertakes a complete review of the manner and substance of the academic evaluation. The student should submit a Notification of Grade Grievance Form with all the supporting documentation, as listed below. Should the Chair be the faculty member providing the evaluation, a senior member of the faculty who is not involved in the academic evaluation, will be selected by the Dean, and will conduct this step of the review.

**Documentation:** Students are responsible for providing adequate written information.

- a) Clear and concise Statement of student grade grievance.
  - b) Course syllabus.
  - c) Assignment or work product involved in the dispute, if applicable.
  - d) Instructor response to statement of student grade grievance.
  - e) Other relevant documents that the student or instructor wishes to submit.
- III. If resolution is not achieved in Step II, the Department Chair forms a review committee comprised of two to three faculty members. All faculty involved in the review process are to be full-time, regular, active-status members of faculty. If a sufficient number of qualified faculty cannot be obtained from within a department or program, faculty from related programs may be appointed to the committee after consultation with the Dean.

The review committee gives the course instructor/faculty member the opportunity to prepare a written explanation of his/her view of the situation, and then will convene to review the entire academic evaluation process and outcome. The committee invites the student and the faculty member to appear, separately, before the committee to make additional comments and to answer questions, if necessary. The committee deliberates and communicates its decision to the Chair in a written report (Attachment B: Resolution of Grade Grievance Form) which the Chair conveys to the student and course instructor.

- IV. If resolution is not achieved in step III, the student requests the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs to review the case, by providing the Associate Dean with a written explanation of the basis for student's claim of arbitrary and capricious academic evaluation, including copies of any supporting documentation. The Associate Dean reviews the case, confers with Department and relevant parties, and comes to a decision. If step III was not conducted, then the Associate Dean may form a review committee to fulfill the requirements of step III. After that, a decision is conveyed to the student, instructor, and Department Chair.

***Attachments:***

- A. Notification of Grade Grievance Form
- B. Resolution of Grade Grievance Form