

# Grievance Policy

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## Request for Review of Academic Policy

A Stetson University student who feels that an academic policy is unfair, inequitably applied or arbitrary may request a review of the policy or may register a formal complaint (“grieve”) about the policy in question. Students should initiate policy review requests by talking with the instructor and/or Department Chair. In the spirit of collegial problem-solving, all parties concerned should attempt to resolve the issue, adhering at all times to Stetson University’s mission and values. If the student thinks that a complete or satisfactory explanation has not been provided by the instructor and/or the Department Chair, the student may then initiate a formal grievance by directing an appeal in writing to the Dean of the College or School. The appeal should be delivered to the office of the Dean of the College or School and should provide the Dean with the following additional data:

Full name, student number, academic major, academic advisor, local/campus address, local telephone number, and local/campus email address

The Dean will communicate his/her response to the formal appeal in writing to the local address provided by the student in a timely manner after consultation with the parties involved in the matter. A student who feels that the Dean’s decision is arbitrary, unfair, or has been reached by procedural error may appeal that decision to the Provost. This appeal must be in writing and must show why, in the view of the student, the decision of the Dean should be reconsidered. The appeal should be delivered to the Office of Academic Affairs, DeLand Hall, and should provide the Provost with the following additional data:

Full name, student number, academic major, academic advisor, local/campus address, local telephone number, and local/campus email address

The Provost will communicate his/her response to the formal appeal in writing to the local address provided by the student in a timely manner after consultation with the parties involved in the matter. The Provost is responsible for maintaining the integrity of all academic policies and regulations of the University and will make the final decision for the University.

## Grade Grievances

Students are entitled to full and clear explanations of their grades. The teacher of each course has authority over all academic matters pertaining to that course, including (but not limited to) establishing requirements, assigning grades, and communicating the reasons for those grades to the student. A student who feels that a final course grade has been inappropriately influenced by prejudice, arbitrariness, or nonacademic factors has the right to appeal that course grade, first to the teacher; then, if the grievance is not resolved, to the Chair of the Department in which the faculty member teaches; finally, if the grievance is not resolved, to the appropriate academic Dean. A grade grievance must adhere to the timelines and steps detailed in the procedure below:

1. The student shall request an explanation of the grade from the faculty member. The faculty member should be prepared to discuss and show records relating the disputed grade to both the course assignment(s) and grading scale as defined in the course syllabus. This disclosure must not include any revelation of another student’s grade(s).
2. If, after meeting with the faculty member, the student thinks that a complete or satisfactory explanation has not been provided, the student may direct a formal written appeal summarizing the grievance to the appropriate Department Chair. This appeal must be initiated no later than 30 calendar days after the beginning of the subsequent regular semester (i.e., fall or spring). The student bears the burden of proof to demonstrate that prejudice, arbitrariness, or nonacademic factors have inappropriately influenced the disputed grade. The Chair shall investigate the matter by collecting a written report from the faculty member. The faculty report will provide appropriate documents and supporting evidence; a written defense of the disputed grade may be included. The Chair shall make a decision within ten working days. If the Chair sustains the appeal, the faculty member shall be advised to assign a new grade. The new grade may be higher or lower than the disputed grade. If the Chair denies the appeal, the student shall be informed in writing immediately and the grade in question remains in effect.
3. Following the Chair’s decision, either the student or the faculty member may initiate an appeal of the Chair’s decision to the appropriate academic Dean. The appeal must be in writing and explain the reasons for the appeal. The Dean shall then refer the grievance to the school’s Grade Grievance Officer. The Officer shall enlist two senior faculty members of the school of the faculty member concerned to constitute a three-person examining board. This board shall investigate the matter. The investigation must include a conference with both the student and faculty member present. (If circumstances prevent the faculty member’s participation, the Dean may appoint a representative or delay the proceedings until the faculty member can be present.) The board shall submit a report to the Dean within ten working days. The board may recommend that the grade be upheld, that the faculty member assign a different grade, or that the record of the course be removed from the student’s transcript. A recommendation for the assignment of a different grade may result in a grade higher or lower than the disputed grade. The Dean shall review the report and all supporting data and report in writing to all parties within ten working days. The decision of the Dean will be final.