

## **(Procedure) Academic Grievances**

Responsible Department: Vice President for Academic Success

Adoption: 3-4-2016

The Alamo Colleges District has no expressed policy for Academic Grievances. The Vice President for Academic Success adopts and publishes the following as policy for Northeast Lakeview College until such time when the Board of Trustees institutes a District policy, which then will supersede this policy. This policy is modeled upon the current Board policy (F.4.7.1) for Non-Academic Grievances.

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### **Student Academic Grievance Procedures**

Northeast Lakeview College acknowledges the possibility that a student may dispute the final grade recorded for a course taken, believing that the grade was incorrectly or unfairly determined.

Prior to initiating a formal grievance, the student should make a reasonable effort to resolve the problem with the course professor. This should occur as soon as possible following the course end or notification of grade.

If the nature of the grade dispute is beyond the course academics and personal, then the student may first approach the chair of the academic division to which the course belongs or the Dean for further guidance. For grievances alleging sexual harassment, students are to follow the procedure outlined under Sexual Harassment in the College Catalog or Student Handbook.

All unresolved grievances beyond the level of the course professor will be channeled to the next higher-level administrator. A complete record of the grievance will be forwarded to the next higher-level administrator. After considering both sides and reviewing the record, a decision will be rendered affirming or denying the grievance. To affirm a student grievance there must be adequate cause.

If an initial, informal grade dispute is not resolved to the student's satisfaction, the following Student Academic Grievance procedure can be initiated using the Academic Grievance Form.

#### **A. Definition of Terms**

1. **"Professor"** is the instructor of record for the course the student took and from whom the disputed grade was recorded.
2. **"Chair"** is the administrative chair of the academic division in which the course resides. Occasionally, the course professor may have a home base in an academic division different from that of the course; in such a case, the chair of the division that controls the course, and not the chair of the professor's home division, is the appropriate administrator.
3. **"Dean"** is the Dean of Arts and Sciences, under whom the academic divisions, professors, and courses fall.
4. **"Adequate cause"** means clear and objective evidence in support of the student's position over that of the professor's explanation of the grade.
5. **"Grievance"** is a claim that a student's course grade has been incorrectly or unfairly determined and recorded.

6. **“Appeal”** is an action taken to request a review of and possible change to the recommended resolution of the grievance at a previous (lower) level.
7. **“Working days”** (and “business days” on the forms) are weekdays (Monday through Friday, excluding holidays) when the College is open for normal business. Days when faculty or chairs are “off contract” may extend the span of working days.
8. **“Grade”** refers only to the grade recorded for a course at the end of the semester. Individual assignment grades within a semester are not eligible for this academic grievance procedure and should be dealt with within the course itself. Individual assignment grades may, however, become part of the case for disputing a course grade after the course is complete.

## **B. Procedures**

1. A course must first be completed and a final course grade recorded before an academic grievance may be initiated.
2. The student who wishes to dispute a course grade should approach the course professor informally within the first two weeks of the next regular semester in an attempt to understand or resolve the grade dispute.
3. If the student is not satisfied with the explanation of the grade and wishes to file a formal grievance, he/she must do so by submitting a written appeal using the Student Academic Grievance Form within five working days following the initial, informal conference with the course professor. The first step in the formal grievance procedure is another conference with the course professor. The professor will render a decision either immediately in conference with the student or within five working days, either affirming or denying the grievance. The professor will notify the student of his/her decision in writing (which may be as simple as noting the decision and signing the grievance form).
4. If the student remains unsatisfied, he/she may appeal to the Chair of the academic division in which the course resides, within five working days. This step involves a conference with the chair, who will then seek an explanation from the course professor. The Chair will render a decision within five working days, either affirming or denying the grievance. The Chair will provide his/her decision in writing to both the student and the professor.
5. If the student remains unsatisfied, he/she may appeal to the Dean within five working days. This step involves completing a separate form available from the Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences, which provides for a written explanation of the student’s dispute, and a conference with the Dean, who will then seek an explanation from the Chair and from the course professor. The Dean’s role is not to regrade the student’s work but primarily to evaluate the process and ensure that the grade was determined properly (that is, in accordance with the course syllabus and College policies) and without inappropriate bias. The Dean will render a decision within five working days, either affirming or denying the grievance. The Dean will provide his/her decision in writing to the Chair, the student, and the professor.
6. The decision of the Dean is final.

7. A record of the academic grievance will be archived in the records of the Office of the Dean and forwarded upon the request of the Office of the Vice President for Student Success for inclusion in the College's records of other grievances.