

Academic Grievance Policy & Procedure

Purpose and Philosophy

Ottawa University's academic grievance policy is established to create an atmosphere wherein concerns about whether or not students have been treated fairly in the academic environment can be resolved. The University endeavors to address both the letter and spirit of academic policies and procedures.

Ottawa University's philosophy concerning the academic grievance process advocates multiple and frequent interactions between students and the University. No student should hesitate to contact a faculty member or administrator to discuss any issue or concern. If a student believes that an instructor has been unfair in grading, assessing student performance, or any area affecting academic performance, the matter should be resolved either informally or formally. Initially, when and wherever possible, parties should demonstrate a full and honest effort to resolve concerns informally, with minimal intervention by the University.

Historically, at Ottawa University, most problems have and can be resolved through the two sequential steps described below through "informal resolution."

Informal Resolution

Students who believe their academic success has been compromised by a faculty member or other University instructor are encouraged to take the initiative to meet with the instructor to resolve the issue in question. The student should inform his/her Academic Advisor/Adawe Advisor/Mentor of this step. More than one meeting may be required to enable either the student or instructor to gather appropriate related data or materials. Every effort should be made to resolve any concerns at this level, as instructors have ultimate responsibility for grades in the courses they teach. If the student does not accept the outcome of the meeting(s) with the instructor or should the student elect not to contact the instructor, the student should then contact his/her advisor for assistance. The student shall take this step promptly, preferably within one week of identifying the grievance. Assistance by the advisor may take a number of forms, including additional clarification to remedy miscommunication or misunderstandings. The advisor may also act as an advocate or neutral intermediary with the instructor. If matters are still unresolved to the student's satisfaction, the formal resolution policy described below is in order.

Formal Resolution

Only after significant effort has been pursued to resolve the issue through the informal process, will a formal resolution be initiated. Although each campus is a part of the overall Ottawa University system, this policy also recognizes that each campus has its own unique organization, size, needs, identity, and culture. In order to offer a consistent process as well as one that is truly responsive to all individuals, each campus will follow this grievance policy, as appropriately determined by the University and circumstances allow. Small campuses may need to modify the review process in order to serve the student effectively and in a timely fashion. The organization of the formal grievance procedure will proceed according to the general principles below:

- The procedure will be “user friendly.”
- The procedure will preserve and protect the confidentiality, integrity and human dignity of all parties.
- The procedure will endeavor to ensure due process for all involved parties.
- The procedure will seek to prevent any conflicts of interest.
- The procedure will be designed to support fairness and impartiality.
- Formal grievances should be submitted in writing.
- The student should describe the circumstances surrounding the issue or incident and provide any evidence in support of the concern that the student has available.
- At the discretion of the Academic Dean a committee or panel of at least three University personnel will hear the case. The committee will not be authorized to make or develop University policy. The panel will typically include (1) the Dean or designee, (2) a member of the faculty and (3) a non-related student advisor. The Dean will identify a committee Chair out of the three committee members.
- At the discretion of the Dean, faculty members may be full-time faculty and/or adjunct faculty. As part of the process, the committee chair must ensure that members of the grievance review committee will review all aspects of the grievance in an impartial manner to allow fairness for all parties.
- The Grievance panel will function only as a body and its members will have no individual authority on the matter before the panel.
- A lack of timeliness on the part of a party will not interfere with the proper investigation of a concern or with appropriately resolving the matter in question.
- Any employee or contractor of the University who attempts, regardless of how subtly, to coerce, single out, threaten, or retaliate against a complaining party, or to discourage use of this or any other University policy or procedure may be subject to disciplinary action or termination.

Procedure for Formal Resolution

A student who wishes to pursue a formal grievance should submit a written formal grievance with the Academic Dean within ten (10) days of exhausting the informal resolution process.

Upon receiving the formal grievance, the Dean will appoint a grievance review committee as described above. The committee will contact (in writing) the involved parties explaining the process to be used in examining the grievance. In a timely fashion, after gathering the necessary information, the committee will begin its review of the issue. The student and faculty member will be provided an opportunity to present their individual perspectives of the circumstance either in person or in writing, and the committee will

endeavor to make a decision in a timely fashion. The committee Chair will communicate the decision (in writing), to the involved parties. The chair will be responsible to maintain a log of all activities of the grievance review committee. This log will include minutes of meetings and all actions taken.

Appeal: Either party may submit a written petition to the Academic Dean appealing the committee decision. This should be done as soon as possible, typically within no more than ten (10) business days after the committee decision is made and communicated to the involved parties. The Dean will review the committee decision and gather any additional information found to be necessary for the appeal review.

Within 10 working days after completing the appeal review process, the Dean will make a final decision concerning the appeal and communicate it, in writing, to the involved parties.

The decision on appeal is final. In the event that the Dean is involved in the dispute, the process described above will be followed with the Campus Provost or Vice President of APGS appointing a university official to serve as the chair of the initial grievance review committee.

NOTE: Within 10 days of the final resolution of the grievance, the Academic Dean must report the details of the grievance to the University Registrar and University Complaints Officer. The University Registrar will maintain an official record of all grievances filed with the University.

If the student complaint cannot be resolved after exhausting the University's grievance procedure, the student may file a complaint with their respective state agency.