

Graduate Student Formal Grievance Procedures for Academic Progress and Other Issues (Graduate School Policies and Procedures, Chapter 12E3 and 12C)

Chapter 12E3: Graduate Student Complaint and Grievance Procedures

The graduate student complaint and formal grievance processes can involve several steps depending on the nature of the issue. There are many avenues available to Washington State University graduate students to resolve differences that might arise during the pursuit of an advanced degree. If a graduate program has its own grievance procedures, these procedures should be followed before utilizing the Graduate School's grievance procedures. In general, the operational principle that should be followed is to maintain open communication at the most immediate point of access and to work upwards from there when appropriate. This means that students should work with their major professor or advisor to resolve matters if possible. The next level would be the Program Director, Department Chair or School Director. If the complaint involves a complex or multi-campus issue, the Dean of the College may get involved at this point in the process. There are cases, of course, where this is difficult. In these cases, graduate students should make an appointment with one of the Associate Deans of the Graduate School for further advice. An important role of the Graduate School is to serve as an impartial arbitrator in these matters and to provide advice to both students and faculty that will result in the student continuing in good academic standing.

Complaint Procedures

- a. Students are encouraged to first consult with their faculty advisor.
- b. If the advisor is unable to resolve the problem, the student is encouraged to discuss the problem with the department/program chair, and/or an appropriate faculty liaison, such as the graduate program director or departmental ombudsman.
- c. If the complaint cannot be resolved at the department or program level, the student should contact the Associate Dean of the Graduate School designated by the Dean to hear student grievances (the Dean's designee).
- d. The Associate Dean will review the complaint and, at his or her discretion, will recommend possible actions for resolution to the student as well as to the department/program chair, director, college dean, and/or faculty liaison.

Formal Grievance Procedures

In some instances, such as those related to academic and employment issues (e.g. failed examinations, termination of assistantship, dismissal from program, etc.), the student may wish to appeal a specific decision made by the departmental or program faculty.

- a. The student must make a formal grievance request to the Dean of the Graduate School in writing, with signature (email is not sufficient). The student must submit documentation describing his/her grounds for a formal grievance to the Dean. Formal grievances must be filed within 15 (fifteen) calendar days following a notice of decision. The original decision will be held in abeyance until the university has rendered a final decision.

- b. The Dean will assign these formal grievances to one of the Associate Deans for full consideration and recommendation.
- c. If the Associate Dean deems it appropriate, the matter will be referred to an independent Committee on Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (CGSRR) for consideration and formulating recommendations of action to the Dean of the Graduate School. The CGSRR will operate with due respect to the rights of graduate students, faculty, and administrators including the conduct of interviews, the right of all parties to review and address allegations, and the right to a fair hearing. The CGSRR will deliberate and render a recommendation to the Dean of the Graduate School or the Dean's designee within 60 days of being formed.
- d. Recommendations for resolution of formal grievances will be acted upon by the Dean or the Dean's designee. The Dean of the Graduate School will make a final decision. The decision made by the Dean on academic matters is final.

Graduate Student Appeal Procedures

An Appeal of the decision made by the Dean of the Graduate School can be made to the Provost if the graduate student believes there was a procedural error or failure to follow WSU or Graduate School policy during the complaint or grievance process. The written appeal to the Provost regarding procedural irregularities must be filed within fifteen (15) calendar days following the notice of the decision from the Dean of the Graduate School in response to the formal grievance. The appeal must be copied to the Dean of the Graduate School. If the Dean of the Graduate School does not receive a copy of the appeal within fifteen (15) calendar days, the student's right to appeal will be waived and the Dean's decision will be final. The Provost will not reopen cases for the purpose of re-investigating the grievance.

Professional Student Grievance and Appeal Procedures

Professional students within the College of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M. program), the College of Pharmacy (Pharm. D. program), and the College of Business (M.B.A. programs) will follow College policies and procedures for grievances related to academic issues. Appeal of College level decisions can be made to the Graduate School if the professional student believes there was a procedural error or failure to follow WSU or College policies during the complaint or grievance process. The professional student must make a formal appeal request to the Dean of the Graduate School in writing, with signature (email is not sufficient). Formal appeals must be filed within 15 (fifteen) calendar days following a notice of decision. The original decision will be held in abeyance while under appeal. The Dean of the Graduate School will not reopen cases for the purpose of re-investigating the grievance.

College of Veterinary Medicine Policies for D.V.M. students:

<http://courses.vetmed.wsu.edu/policies/>

College of Pharmacy Policies for Pharm.D. students:

<http://www.pharmacy.wsu.edu/currentstudents/pharmfiles/studenthandbook.pdf>

College of Business Policies for M.B.A. students:

<http://business.wsu.edu/graduate-programs/>

12C: Student Rights of Appeal Related to Academic Work

- 1. Appeal of Course Grades:** Graduate students should refer to the WSU Academic Regulations 104 and 105 stated below. If the student wishes to appeal a grade that has led to a decision that the student be dismissed from the Graduate School (for academic deficiency or examination failure, for example). The student should make every effort to file his/her appeal as soon as possible and to work through the grade appeal process in a timely manner.

Formal grievances submitted to the Graduate School regarding dismissal due to a failed examination or academic deficiency will not be delayed due to the grade appeal process. Formal grievance decisions made by the Dean of the Graduate School will be based on the grades officially listed on the student's transcript. If the student's grade is changed due to a grade appeal decision made after the formal grievance process has been completed, then the program chair may request that the Dean of the Graduate School review the case based on the grade change and make a determination regarding reinstatement.

WSU Academic Regulations Rules 104 and 105 state:

Rule 104: ACADEMIC COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

A student having complaints about instruction or grading should attempt to resolve those issues directly with the instructor. If that fails, the student should send an email to the instructor using his or her official WSU email account no later than 20 business days following the end of the semester. This email should briefly outline the complaint and be copied to the chairperson of the academic department.

If the complaint is not resolved with the instructor within 20 business days of sending the email, then the student may work directly with the chairperson of the academic department in which the course is offered. The chair's decision shall be rendered within 20 additional business days.

After the chair's decision, the student or the instructor may appeal to the academic college Dean's Office. Complaints must be presented in writing to the college dean within 20 business days of the chair's decision. The written statement should describe the complaint, indicate how it affects the individual or unit, and include the remedy sought from the college dean. The decision of the college dean is the final step and shall be made within 20 business days.

At the campuses other than Pullman, the procedure is identical except that the program leader shall substitute for the department chair, and the campus chancellor or his or her designee shall substitute for the college dean, if the department chair and/or the college dean is not located on that campus.

The University Ombudsman is available at any stage for advice or assistance in resolving academic complaints.

Note: Though chairs and college deans (and program leaders and campus chancellors) may resolve complaints about instruction and grading, they may not change a final grade without the consent of the instructor, except as provided by Rule 105.

Rule 105: ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES TO FINAL GRADES

Chairperson Acting in Lieu of Instructor: In the extraordinary circumstances when an instructor is not available, or has failed to respond to the student or chairperson using his or her official WSU email account

within 20 business days according to Rule 104, the chairperson of the department may change a final grade.

University Grade Appeals Board: If a chair, dean, Graduate School Dean, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs or designee, or University Ombudsman determines that a change of a final grade is warranted for any reason other than academic dishonesty, any one of them may refer the case to the chair of the University Grade Appeals Board for review. The case must be referred within one semester of the posting of the grade (excluding summer term).

The University Grade Appeals Board shall have jurisdiction over decisions of any instructor and/or administrator on matters of University course grading appeals. The decision of the board is final and not subject to further appeal.

Note: Students may not take a grade appeal directly to the board but should follow the academic complaint procedures, as presented in Rule 104.

Procedure for academic integrity violations: Allegations of academic integrity violations are processed through the procedure established in WAC 504-26-404. A final grade may be changed at any time as a result of this procedure.

2. **University Grade Appeals Board.** The University Grade Appeals Board, an official committee of the University President, functions to review academic grade appeals forwarded by any departmental chair, dean, Graduate School Dean, or university ombudsman. <https://president.wsu.edu/grade-appeals/>
3. **Preliminary and/or Final Examination Committee Decisions.** In most cases of examination failure, the student is given an opportunity to take a second and final examination (the exception is discussed below). In these cases, the Graduate School will send an official representative to preside over the second examination to protect the rights of the student, faculty, and program. The Graduate School has trained a group of willing faculty members (Graduate Mentor Academy) in the appropriate procedures to be followed for a second examination. The Graduate School's examination procedures must be followed to schedule the second examination. These procedures are outlined in Chapters 7 and 8 of this manual. If the student fails the examination a second time, he/she will be dismissed from the Graduate School. The student may appeal the decision by filing a formal grievance with the Graduate School. For details, see Section E, Part 3 of this chapter.

A student will not be allowed to take a second and final examination after first examination failure when the following criteria are met: the first examination must have had a representative from the Graduate Mentor Academy (appointed by the Graduate School) present for the oral examination and/or balloting meeting (if no oral examination was given); if this representative confirms that the examination process was fair and proceeded according to Graduate School policy, and if the representative agrees with the faculty committee and program chair that a re-examination is not an appropriate disposition of the case, then the Dean of the Graduate School will review the case and make the final determination whether or not to re-examine the student. The student may

appeal the decision by filing a formal grievance with the Graduate School. For details, see Section E, Part 3 of this chapter.