

College Operating Procedures (COP)



Procedure Title: Student Academic Grievance Procedure
Procedure Number: 06-0803
Originating Department: Student Services

Specific Authority:

Board Policy 6Hx6:3.02
Florida Statute 1001.65
Florida Administrative Code

Procedure Actions: Adopted: 01/10/2010, 02/01/2011, 07/29/2011; 9/27/2011; 02/02/2021

Purpose Statement: The academic grievance procedure outlines a process through which students can resolve academic issues, both informally and formally. The procedure defines the role of campus and district personnel.

Academic Grievance Procedure

The Florida SouthWestern State College Academic Grievance Procedure is designed to provide resolution to legitimate academic issues. State Board Rules and College Policies are not subject to academic grievance; only the application or interpretation of rules or policies may be grieved. To facilitate an efficient and timely resolution process, Florida SouthWestern State College has an Ombudsperson to assist students through informal and formal grievance procedures. The College also maintains a clear chain of escalation for grievances.

The Academic Grievance Procedure is based on the assumption that academic disagreements should be resolved by student and faculty interaction via an informal process. The formal grievance procedures are intended to provide all Florida SouthWestern State College students with opportunities for objective review of facts and events that are related to the cause of a grievance when the involved faculty members and students are not able to resolve a dispute on their own. These reviews will be accomplished in a collegial, non-judicial atmosphere. All parties are expected to behave in a civil manner.

When a student feels that an error has been made in the assignment of a course grade, it is the responsibility of the student to first meet with the faculty member to try to resolve the issue. The Academic Dean or designee in the appropriate school may be consulted if necessary. Grades are assigned solely by the faculty member of record. This assignment of grades is not subject to change through the Formal Academic Grievance Process. The decision of the faculty member is binding, except in cases where a grade can be shown to have been arbitrary, capricious, and/or retaliatory in nature.

Time Limits for Grievances

A grievance must be filed in a timely fashion. Formal written grievances must involve a specific event or incident occurring within 30 days of filing. The student must participate in an Informal Grievance Procedure before filing a formal written grievance. Grievances will generally be resolved within 30 days. If more time is required to reach a resolution, all parties involved must agree in writing to the extension. If agreement cannot be reached, the Provost will make the final time determination.

Informal Grievance Procedure

The aggrieved student feels that published College policies or procedures have been violated and that this has negatively affected his/her academic status.

1. The student shall meet with the faculty member and both shall make an effort to reach a mutual resolution. The syllabus will be the guiding document. Every effort should be made to resolve the problem at this level.
2. If the grievance remains unresolved, the Academic Dean or designee shall be consulted, and a second attempt will be made to solve the grievance informally.
3. If resolution is not successful, then the student may move to place a formal grievance. The formal grievance must be submitted within five working days of denial of the informal grievance.

Formal Grievance Procedure

The aggrieved student should submit a request in writing to the Academic Dean for a formal student grievance hearing.

A formal written grievance is distinguished from an informal grievance in the following manner:

1. The grievance must be in writing and must be dated and signed by the student making the grievance.
2. The grievance must clearly identify the department(s) and issue(s) involved.
3. The grievance must indicate that the student has attempted to resolve the issue with the involved staff member prior to the date of the grievance.

The Academic Dean shall appoint an ad hoc grievance committee consisting of the faculty Department Chair, Program Coordinator or Director, or faculty designee, and two other members: one regular, full-time administrative employee and one member of the Student Government Association Board. The Department Chair, Program Coordinator or Director, or faculty designee will serve as the chairperson.

1. The Dean or his/her designee will serve as recording secretary to the committee but shall have no vote.
2. The committee shall, within seven working days of being constituted, meet to hear the grievance, review documentation, and interview all witnesses deemed pertinent to the matter.
3. The committee shall, within four working days after the close of the hearing, report its findings, and make a recommendation for resolution of the matter.
4. The Academic Dean will report the finding to the Provost for a final decision. That decision is binding. There are no further appeals within the College.
5. When the grievance has been resolved, all paperwork shall be forwarded to the Vice Provost for Student Affairs for archiving.