

Academic Grievance Policy

Wheaton College, Norton, MA

It is the policy of Wheaton College to address student academic concerns or complaints fairly and in a timely manner. When a student has a concern about a grade given by a faculty member the department and the college have an obligation to deal with such concern in a prompt and fair manner. Often, these complaints or concerns arise due to poor communication or misunderstandings. Whenever possible, therefore, informal procedures as outlined in Step One should be used to address the grievance.

Students can receive guidance on the how to proceed with any part of the grievance process by meeting with an academic dean in Kollett Hall.

Step One:

When a student has a complaint about a grade based on a clear discrepancy between the grade and the course requirements as stated in the syllabus, miscalculation, or a discrepancy with a grading rubric, the student should bring the matter to the attention of the faculty member **in writing** within 10 days after receiving the grade, either by e-mail or letter, to be followed if possible by a telephone or face-to-face conversation to discuss it. Upon receipt of such notification the faculty member must send a response within 10 days. If the student is not satisfied with the response, or receives no response within the 10 day period, the student is urged to contact the instructor again to request a decision. If at this point the student is not satisfied with the response, or has yet to receive one, and does not feel that he or she can present the concern directly to the faculty member, he or she may proceed to Step Two within the latter 10-day period.

Step Two:

If the matter cannot be resolved through informal consultation with the faculty member, the student may take the concern or complaint to the Chair of the department of the faculty member in writing. If the complaint is against the Chair, another senior member of the department with experience as chair, selected by the Provost, will fulfill the responsibilities of the chair. If no such senior member is available, a senior member from a department in a related discipline may fulfill this role.

In all cases the chair or substitute should base her/his decision on clear and convincing evidence and on the principle that authority to determine grades lies with the faculty member, especially if there is a clear rubric for determining grades that has been spelled out in the syllabus or course documents.

If the department chair concludes that the student's concerns about a grade do not require further action, the chair shall issue a written statement to both parties that clearly outlines the reasons for the decision. Chairs are expected to keep records of such disputes on file.

If the department chair determines that the complaint merits further review, he or she shall separately interview the faculty member and complaining student. The Chair should render a decision and issue a report based on the evidence that he/she reviewed along with any recommendations and send a copy to the complaining student, the faculty member, and the provost. In ordinary cases it is expected that the review and written report should be completed within 20 working days of the date the complaint was filed.

Step Three:

If either the grieved student or faculty member is dissatisfied with the Chair's decision, he or she may appeal the decision to the Provost within 10 days for a final review of the matter. The appeal must be based on a perceived procedural defect in the Chair's handling of the matter or on new evidence not available at the time of the Chair's review. The provost shall review all the documentation that led to the Chair's decision, along with the materials submitted by the student to the Chair. The provost shall send a copy of her/his decision to the student presenting the grievance, the faculty member, and the department chair. That decision shall be final and not subject to further appeal by the grieving student.