

College of Visual Arts
Student Academic Grievance Policy and Procedures

Section 1: Scope and Guiding Principles

This policy addresses student academic grievances only. Academic grievances are complaints brought by students concerning the college's provision of educational services affecting their role, progress, and status as students. Academic grievances must be based on an alleged violation of a college rule, policy, or established practice. This policy does not limit the college's right to change rules, policies, or practices.

This policy does not apply to conflicts related to complaints under the Student Conduct Code, to academic misconduct allegations, to sexual harassment complaints, or to any type of allegation other than an academic grievance, as defined above.

The goal of this policy and these procedures is to resolve conflicts through a simple and expeditious process, through informal resolution methods, if possible. Resolutions may include student reinstatement or other academic corrective action on behalf of the student, but may not include monetary compensation or disciplinary action against any college employee. Grievances involving an instructor's judgment in assigning a grade based on academic performance may be resolved only through the informal resolution procedures set forth in this policy.

Section 2: Academic Grievance Procedures

(a) Academic Grievance Officer

The Vice President and General Counsel of the college shall serve as the Academic Grievance Officer. It shall be her role to coordinate the process of resolving academic grievances.

(b) Initiating a complaint

A student initiates a complaint by submitting a written statement to the Academic Grievance Officer including the complainant's name, the respondent individual(s) involved, the incident, the rule, policy, or established practice claimed to be violated, and the relief that the complainant seeks. The complaint must be filed not less than thirty (30) calendar days after the incident that is being grieved.

(c) Informal resolution

If the complaint names a faculty member who is not an academic department chairperson as respondent, the Academic Grievance Officer shall forward the complaint to the chairperson of the academic department in which the incident occurred. Within fifteen (15) days of receiving the complaint, the department chair shall meet with the complainant and the faculty member and attempt to resolve the conflict to their mutual satisfaction. If an agreement is not reached, the complaint enters the formal resolution process.

If the complaint names an academic department chairperson, a staff member, or an administrator as the respondent, the Academic Grievance Officer shall meet with the complainant and the respondent within fifteen (15) days of receiving the complaint and attempt to resolve the conflict to their mutual satisfaction. If an agreement is not reached, the complaint enters the formal resolution process.

If the complaint is resolved through an informal process, the terms of the agreement resolving the complaint are communicated to the Academic Grievance Officer, who in turn reports on the controversy and resolution to the President and Chief Academic Officer.

(d) Formal resolution

If informal resolution of the complaint does not occur, the complaint is resolved through a formal hearing process coordinated by the Academic Grievance Officer.

(1) Formation of Hearing Panel

Unless named as respondent, the chair of the academic department in which the incident occurred shall serve as panel chair. If the department chair is a respondent, or if a staff member or administrator is a respondent, the Academic Grievance Officer may serve as panel chair or may designate another faculty member to chair the panel. The panel chair, with the advice of the Academic Grievance Officer, shall select two other faculty members who shall serve as panel members for the grievance proceeding.

(2) Hearing Panel Procedures

The hearing panel shall review the written evidence offered by the complainant in support of the complaint and take testimony, if they in their sole discretion deem testimony to be necessary. The panel shall not substitute its judgment for that of those most closely acquainted with the discipline involved and the student's performance, but will base its decision on whether a rule, policy, or established practice was violated. The hearing panel shall prepare a written report recommending a resolution of the matter and provide copies of the decision to the Academic Grievance Officer, the complainant, and the respondent. The Academic Grievance Officer shall give the complainant appeal instructions.

(3) Within fifteen (15) days after receiving the panel's decision, the complainant may appeal the decision by presenting to the CVA President and Chief Academic Officer a written appeal statement of reasons why the panel's decision should be modified. In the absence of the President and Chief Academic Officer, the appeal may be presented to the Academic Grievance Officer to be forwarded to the President and Chief Academic Officer. During school vacation periods, the appeal instructions may specify a longer appeal period, if necessary to preserve the student's right to appeal.

(4) The President and Chief Academic Officer shall review the panel's written decision and the complainant's written appeal statement. The President and Chief Academic Officer, in her sole discretion, may request that the complainant and/or the involved faculty member or the Academic Grievance Officer meet with her to discuss the matter before ruling on the appeal. The President and Chief Academic Officer shall communicate her ruling on the appeal to the complainant, the respondent, the involved academic chairperson, and the Academic Grievance Officer; the President and Chief Academic Officer's decision is final.

(5) If the student does not file a timely appeal, the panel's decision becomes final upon the expiration of the appeal period.