

STUDENT GUIDE TO ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

The process of addressing academic grievances is described in the formalized Academic Grievance Procedures document, available at <https://www.kapiolani.hawaii.edu/policies-and-plans/>.

NOTE: If a student feels harassed, harmed, or discriminated against, it is recommended that the student contact the appropriate campus department. Visit <https://www.kapiolani.hawaii.edu/report-a-concern/> to report this type of concern to Kapi'olani Community College.

A student must make reasonable attempts to learn the course material. Instructors have the authority to conduct classes, facilitate discussions, assign tasks or projects, administer assessments, and evaluate students. Students are responsible to follow the instructor's policies and procedures as written in the course syllabus, but should also be safeguarded against unfair grading practices.

If a student feels that they have received an unjust final grade due to the instructor's misconduct or failure to meet customary academic standards, the student has the option to initiate academic grievance proceedings. The purpose of the academic grievance is to seek an appropriate remedy, typically a grade adjustment, that empowers the student to advocate for themselves. The student should not expect that the academic grievance will penalize the instructor.

The academic grievance process relies on the student taking action and aims to resolve issues at the lowest level possible. Initially, the student discusses their complaint with the faculty member but, if necessary, it can be escalated up to the Chancellor. If the student is satisfied with any outcome along the way, they can stop the process. However, each step must be completed within a set timeframe for a prompt resolution.

When starting the process, the student must state their claims upfront and provide all relevant evidence. This ensures that each level of review, including the Department Chair, Dean, Academic Grievance Committee, and Chancellor, has all the necessary information to make an informed decision.

The process begins with the student initiating a conversation with the instructor about their final grade. This conversation should take place within 30 business days after the grades are officially posted (See <https://www.kapiolani.hawaii.edu/classes-and-graduation/academic-calendar/> for Fall and Spring dates.). If the student and instructor fail to resolve the matter, the student must then consult informally with the Department Chair, who will also consult with the instructor involved. The DC will notify the student of the chair's determination regarding the validity of the complaint, along with the reasons for this decision, within 7 business days of the student's informal consultation with the DC.

If the chair finds no merit to the complaint, the student can now file a formal written complaint with the DC (Form 1) within 7 days, and the DC will then create a written response for the student (Form 2) within 7 business days of receipt of the formal complaint. The student has the burden of proof, which means that the student has to include evidence, including any written documents (such as the syllabus, graded work, or email) and statements from the student or others that show that the instructor acted inappropriately or inconsistently, leading to an unfair grade. This creates a record for the next step in the process. A student cannot file a grievance without documentation or evidence backing their claim.

If the DC's response isn't satisfactory to the student, within 7 business days, the student can take the academic grievance to the appropriate Academic Dean. The student needs to send the Dean the original complaint (Form 1), the DC's response (Form 2), and a statement explaining why the student disagrees with the DC (Form 3). Within 14 business days of getting the grievance, the Dean will review it and let the student know if the Dean thinks the complaint is valid, and why, using Form 4.

If the Dean's response does not resolve the situation to the student's satisfaction, within 7 business days of receiving the Dean's response, the student can file a grievance with the Chancellor (Form 5), including a statement as to why the student disagrees with the Dean's response. Within 7 business days of receipt of the grievance, the Chancellor will inform the instructor and Academic Grievance Committee (AGC) Chair of a pending grievance.

The Academic Grievance Committee (AGC) Chair will review the grievance. If the Chair believes the grievance lacks merit and is beyond dispute, it will be dismissed as frivolous. If it is not clearly frivolous, the Chair will schedule a hearing within 14 business days of receiving the grievance notice. The student must attend the hearing, but the faculty member is not required to. If the student does not attend, the grievance may be dismissed. Within 7 business days after the hearing, the AGC chair will send a memo with the committee's findings and recommendations to the Chancellor.

The Chancellor will come to a conclusion regarding the grievance based on the recommendations of the AGC. The Chancellor will then inform the student and faculty member of that decision within 7 business days of receipt of the AGC Chair's memo. The Chancellor's decision is final within the College.