

<b>ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION</b> STAF Student Affairs		<b>POLICY NUMBER</b> STAF 6.27
<b>POLICY TITLE</b> Student Grievance Policy		
<b>SCOPE OF POLICY</b> USC Columbia		<b>DATE OF REVISION</b> June 17, 2025
<b>RESPONSIBLE OFFICER</b> Vice President for Student Affairs and Academic Support		<b>ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE</b> Office of Student Affairs and Academic Support

## **PURPOSE**

The university is committed to treating all students fairly with regard to any academic or non-academic decision/action that the student contends was in violation of written campus policy or unfair/unequal application of said policy. This procedure is designed to provide students an opportunity to address academic and non-academic complaints and problems they have been unable to resolve through other channels.

## **DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS**

**Academic Grievance:** A complaint by a student about a grade in a course or an absence that affects their final grade in a course. The procedures herein shall not extend to matters of grading student work where the substance of a complaint is simply the student's disagreement with the mark or grade placed on their work. Such matters shall be discussed by a student and their instructor; final authority shall remain with the instructor.

**Appeal:** An application to a higher designee(s) to review and request change of a decision.

**Appeals Committee:** A group of university representatives who hear formal resolution cases in each unit of the university. Appeals committee are appointed by the academic dean or vice president of the department or unit that participated in the informal resolution process. Appeals committee should consist of no less than three full-time employees. It is the responsibility of the academic dean or vice president of the department or unit to train the committee members on appropriate decision-making.

**Student:** A person who is currently enrolled at the university, or who is accepted for admission or readmission to the university, or who has been enrolled at the university in a prior semester or summer session and is eligible to continue enrollment in the semester or summer session that immediately follows, or who is attending an educational program sponsored by the university while that person is on campus, or who engaged in prohibited conduct at a time when the individual met the above criteria. Individuals who are not currently enrolled at the university remain subject to the disciplinary process for conduct that occurred while they were enrolled.

**Grade Appeal:** A formal process where a student can request a review after receiving a final grade if they believe there was an error in computation of the grade or does not follow the grading rubric outlined in the syllabus.

**Informal Resolution:** Resolving a complaint or issue directly with the involved parties, without a formal appeal, aiming for a quick and mutually agreeable solution. This resolution is resolved within the department or unit with the authority to issue a decision.

**Formal Resolution:** Resolving a complaint or issue through formal review decided by an appeals committee.

**Formal Resolution Petition:** A written complaint that outlines the grievance, the conversations leading to the request for formal resolution, and the preferred outcome. The formal resolution petition can be sent via email.

**Non-academic Grievance:** A complaint by a student about an alleged action by a university employee which adversely affects the status, rights, or privileges of the student. This process shall not be used to appeal a grade, contest course requirements, examinations, course content, admission to a program, disciplinary decisions, housing appeals decisions, residency classification decisions, financial aid and scholarship decisions, or traffic appeals decisions, or any other type of decision where a clearly defined appeal process has already been established. Grievances relating to discrimination or harassment by reason of a protected class will be referred to the Office of Civil Rights & Title IX.

**Scholastic Standard and Petitions Committee:** A committee of the Faculty Senate whose responsibilities can be found on the [website](#).

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The primary objective of the grievance procedure is to ensure that concerns are promptly dealt with, and resolutions are reached in a fair manner. It is essential that each student be given an adequate opportunity to bring both academic and non-academic complaints and problems to the attention of the university administration with assurance that each will be given fair treatment.

## **PROCEDURES**

- A. A grievance must be initiated within 30 business days from the date of the alleged violation. The Office of Student Advocacy serves as a resource to advise students on grievance resolution options. There are two resolution options: (a) informal resolution, and (b) formal resolution. The informal resolution option must be exhausted before a formal resolution claim may be filed.
- B. Informal Resolution:
  1. Students should first attempt to resolve the grievance with the person with whom they have a grievance through informal resolution.
  2. The aggrieved student should meet with the person(s) who they believe was unfair first. If the student is unsatisfied after meeting with them, they can escalate the grievance to their direct report (department chair for academic grievances or

supervisor for non-academic grievances.)

3. If the student has good reason not to attempt a resolution with this person, the Office of Student Advocacy will arrange for the student to meet with the appropriate supervisor or department chair to address the grievance.
  4. Informal resolutions are deemed satisfactory when all parties arrive at a resolution that is acceptable. The outcome of the informal resolution should be shared in writing, an email is acceptable, by the university official to create a record of the outcome.
- C. Formal Resolution: If the parties cannot reach a satisfactory informal resolution or one of the parties does not accept the informal resolution shared in writing, they can file for a formal resolution by contacting the university official involved in the informal resolution process. The Office of Student Advocacy can assist parties in determining the appropriate party to file the formal resolution petition.
1. A formal resolution petition is a written complaint that outlines the grievance, the conversations leading to the request for formal resolution, and the preferred outcome. The formal resolution petition can be sent via email.
  2. The formal resolution petition should be submitted within five business days of the conclusion of the informal resolution process.
  3. The formal resolution petition will be shared with the designated appeals committee, and, at the same time, the names of the appeals committee members will be shared with the party filing the appeal. Should the party filing the appeal deem a member of the appeals committee to hold a bias that would render them unable to provide a fair decision on appeal, that party should file a request to have that party removed with the academic dean or vice president who will make the final decision as to whether that member of the appeals committee should remain or be replaced by a member of the dean or vice president's choosing.
  4. On the date that the formal resolution petition is filed, the appeals committee will also share the petition with the party who is the subject of the grievance. That party will submit a response in writing to the appeals committee within five business days of receiving the petition.
  5. The committee will meet within five business days of receiving the appeal petition response to make a decision. While appeal committee decisions will be made on a review of the written appeal petition and response. In extraordinary circumstances, the appeal committee can request to call parties as witnesses. Generally, appeals committee decisions will be made at the meeting stage, but the committee may take additional reasonable time, if needed, but not to exceed ten business days without permission from the academic dean or vice president.
  6. The appeals committee decision should be issued to both parties in writing.

7. The decision of the appeal committee is final for a non-academic issue. For an academic issue, the student's final appeal is with the Scholastic Standards and Petitions Committee. Final appeals to the committee must be requested within 14 calendar days of the final decision of the formal resolution.

#### **RELATED UNIVERSITY, STATE AND FEDERAL POLICIES**

As Applicable

#### **HISTORY OF REVISIONS**

<b>DATE OF REVISION</b>	<b>REASON FOR REVISION</b>
June 1, 1992	New policy approval
October 18, 2016	Non-Substantive Revision
August 3, 2023	Policy updated to standard template. Non-Substantive revision to reflect current organization structure.
June 17, 2025	Consolidation of academic and non-academic grievance policies.