



**To be used for Undergraduate Student Grade Grievances ONLY.
Do not use this process to address General Complaints.**

I. GUIDELINES

- A. The College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (CSSAH) is committed to providing a supportive educational environment for students. The procedures for hearing student grievances attempt to balance the rights of students with the rights of instructors.
- B. The student grievance procedures and guidelines as set forth herein apply to undergraduate students enrolled in classes or programs in the CSSAH at Florida A&M University, hereinafter FAMU, and shall be reviewed by the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities Grievance Committee (CSSAH-GC).
- C. The CSSAH-GC members are appointed by the dean of the CSSAH. One representative is appointed from each of the CSSAH departments, with the exception of the Department of Military Science (Army ROTC), which is a federal government entity. The degree-granting programs are housed in the following departments:
- Department of English and Modern Languages
 - Department of History, Political Science, Geography and African American Studies
 - Division of Interdisciplinary Studies
 - Department of Music
 - Department of Psychology
 - Department of Social Work
 - Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice
 - Department of Visual Arts, Humanities and Theatre (includes Philosophy and Religion)

The CSSAH-GC members are required to be full-time nine (9) month or twelve (12) month faculty from one of the aforementioned departments. The committee consists of eight (8) members, one (1) of whom serves as chair. The majority of the committee shall be 12-month faculty. The dean reserves the right to appoint a chair to serve on the committee, in addition to the eight (8) members who serve on the CSSAH-GC. CSSAH-GC members serve two-year terms and may be reappointed by the dean. The dean may use his/her discretion to reorganize the CSSAH-GC members prior to the end of the two-year term.

The standard meeting schedule for the CSSAH-GC shall be the first Wednesday (including summer term) of each month from 2:30 p.m.– 4:30 p.m., unless otherwise directed by the CSSAH-GC Chair. The CSSAH-GC shall have a quorum to conduct meetings and hearings. A quorum shall consist of two-thirds (2/3rds) of the committee membership.

- D. The student grade grievance procedures and guidelines of the CSSAH-GC provide 1) an impartial review of grades which are alleged to be capricious, arbitrary, or discriminatory (grade grievance) or 2) actions which create an unsatisfactory academic learning condition (complaints).
- E. The student grade grievance procedures and guidelines do not provide a mechanism for departure from curricular and programmatic requirements. Unless there is an issue with grading the student in a capricious, arbitrary or discriminatory manner or an issue with the academic learning condition, the professional judgement of the instructor is not a matter which can be challenged or appealed in this process.
- F. There are other departments/schools, colleges, and university policies identifying grounds for grievances not covered in the student grade grievance procedures and guidelines of the CSSAH. For information concerning these other grievance issues, see the FAMU General Electronic Catalog and/or the Florida A&M University Student Handbook – the FANG.
- G. In all cases, student grade grievances shall be heard at the College level only after an initial decision has been rendered at the department level in accordance with the procedures and guidelines established herein.
- H. An instructor shall not be required to change a grade or a learning condition unless the grievant is able to document to the chair/director of the department/school, the dean of the CSSAH or chair of the CSSAH-GC that the instructor's grading has been arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory or the instructor's actions have been otherwise detrimental to satisfactory learning conditions.
- I. Chairs, directors and the dean are authorized to grant **variances** of deadlines and appointments to process the appeal in order to allow for unavoidable circumstances. A variance arising because of a person's absence from campus during the time of the appeal may be granted by the dean after reviewing the circumstances.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Grievance:** the expression of dissatisfaction with an academic decision or learning condition.

There are two types of grievances:

1. **Grade Grievance** to reverse a final course grade that is alleged to be arbitrary, capricious, discriminatory or an unacceptable learning condition.
 - **Arbitrary** refers to a grading decision for which there is no sound academic reason, or a decision based solely on preference or whim.
 - **Capricious** refers to a grading decision not resulting from a reasonable and announced grading policy and procedure.
 - **Discriminatory** refers to a grading decision reflecting differential treatment based on race, religion, color, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, or national origin.

- **Unacceptable Academic Learning Condition** refers to an instructor who has created or perpetuated an unauthorized academic learning condition or environment that has caused a significant and ascertainable negative impact upon the student.
2. **General Complaints** refer to actions on the part of an instructor who allegedly contributes to an unsatisfactory academic learning condition. (The CSSAH-GC does not hear complaints of this nature. Please refer to the FAMU General Electronic Catalog and/or the Florida A&M University Student Handbook – the FANG.)
- B. **Grievant** is the individual who files a grievance or an appeal of a decision.
- C. **Time Periods** are referred to as **working days**, which are weekdays (Monday-Friday) on which classes or exams are scheduled during any of the academic terms of the institution.

III. GRADE GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Formal Department/College Review

1. The formal grade grievance procedure may be initiated by the student only after the student has made an effort to resolve the appeal informally with the instructor who has assigned the grade. Review and reconsideration of the issue by these two parties may be all that is required for resolution. The student should initiate the formal grade grievance process with the instructor as soon as possible after receipt of notification of the grade.
2. If the instructor and student cannot resolve the student's issue, the student should make an appointment with the department chair. In the event the instructor is the chair of the department, the student should contact an associate dean in CSSAH and discuss the issue with this individual.
3. The chair may offer to meet with the student and the instructor if the student thinks that a mediating presence would be helpful. If the student would like to remain anonymous, and the nature of the concern makes anonymity possible, the chair may offer to speak to the instructor on behalf of the student.

B. Formal College Review

1. If the department fails to resolve the student's grievance, the student may elect to file an Application for Student Grade Grievance to the CSSAH-GC. The application shall be filed **within 30 working days** from the first (1st) day of class, at the beginning of the following semester in which the disputed grade was issued. The first (1st) day of class is stipulated in the FAMU Official University Calendar for the summer, fall and spring semesters.
2. The Application for a Student Grade Grievance can be accessed and completed online at www.famu.edu/cssah. Handwritten forms will not be accepted.

The grievance is required to include the following information:

- a. Specific details regarding the actions or events leading to the written grievance and evidence regarding the student's allegation(s) of arbitrary, capricious, discriminatory action or an unacceptable academic learning condition;
- b. Redress (the remedy or resolution being sought) by the grievant;
- c. Steps already taken;
- d. Reasons for dissatisfaction with the response of the instructor and/or with the decision resulting from the formal department review;
- e. The course syllabus that was provided by the professor to the class;
- f. Any and all assignments; including graded exams, quizzes, homework, graded essays or research papers, e-mails, text messages, Blackboard Assignments or grades, etc.;
- g. Any pertinent official university and/or dean's excuse that grievant has in his/her possession;
- h. Additional supporting documentation necessary to support the grievance.

An Application for Student Grade Grievance that does not include the aforementioned shall be deemed as not having merit and shall be reviewed by the CSSAH-GC.

The typewritten appeal shall be addressed to the CSSAH-GC.

3. The CSSAH-GC chair shall request that the department chair forward documentation pertaining to the grievance **within 21 working days** of receipt of the initial letter notifying him/her of the student grade grievance.
4. The CSSAH-GC chair shall then initiate the committee's review so that a decision may be rendered to the grievant **within the semester the Application for Student Grade Grievance is filed.**

Formal Hearings

5. Upon receipt of the grievance, the CSSAH-GC chair shall present the materials to the CSSAH-GC by the grievant for the purpose of determining if further discussion or a hearing shall be scheduled to resolve the grievance.
6. **Hearing Not Warranted** - After reviewing documentation provided by the parties to the grievance, the CSSAH-GC may determine that a College-level hearing is not warranted. The CSSAH-GC shall report its findings and make a recommendation to the CSSAH dean. The dean shall make a decision on the student's grievance and notify the grievant in writing.

Hearing Warranted - After reviewing documentation provided by the parties to the grievance, the CSSAH-GC may determine if a hearing is warranted. A hearing will be scheduled by the CSSAH-GC chair.
7. **Hearing Schedule** - The parties to the hearing shall include the grievant, the instructor being aggrieved and the chair of the respective department in which the dispute arose. All parties shall be notified in writing by the CSSAH-GC chair as to the date, time, and location of the formal hearing **ten working days in advance** of the formal hearing.

Unless otherwise directed by the committee or its chair, all hearings will be held in Room 302 Tucker Hall from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. as scheduled.

8. **Hearing Process** - Each party shall be given five (**5**) *minutes* during the formal hearing to present his/her respective positions. Additional time may be allowed at the discretion of the CSSAH-GC. The CSSAH-GC may request additional information in the form of questions or documentation after each party has made his/her five (5) minute statement.

Legal Counsel and Hearings

9. **Legal Counsel and Witnesses** – The CSSAH-GC does not serve as legal counsel, a legal entity or in any legal capacity for FAMU or the CSSAH. The CSSAH-GC only makes recommendations regarding the grading processes. The FAMU Office of the General Counsel addresses all legal questions, comments and potential legal issues involving the university.

For these reasons, the CSSAH-GC only hears cases involving the parties involved in a grade grievance, which includes the instructor and student. The department chair in which the dispute arose may be requested to attend a hearing to clarify matters of department procedures and guidelines for CSSAH-GC members.

Only the student making the grievance, the faculty member, staff member or administrator whose action gave rise to the grievance, and the appropriate department chair will be allowed to speak during a hearing. Pertinent information from witnesses having direct knowledge of the circumstances giving rise to the appeal may be submitted to the committee in written form, although the committee upon its own motion may call witnesses for oral testimony at a hearing.

Legal Counsel for both parties may be permitted to attend the formal hearing. However, legal counsel shall **not** be permitted to question either party to the hearing, witnesses of either party involved in the hearing or to address the committee.

10. After considering the formal grievance, the written response(s), and any verbal statements as previously indicated, the CSSAH-GC shall forward its findings and recommendations in writing to the dean **within ten working days** of the conclusion of the formal hearing.

Final Review Post Hearing

11. **Final Determination.** The dean of the CSSAH will review the CSSAH-GC findings and recommendations in a timely manner. As soon as is reasonably practicable; thereafter, he or she will notify the parties to the appeal in writing of his or her decision and also will provide each of the parties with a copy of the CSSAH-GC findings and recommendations.



Telephone: (850) 599.3430

Fax: (850) 561.2290

Application for Undergraduate Student Grade Grievance

To be used for Undergraduate Student Grade Grievances ONLY.

Student Information

Name		Student ID#	Major	
Local Address		City	State	Zip Code
Permanent Address		City	State	Zip Code
Phone (Best Contact Number)		(FAMU E-mail)		
Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	

Nature of Grievance (please check appropriate box(es))

Arbitrary grading	Discriminatory grading
Capricious grading	Unacceptable Academic Learning Condition

Course from which dispute arose:

Course Prefix:	Term:
Course Number:	Year:
Course Title:	Instructor:

STUDENT GRIEVANCE CHECKLIST

Please briefly type the facts of the dispute and attach the statement to the completed grievance application. **Handwritten statements will not be accepted.**

The packet should include the Application for Student Grade Grievance, a typewritten statement and the following items (please check items that are included in the grievance packet):

Specific details regarding the actions or events leading to the written appeal to the dean, and evidence regarding the student's allegation(s) of arbitrary, capricious, discriminatory action or an unacceptable academic learning condition;

1. Redress (the remedy or resolution being sought by the grievant);
2. Documented steps already taken (e-mails, text messages and any other correspondence);
3. Reasons for dissatisfaction with the response of the instructor and/or with the decision resulting from the formal department review;
4. The course syllabus that was provided by the professor to the class;
5. Any and all assignments, including graded exams, quizzes, homework, graded essays or research papers, e-mails, text messages, Blackboard Assignments or grades, etc.;
6. Any relevant official university and/or dean's excuses;
7. Additional supporting documentation necessary to support grievance.

Grievance Disclaimer

I certify the following (please initial):

I have read and understand the "Undergraduate Student Grade Grievance Procedures and Guidelines" of the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities;

I have attempted to resolve this dispute by communicating with the course instructor and/or through the chair of the department that offered the course (please provide documentation - e-mails, text messages and any other correspondence);

The attempts that I have made to resolve the dispute are not to my satisfaction;
I do not undertake this appeal for frivolous reasons; and
The information that I have given on this form is correct and truthful to the best of my knowledge.

Signature of Grievant

Date