East Georgia State College

Academic Student Grievance Policy

Maintaining a Culture of Respect

Adopted by Academic Policies and Curriculum Committee 4/25/19
Adopted by Faculty Senate 6/13/19
Approved by President 7/24/19

11/4/18

East Georgia State College

Process for Academic Student Grievance Resolution
EGSC Academic Grievance Policy 2

Student perceives or has an academic grievance against a Faculty or Staff Member (IV-VI)

Student notifies the Faculty or Staff Member and requests a meeting to discuss the grievance. (VI-VII)

Student is satisfied with the results of the meeting.

No further action is required or necessary. (VII)

Faculty or Staff Member must document the conversation and copy the documentation to the dean or department chair or staff supervisor.

Student is not satisfied with the results of the meeting.

Dean or Supervisor will determine if the complaint qualifies as an academic grievance and conducts an investigation. (VIII)

Dean or Supervisor notifies the complainant and accused faculty/staff member within five (5) business days after a decision has been made. (VIII)

Dean or supervision will meet with the faculty or staff member.

Student files a formal complaint with the faculty member’s dean or department chair, or staff member’s supervisor. (VIII)

Student is satisfied with the outcome. No further action is required.

Student may file a formal complaint with the VPASA IX

Student or Faculty/Staff Member is satisfied with the decision of VPASA.

No further action is required.

Student or Faculty/Staff Member is not satisfied with the decision of the VPASA.

Faculty / Staff Member or Student may appeal to President X

Staff or Faculty Member perceives or witnesses another staff or faculty member behaving in a manner that would cause a student to have an academic grievance. (IV-VI)

With the exception of Title IX grievances,* if student is uncomfortable discussing the complaint with the faculty/staff member, student is to ask a trusted staff/faculty member to facilitate a meeting with the other faculty member. (VI-VII)

Reporters notifies that faculty member’s dean or staff member’s supervisor (within 5 days)**

* Title IX Grievances are directly reported to the Title IX Director. 

** See EGSC Calculation of Due Date Policy for details about computing the specific due date
I. Statement of Values

East Georgia State College serves traditional and nontraditional students from different geographical, religious, socio-economic and political backgrounds. The faculty at EGSC strive to protect the learning environment so that all students have a fair opportunity to speak, learn, and share their points of view, concerns, or ask questions while maintaining an academic environment premised upon best practices and academic integrity. Fairness is essential for student success, and EGSC is committed to ensuring each student has a fair and equal opportunity to acquire the skills necessary for success. Thus, the Academic Grievance Policy promotes, protects, and ensures healthy learning environments for all students, regardless of age, gender, religion, nationality, ethnic identity, race, physical and mental disabilities, or support of political candidates.

II. Responsibility of Students:

Students are expected to participate actively in their learning experience; thus, EGSC encourages students to apply themselves to the best of their abilities. They are expected to attend class, maintain steady progress toward completion of a degree or transfer pathway, comply with the workload of their courses, submit work on time, and behave with civility so not to disrupt the learning environment or make others feel unsafe. Students must accept the responsibility of making themselves aware of institutional policies outlined in the student handbook, the academic honesty policy, as well as course policies printed in the syllabus.

Any student who knowingly files a false complaint with malicious intent, or viciously manufactures or forges false documents or evidence, or bears false witness with malicious intent against faculty or staff members, will be subject to suspension or expulsion, as outlined in the University System of Georgia Board of Regents’ policy: (http://www.usg.edu/policymanual/section4/C332/).

Intellectual Diversity East Georgia State College supports the principles of intellectual diversity in the classroom and academic freedom. The EGSC Academic Freedom Policy is located in the EGSC Statutes: http://www.ega.edu/policy/egsc-statutes.pdf?8718

III. Introduction

East Georgia State emphasizes its culture of respect. A culture of respect allows for academic freedom as well as integrates multiple points of view that encourage learners to enter dialogues that expand our worldview and understanding of complex issues. A culture of respect is necessary to the personal, academic, and professional growth of our community; it is one that integrates multiple worldviews and encourages our community to engage in dialogues that value diverse perspectives and foster an atmosphere of courtesy, civility, and respect.

Academic Grievance is defined as any reasonable claim that a student has sustained academic injury or disadvantages because of the behavior of any staff or faculty members associated with EGSC. Examples of Academic Grievances may be, but are not limited to, the items listed:
a. Failure to be consistent (without reasonable cause) in observing established
guidelines or policies outlined in the course syllabus;
b. Failure to hold students accountable for their words or actions, especially if their
words or actions disrupt the learning environment or compromise it in ways that
make others feel unsafe, unwelcome, degraded, or ridiculed;
c. Obvious and provable partiality in grading;
d. Unjust or excessive disciplinary action, particularly excessive action that has
interfered with accessing educational materials or learning opportunities (excessive
action is defined as punishment that exceeds the offending act);
e. Abuse of authority, including jokes or comments that are meant to belittle, alienate,
or ridicule the student, and that are not associated with race, ethnicity, nationality,
gender, religion, abilities or political affiliations
f. Knowingly allowing instances of cheating, plagiarizing, and other violations of
EGSC’s Academic Honesty Policy. (http://www.ega.edu/policy/03-academic-
honesty-policy.pdf)
g. Failure to hold students accountable for the class materials;
h. Teaching below reasonable expectations for the course level or the basic requirements

IV. Purpose

East Georgia State College is committed to maintaining a culture of respect and providing a civil
work and study environment. EGSC will handle complaints seriously while attempting to resolve
them quickly and fairly. The formal student academic grievance procedure serves primarily as a
means of resolving concerns about academic fairness that arise between a faculty member and a
student within a particular course during a single term. The policy outlines a clear set of
procedures that will ensure consistency from one case to the other, from one year to the next, and
for each student and faculty member. The procedures will help each complaint to be dealt with
quickly, fairly, and satisfactorily.

The goals of the Academic Grievance Policy are threefold:

1. To protect the students’ rights and learning environment;
2. To minimize the escalation of minor grievances and avoid major problems;
3. To establish consistency across campuses, schools/divisions, and departments.

VI. Student Academic Grievance Policy:

Students who believe a staff or faculty member (acting in his or her academic capacity) has
behaved unfairly or unprofessionally may have their grievances reviewed through the procedure
described in this document. Please be aware that this policy does not cover any Title IX claims
that involve any type of harassment. Please see EGSC’s Title IX policy:
In the interest of promoting professional growth for faculty members and students, East Georgia State College urges students to make an appointment with the offending faculty or staff member so that the issue may be brought to the accused person’s attention. Out of fairness, faculty and staff members should have the opportunity to resolve any conflict to the satisfaction of all parties involved.

**VII. Resolution Procedure**

Any student who has an academic grievance with a faculty or staff member should make arrangements for a meeting with the faculty or staff member so that the parties may resolve a small problem before it escalates into a larger one. Students may request a witness to attend the meeting. A witness may be the faculty member’s dean or department chair, a campus dean or director, or another faculty member the student trusts. If the complaint involves excessive punishment, the student may request the Director of Student Conduct as a witness to the meeting. If the student is enduring harassment, the student must go directly to the director of Title IX: (http://www.ega.edu/offices/business_affairs/human_resources/office-of-title-ix). With the exception of having a Title IX grievance, any student not comfortable directly contacting the concerned staff or faculty member should contact a trusted staff or faculty member to witness the meeting with the concerned staff or faculty member.

In each meeting under this policy, the faculty, dean, department chair, supervisor and/or Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs) should provide written documentation of the meeting(s) and the resolution.

If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily after taking the above-referenced steps, the student may file a formal grievance with the Dean or department chair, or staff supervisor.

If the matter remains unresolved, the parties may agree to use the conflict resolution process, if appropriate, where a qualified mediator will facilitate a meeting with the goal of resolving the grievance. Both parties must agree to participate in the conflict resolution process. This process is managed by the Director of Human Resources. See http://www.ega.edu/policy/08-conflict-resolution-policy.pdf?8718

**VIII. Procedure for Filing a Formal Grievance Complaint**

After the student meets with the faculty or staff member and is not satisfied with the results, then the student must first file a formal complaint with the faculty member’s dean or department chair, staff member’s supervisor, or the Director of Title IX if the grievance is related to harassment. **Academic grievances unrelated to Title IX should be filed within the same semester of the occurrence but no later than ten (10) college working days of the term following the term in which the dispute arose.** Exceptions to the expiration of the right to report will only be made for extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the student, such as military service or lengthy hospitalization or continued abuse of authority.
Several existing college complaint mechanisms exist for specific complaints types. Complaints will be redirected to the appropriate college administrator for investigation and resolution under the relevant policy. Examples of complaints NOT covered under this policy include:

- Academic Exclusion Appeal
- Academic Honesty Policy
- Amorous Relationships Policy
- Conflict Resolution Policy
- Family and Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Final Course Grade Appeal
- Student ADA Grievance Policy
- Sexual Misconduct Policy
- Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy

All complaints must be in writing. In instances where an issue is taken with the receipt of a grade received from an instructor, student is directed to the Grade Appellant procedures.

When a complaint is filed with the faculty’s dean or department chair, or staff supervisor and there is a conflict of interest, the VPASA will resolve the conflict by appointing an alternate dean, department chair or staff member’s supervisor to serve.

The written complaint must state the name of the faculty member against whom the grievance is made, the specific complaint, and the specific remedy or sanction desired. All statements should be concise, factual, and avoid exaggerations, misrepresentations, and personal attacks. The burden of proof rests with the student. Any evidence to support the complaint should be provided at this time.

After the grievance is filed with the dean or supervisor, the dean or supervisor has the right to determine if the complaint is an academic grievance, as defined by the institution. If the dean determines it is not an academic grievance, the dean must notify the student in writing within five (5) business days, and, if appropriate, direct the student to the correct office for handling the student’s specific complaint, or inform the student of their right to file a formal complaint with the Office of Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs if they wish to contest the dean’s decision.

If the dean or supervisor believes the complaint qualifies as an academic grievance, then the dean or supervisor will notify the student (within five (5) business days) that action is being taken and they will be contacted with the investigation results within five (5) business days after the investigation has been completed. An investigation will begin with questioning the faculty or staff member. The faculty’s dean or staff member’s supervisor must meet faculty or staff member within five (5) working days of receiving the complaint. The faculty or staff member will have a chance to respond to the complaint and provide evidence or names of witnesses. The faculty or staff member must provide a written response to the complaint to the dean within five (5) working days and provide evidence as necessary. The faculty member has four options:

(1) Confirm that the event did happen and seek for ways to resolve the issue;
(2) Prove the complaint is misrepresented in context;
(3) Disprove the allegations and provide evidence or names of witnesses;
(4) Request a formal meeting with the student and a mediator or a witness.

If the faculty member requests a formal meeting with the student, the dean will schedule a meeting with the faculty member and the student to discuss the complaint. If a resolution does not occur, then the dean will complete the investigation and seek a fair outcome.

The dean or supervisor will work with the faculty member and student to ensure a resolution and to provide feedback or training to the faculty or staff member so that future problems may be avoided. A formal reprimand may be appropriate, especially if the student requested it and if the dean or supervisor believes it is warranted. If the conflict is not resolved to the student’s satisfaction, the student may file a formal complaint with the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs.

IX. Filing an Academic Grievance Complaint with the Office of Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs

A formal complaint of an academic grievance must be filed with the Office of Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs. The VPASA will review the complaint and evidence presented, assess whether it meets the definition of an academic grievance as defined in this policy, and determine if the prior review process was followed. The VPASA may elect to interview the student and the faculty or staff member in question when necessary. VPASA will decide within five (5) working days of receipt of the complaint. If the matter does not qualify as an academic grievance but should be reviewed by another individual or committee, the matter will be referred by the VPASA through the appropriate avenue as defined in the East Georgia State College policies and procedures.

If the VPASA, in conjunction with the Director of Human Resources determines that faculty or staff disciplinary action is necessary, ranging from an official reprimand to dismissal, such action will be administered according to due process as set forth in the policies of East Georgia State College and the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

X. Appeal to the President

The faculty member, staff member or the student has the right to appeal to the President, challenging the decision of the VPASA. The appeal must be submitted to the Office of the President in writing within ten (10) working days of receiving the notification of the VPASA’s decision. An appeal to the president is a review of the record. No new information is presented, no hearing will be conducted and no interviews held. The President’s review is limited to whether the process contained in this policy was followed and that the finding is consistent with the evidence.

The complainant must write a letter of appeal. The letter must summarize the circumstances of the grievance, state and attach documented details reviewed in the hearing, and applicable codes, rules, and policies EGSC is bound to honor.
The president must make a decision about the appeal and inform the student, the faculty member, the dean, or the staff and staff supervisor, and the VPASA of the decision in writing within forty-five (45) working days of the filing of the appeal. The President's decision is final.

XI. Student Accountability and Liability

If the complaint proves to be false and filed with malicious intent or it was purposefully and maliciously misrepresented, the student's case will be referred to the Director of Student Conduct for review and discipline which could include suspension or expulsion, as outlined in the EGSC Student Handbook and Policy Manual of the Board of Regents.