

# Academic Rights of Students

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The university has the responsibility of providing a program of high-quality education in keeping with its financial resources; students have protection through campus-specific procedures against arbitrary or capricious academic evaluation. Student performance shall be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. Students are responsible for completion of their academic program, for familiarity with all requirements of the university catalog and for maintaining an acceptable grade point average for degree requirements. Students have the right to be informed at the beginning of each term of the nature of the course, course expectations, evaluation standards and the grading system.

## Academic Honesty

Academic integrity is a basic principle that requires students to take credit only for ideas and efforts that are their own. Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are defined in the Student Code of Conduct (<https://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/handbook/student-freedoms-rights-and-responsibilities/student-code-of-conduct/>). Cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will first go through the student conduct process and then, if a violation of the Student Code of Conduct is found, academic sanctions may occur in addition to disciplinary sanctions. The Student Conduct Review Procedures (<https://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/handbook/student-freedoms-rights-and-responsibilities/student-code-of-conduct/>) are outlined in the UAA Student Handbook (<https://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/handbook/>).

## Academic Dispute Resolution Procedure

Challenges to academic decisions or actions of the faculty or academic administration will be reviewed according to the procedure that implements the UA Board of Regents Policy 09.03.024 (<https://www.alaska.edu/bor/policy-regulations/chapter-09-03-student-dispute-resolution.php>) and its University Regulation on Student Dispute Resolution: Review of Academic Decisions or Actions. Appropriate issues for this procedure include (1) final grades resulting from alleged grading errors or (2) the arbitrary or capricious assignment of final grades or (3) the arbitrary or capricious dismissal from or denial of admission to an academic program based upon academic considerations. Academic decisions based on alleged violations of the Student Code of Conduct (<https://catalog.uaa.alaska.edu/handbook/student-freedoms-rights-and-responsibilities/student-code-of-conduct/>) will not be reviewed under this procedure until the Student Conduct Review Procedures are exhausted.

## Definitions

**Academic Decision Review Committee** - An academic decision review committee is an ad hoc committee that formally reviews a contested final grade assignment, dismissal from or denial of admission to an academic program based upon academic considerations or other academic decision. The committee will be composed of three faculty members, one of whom must be from outside the college/community

campus delivering the course or program, a non-voting committee chair who may be a faculty member, and a non-voting student representative. To be eligible, the non-voting student representative must be currently enrolled in at least three credits, in good disciplinary standing and have a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 or higher. The dean of the college/community campus director will appoint committee members. If the academic decision being challenged is for a graduate course or program, the faculty appointed will be from those departments with graduate programs, and the student committee member will be a graduate student.

**Dean/Community Campus Director** - The dean is the administrative head of the college offering the course or program from which the academic decision or action arises. For students at community campuses or taking a course from a community campus, the director of the community campus may substitute for the dean in the case that the relevant course or program is delivered by that community campus. This definition includes the designee of either the dean or community campus director.

**Arbitrary or Capricious Academic Decision** - An academic decision is "arbitrary or capricious" when: 1) it is not based on academic factors or criteria or accepted standards of the discipline or profession; 2) standards are not equally or fairly applied to students in relevantly similar situations; and 3) there is a substantial, unreasonable, or unannounced departure from articulated standards or criteria.

**Arbitrary or Capricious Grading** - An academic final grading decision is "arbitrary or capricious" when: 1) the assignment of a final course grade is on a basis other than academic performance in the course; 2) the instructor uses standards different from those applied to other students in the same section of the course; or 3) there is a substantial, unreasonable and/or unannounced departure from the course instructor's previously articulated standards or criteria (see also Grading Error).

**Class Day** - As used in the schedule for review of academic decisions, a class day is any day of scheduled instruction, excluding Saturday and Sunday, included on the academic calendar in effect at the time of a review. Final examination periods are counted as class days.

**Final Grade** - The final grade is the grade assigned for a course upon its completion.

**Grading Error** - A grading error is a mathematical miscalculation of a final grade or an inaccurate recording of the final grade (see also Arbitrary or Capricious Grading).

**Next Regular Semester** - The next regular semester is the fall or spring semester following the semester in which the disputed academic decision was made. For example, it would be the fall semester for a final grade issued for a course completed during the previous spring semester or summer session. The spring semester is the next regular semester for an academic decision made during the previous fall semester.

## Procedures for Resolving Disputes Regarding Final Grade Assignment

Students may request a review of a final grade assignment on the basis of alleged grading error or arbitrary or capricious grading. Grades assigned prior to the final grade received in a course are not subject to review under this procedure. Only the course instructor or an academic decision review committee may authorize a change in the assignment of a final grade. Because grades can affect such things as a student's eligibility for continued financial aid, students should check their final grades and initiate a review, where desired, as soon as possible. The time schedule outlined in this procedure stipulates maximum time periods within which to complete stages of the review. However, permission for extensions of time may be granted, in writing, by the dean/community campus director.

Each college and community campus has designated an individual to explain the academic review process to students. The names and contact information for these individuals are posted on the college/community campus website. Students are encouraged to reach out to these individuals for assistance.

### Informal Procedure for Academic Disputes Regarding Final Grade Assignment

Students will be expected to first request an informal resolution of the final grade assignment with the course instructor. The process must be initiated by the fifteenth class day of the next regular semester at UAA. The instructor must respond to the request within five class days of receipt.

If the course instructor's decision is to change the final grade, the instructor must promptly initiate the process. If the instructor does not change the grade and the student's concerns remain unresolved, the student may notify the department chair/academic leader responsible for the course. Within five class days of such notification, the department chair/academic leader must either effect resolution of the issue with the instructor or inform the student of the process for requesting a formal review of the final grade assignment.

If the course instructor is no longer an employee of the university or is otherwise unavailable, the student must notify the department chair/academic leader of their request for informal resolution of the final grade assignment by the fifteenth class day of the next regular semester. Within five class days of notification by the student, the department chair/academic leader must either effect resolution of the issue through contact with the course instructor or inform the student of the process for requesting a formal review of the final grade assignment.

### Formal Procedure for Academic Disputes Regarding Final Grade Assignment

If the student's concern remains unresolved through the informal procedures above, the student may request a formal review of the final course grade assignment. A student formally requesting a review of a final grade assignment must submit to the dean/community campus director: a completed and signed request for formal review

form, an explanation of the basis for requesting a change of grade, and supporting documentation. The request must be filed by the twentieth class day of the next regular semester or within five class days of receipt of notification of the process for filing a request for a formal review by the department chair/academic leader after completion of an informal review. The only exception will be when written permission for an extension of time is granted by the dean/community campus director.

After establishing that informal procedures have been followed, that the request for formal review falls within the required deadlines, and that this is the first request for formal review of this issue, the dean/community campus director will convene an academic decision review committee and forward to it the completed and signed request for formal review form, the explanation of the basis for requesting a change of grade, and supporting documentation from the student. The committee chair will convene the committee within ten class days of receipt of the student's written request for review. The committee will first consider whether the facts submitted by the student warrant a formal review meeting.

The committee may dismiss the student's request without conducting a formal review meeting if the facts as presented clearly do not constitute a case of arbitrary or capricious grading or grading error. This decision will constitute the final decision of the university. The committee's decision will be provided in writing by the committee chair to the student, the course instructor, the department chair/academic leader, and the dean/community campus director. The dean/community campus director will maintain the decision letter, along with the documents submitted by the student and will send a copy of the decision letter to the provost.

### Academic Decision Formal Review Meeting

If the academic decision review committee determines that the facts as presented might constitute arbitrary or capricious grading or a grading error, the committee will proceed to a formal meeting. The committee will consider information provided by the student, the course instructor, and others as it sees fit. Both the student and the instructor will have an opportunity to present the facts as they understand them.

Formal review meetings will ordinarily be scheduled between five and ten days after the academic decision review committee determines that a formal review is warranted. The student and the course instructor must be notified in writing at least three class days in advance of the time and place the request will be considered and of the process to be followed. Formal review meetings will normally be closed. Requests for an open proceeding must be made by a party to the committee chair prior to the start of the meeting. Such requests will be granted to the extent allowed by law unless the committee chair determines that all or part of a proceeding should be closed based upon considerations of fairness, justice, and other relevant factors.

The university cannot guarantee confidentiality, however, as a reasonable effort to preserve the legitimate privacy interests of the persons involved, all participants in the proceedings will be expected to maintain confidentiality.

A party may choose a supporter to be present at all times during the proceedings. However, the supporter may not speak on behalf of the party. The committee may direct that witnesses, but not the parties or their supporters, be excluded from the meeting except during their testimony. Should the student or instructor fail to appear at the formal review meeting, the meeting may proceed in their absence. The student or instructor may submit a written statement, if they cannot attend the meeting.

The deliberations of the committee will be closed to the public, the parties, and their advisors.

## Academic Decision Review Committee Decision

The academic decision review committee proceedings will result in one of the following determinations for reviews of final grade assignments:

- the request for a grade change is denied;
- the request for a grade change is upheld and the committee requests the course instructor to change the grade and the course instructor changes the grade; or
- the request for a grade change is upheld and the course instructor is either unavailable to change the grade or refuses to do so. The committee directs the dean/community campus director to initiate the process to change the grade to that specified by the review committee.

The decision of the review committee constitutes the final decision of the university. The committee chair will provide the decision in writing to the student, the course instructor, the department chair/academic leader and the dean/community campus director. The meeting will be recorded and the committee chair will be responsible for the preparation of a written record of the meeting and will submit it to the dean/community campus director. The dean/community campus director will maintain the decision letter and the written record of the meeting, and will send a copy of the decision letter to the provost.

Unless an extension has been granted by the dean/community campus director, disputes concerning final grades must be completed by the end of the next regular semester following the assignment of the final grade.

## Procedures for Resolving Disputes Regarding Denial of Admission to or Dismissal from a Program of Study for Academic Reasons

Students may challenge a denial of admissions to, or dismissal from, a program of study for academic reasons on the basis that the academic decision was arbitrary or capricious. Students will be expected to first request an informal resolution with the department chair/academic leader regarding denial of admission to or dismissal from a program of study for academic reasons. The process must be initiated by the fifteenth class day of the next regular semester. The department chair/academic leader must respond to the request within five class days of receipt, and, if there is not a resolution of the issue, inform the student of the process for filing a request for formal review.

If the student's concern remains unresolved through the informal procedures above, the student may request a formal review of a denial of admission to or dismissal from a program for academic reasons. The student must provide the dean/community campus director a signed, written request for a formal review, indicating the basis for requesting a review. The request must be filed by the twentieth class day of the next regular semester, or within five class days of receipt of notification of the process for filing a request for formal review after completion of any informal review. The only exception will be when written permission for an extension of time is granted by the dean/community campus director.

An academic decision review committee will conduct a formal review meeting for academic decisions regarding denial of admission to or dismissal from a program for academic reasons. The committee will consider information provided by the student, the department chair/academic leader and others as it sees fit. The process will follow the same timelines and procedures for academic disputes regarding final grade assignment with the following exceptions:

1. The chair will submit the written findings and recommendations of the academic decision review committee along with the written record of the meeting to the dean/community campus director for consideration. At the same time a copy of the findings and recommendations will be provided to the student.
2. The student will be given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the committee. The student must submit written comments to the dean/community campus director within seven class days of the day the committee findings and recommendations are sent to the student.
3. The dean/community campus director will review the written findings and recommendations of the academic decision review committee, the record of the formal review meeting and any written comments submitted by the student and make a decision. The dean's/community campus director's decision will constitute the final decision of the university on the matter and will be provided, in writing, to the student, the department chair/academic leader and the committee. The dean/community campus director will maintain the decision letter and written record of the meeting, and will send a copy of the decision letter to the provost.
4. The provost will make the final decision of the university on the matter if the dean/community campus director is the person who made the academic decision under review.

Unless an extension has been granted by the dean/community campus director, final decisions must be completed by the end of the next regular semester following the date of the denial of admission to or dismissal from a program for academic reasons.

## Other Academic Decisions

Students with concerns relating to other academic decisions should refer to the dean/community campus director of the academic unit that delivers the course or program.

Disputes regarding decisions associated with appropriate academic adjustments and programmatic accommodation for students with disabilities will be reviewed according to procedures set forth in

University Regulation 09.06.050 (<https://www.alaska.edu/bor/policy-regulations/chapter-09-06-services-students-disabilities.php>) Services for Students with Disabilities.

## **Eligibility for Services Pending Final Decision in the Academic Decision Review Process**

During the review of an academic action or decision by the university, the action or decision being contested will remain in effect until the dispute is resolved. If an academic action or decision affects the student's eligibility for financial aid, housing, or other university service, the student will be informed by the dean/community campus director of the steps to be taken that may maintain or reinstate the affected service. The student will be responsible for initiating any necessary actions or procedures.