

STUDENT ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE POLICY

Updated January 2025, Approved by Faculty Senate 01.31.2025

The Faculty of Roberts Wesleyan University are responsible for determining and enforcing the academic standards of the University. The Student Academic Grievance Policy becomes relevant if a student believes they have been treated unfairly or inequitably by an instructor* or program/department.

This Policy applies to all students, regardless of program level (undergraduate or graduate), degree-seeking status, or course modality (online, onsite, hybrid), who are enrolled or are seeking to enroll (or re-enroll) in an educational program at the University.

NOTE: The Student Academic Grievance Policy applies to all academic grievances except those related to matters of Discrimination or Harassment. Incidents of Sex Discrimination, including Non-Harassment Discrimination (Differential Treatment, Retaliation, and Failure to Provide a Student Reasonable Modifications for Pregnancy and Related Conditions) and Sex-Based Harassment (Quid Pro Quo Harassment, Hostile Environment Harassment, Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Stalking, and Sexual Exploitation), will be handled through the University's Sex Discrimination Policy and Title IX Office (roberts.edu/title-ix). Incidents of Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying (not sex-based) will be handled through the University's Nondiscrimination, Harassment, and Bullying [Policy](#).

Initial Academic Grievance Procedures (Stage ONE)

Concerns related to a student's academic experience within the academic department or program can typically be addressed/resolved through the steps outlined below. [The University abides by a six-month statute of limitations for initiating grievance resolution.]

Steps to initiate and resolve a Student Academic Grievance

1. The student should first contact the instructor regarding the perceived unfairness. The instructor and student should discuss the situation and attempt to clarify and resolve the matter. [The Chair/Program Director or designee will ensure the student understands what needs to be done at each step throughout the process.]

2. If discussion between the student and the relevant instructor about what is perceived to be unfair or inequitable treatment does not result in acceptable understanding and resolution, the student as well as the instructor should send an email to the appropriate Department Chair, Program Director, or Course Lead within a week of their discussion, explaining the situation and steps that already taken to address the matter. The student should receive a response and recommended course of action from the Chair/Director/Lead within ten (10) business days**.

The University recognizes that students might be unsure whom to contact after talking with the instructor if the matter has not been resolved. For assistance, students may contact the Office of Academic Affairs at academicaffairs@roberts.edu.

NOTE: If the next in line of communication (Department Chair, Program Director, or Course Lead) is also the instructor involved in the grievance situation, the student should contact the Dean of the instructor's School. (If that Dean is the individual involved in the grievance, the student should contact the Chief Academic Officer.)

3. If Step #2 does not result in an acceptable resolution, the student has the right to email the Dean of the instructor's School within ten (10) business days** of having received the response from the

Chair/Program Director/Lead. The email needs to include all relevant information and documentation, including the steps that have been taken by the student to resolve the issue. (The instructor also has the right to submit an informative email.) The School Dean and student will attempt to find an acceptable resolution, after which the Dean will provide the student with a written report, typically within ten (10) business days**.

4. If the above steps have not yielded an acceptable resolution, the student may file a Formal Student Academic Grievance within ten (10) business days** of having received the Dean's report.

NOTE: Throughout the efforts toward resolution, individuals involved should keep a record of all communications and attempts at resolution, including dates, times, and outcomes. Written confirmation of what was agreed upon at the point at which informal resolution is achieved will be sent to the student and all relevant personnel by the person with whom that agreement was reached.

**An instructor refers to anyone teaching in an academic program, such as, but not limited to, a faculty member, professor adjunct professor, or clinical instructor.*

Ten (10) business days refers to ten days when the University offices are open. **Note: Faculty under extenuating circumstances may be afforded extra time as approved by the Dean or CAO.

Formal Academic Grievance Procedures (Stage TWO)

If Initial Academic Grievance Procedures have not yielded an informal resolution, the student may file a Formal Student Academic Grievance within ten (10) business days* of having received the Dean's report. A record should be kept of all communications, deliberations, and decisions (including dates and times) involved in the Formal Academic Grievance Procedures.

Steps to initiate and resolve a Formal Student Academic Grievance

1. The student will use the Student Academic Grievance Form available [here](#) to submit a formal, written grievance to the Dean of the School in which the Department/Program is housed. [The Chair/Program Director or designee will ensure the student understands what needs to be done at each step throughout the process.]

The Dean will contact the Office of Academic Affairs to initiate the formal process by requesting an Ad Hoc Committee be formed and a convener appointed (as described in #2 below). The Dean will send the completed Student Academic Grievance Form, along with documentation of the steps previously taken within the Initial Academic Grievance Procedures to the appointed convener.

2. The Dean of a different School from which the grievance originated, rotated alphabetically per grievance, will be appointed by the Office of Academic Affairs to convene the Ad Hoc Committee. The convening Dean will appoint an Ad Hoc Committee within ten (10) business days of receiving the written grievance.* The Ad Hoc Committee will be composed of:

- Four faculty members from four different programs, or unrelated departments, representing at least two different Schools, will be chosen in consultation with the Deans of those schools.

No more than one faculty member, if any, may come from the School, Department, or Program of the instructor(s) mentioned in the grievance. To ensure impartiality, faculty who were included in the initial process to resolve the grievance, or who have experiences with the student that may hinder impartiality (e.g., close personal friendship or prior grievances), will not be appointed to the committee.

- A student representative

- In Traditional Undergraduate programs, the student representative is appointed by the student Association (SA)—typically either the SA President or Vice-President.
- In Nontraditional or Graduate programs, the student representative is appointed by the relevant Department Chair/Program Director.

To assure impartiality, the student appointee will not currently be enrolled in courses with the student and will not be in the same academic program (for traditional programs) or program cohort (for degree completion and graduate programs). In addition, the student appointee will not have had experiences with the student or instructor(s) that may hinder impartiality.

3. As soon as the Ad Hoc Committee is appointed, the appointed Dean will send members a copy of the student's written grievance and the primary documents from the initial steps taken to seek a resolution.

4. The appointed Dean will convene the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee, at which time one of the faculty members will be designated as Convener/Chair for subsequent meetings. The Committee will:

- Review the materials.
- Decide what additional information is needed.
- Decide who, in addition to the student and relevant instructor(s), should be interviewed: for example, additional instructors, a representative from Student Life, a representative from Registration, etc.
- Schedule a second meeting to consider any additional information and interview those asked to attend. [The second meeting may, in some cases, be scheduled for the same day as the first meeting.] Depending on the nature of the incident and grievance, the student and instructor may be interviewed separately or together.

NOTE: If the student wishes to bring someone to the interview with the Ad Hoc Committee for personal support, the student will consult with the appointed Dean. The person accompanying the student will function only as a supportive presence, not as a participant.

5. As soon as relevant information has been gathered, the Ad Hoc Committee will deliberate and make a ruling, using a simple majority vote.

- The appointed Dean will participate in the discussion but will not vote. Once a decision has been made, the appointed Dean will send a written communication to the student, instructor(s), advisor, relevant Chair/Director, Dean of the School in which the grievance occurred, and to the Chief Academic Officer (CAO).
- If the decision is not appealed to the CAO, as explained below (#6), the Appointed Dean and the School Dean will meet with the Department Chair/Program Director and instructor(s), if relevant, within ten (10) business days of the ruling to ensure that the practical consequences of the decision are implemented in a fair and timely fashion.

6. Any further appeal by the student will be filed with the CAO (or appropriate designee) within ten (10) business days. The role of the CAO is not to "retry" the case but to ensure that the policy was followed, the process was free from bias, and the Ad Hoc Committee considered all relevant options. The CAO retains the right to consult with the student, the instructor(s), the Committee, and/or additional personnel relevant to the situation.

- Once the CAO has made a final decision, the student, appointed Dean of the Ad Hoc Committee, School Dean, Department Chair/Program Director, advisor, and instructor(s), if relevant, will be notified in writing within ten (10) business days receipt of the appeal.

NOTE: Either the student or CAO may request a meeting to receive or review the CAO's final decision.

- The Dean of the School in which the grievance was filed will work with the Department Chair/Program Director and instructor(s), as relevant, to implement practical consequences of

the final decision in a fair and timely fashion.

7. Once the grievance process and procedures are completed, proceedings of the meetings involved will be filed in the School Dean's office. If the process involves the CAO, the proceedings of the meetings will also be filed in that Office.

8. Retaliation (any targeted, punitive action) by anyone against a student for initiating a grievance under this policy, for supporting a student who files a grievance, or for participating in the grievance process is strictly prohibited. Regardless of the merits of the original grievance, retaliation is a serious offense that can lead to disciplinary action.

Ten (10) business days refers to ten days when the University offices are open. **Note: Faculty under extenuating circumstances may be afforded extra time as approved by the Dean or CAO.*

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