

Grade Appeals and Student Complaints

Grade Appeals

Student progress in a course requires the submission of work in a timely fashion. The expectation is that the student's work meets the course standards. The professors at Sarasota University have the authority to extend deadlines and to grade or to not accept work which they deem unsatisfactory or beyond the deadline for submission. Students should understand that the work they submit is treated as final copy and is subject to evaluation against the assignment's standards. It is the prerogative of the professor to request that an assignment be redone before a grade is assigned. Students are encouraged to communicate in a timely fashion any issues that might affect the student's progress in the course.

Faculty members who are professors of record for a class are vested with the primary but not sole authority to grade and report student work in relation to course requirements and standards of performance.

Grading procedures are University-wide standards for assessing and reporting student work. If a student feels that a grade is an unfair representation of their achievement in a course, the student should first talk with the professor. If the outcome of that conversation is unsatisfactory, the student should contact the professor's department head who will discuss the issue with the professor. This discussion may involve the student. If the result of that discussion is unsatisfactory to the student, the student may appeal to the **Academic Progress Committee**. If the student finds the result of that discussion unsatisfactory, the student's next step is an appeal to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs who will refer the appeal to the **Provost**.

Depending on the nature of the complaint, the **Provost** has the authority to uphold previous actions, to dismiss a student, to consult with the professor for clarification and documentation, to recommend an opportunity to submit or resubmit work, and to counsel the professor about a grade change. The University's policy of fairness means that issues related to student progress and achievement are significant, intellectual freedom is respected, and that in a community, determinations of achievement and progress may be a group decision.

Students should make their issue with a course grade or other complaint known by email in a timely fashion (within 14 days). Appeals and complaints at the department head level will be handled within seven days of receipt. At the University level, decisions are reported within 30 days. All actions are reported by email or in writing by US or commercial mail (UPS, FedEx). A printed record of all written correspondence between the student and the University regarding the complaint will be kept on file. A *Grade Appeal Form* is available from the Director of Student Services. An appeal of the Provost's decision may be made to the Executive Director, Commission for Independent Education, 325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1414, Tallahassee, Florida 32399, and (888) 224-6684.

Civil Rights

The University prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, ethnic, or national origin, religion, age, sex, color, physical or mental condition, marital, or veteran status under any program or activity under its purview. Sexual harassment includes harassment based on gender, pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical condition, and inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature. It is the University's policy that all persons should enjoy freedom from unlawful discrimination of any kind as well as from sexual harassment or retaliation for reporting a complaint.

- This policy applies regardless of the gender or sexual orientation of the complainant or the alleged harasser.
- This policy prohibits unlawful discrimination or harassment between members of the University community, including between faculty and students, staff and students, and faculty and staff.
- Harassment is defined as unrequested or unwelcomed comments or actions that may interfere with an individual's feelings of security and safety. The University believes a feeling of mental and physical security is essential to academic achievement. Actions that violate an individual's feelings of security are prohibited and individuals who engage in inappropriate or prohibited conduct may be subject to disciplinary action. Counseling may be an initial step in the disciplinary action.
- Harassing, threatening, intimidating behavior, and illegal activities will result in immediate administrative suspension by the senior resident administrator, pending further investigation.

Appeals Procedures for Civil Rights Violations

Persons who observe or may be the target of a civil rights violation are encouraged to report the violation so appropriate action may be taken quickly. Silence is not acceptable by the target or an observer. **The University has a responsibility to investigate all Civil Rights complaints.** Students should report violations verbally or in writing directly to the Director of Student Services (DSS). Faculty and Staff should report violations directly to the University's Vice President of Academic Affairs (VPAA).

The Director of Student Services (DSS) will investigate and respond to Civil Rights complaints of students in writing by email within 7 calendar days. The DSS will also report the complaint, and present particulars of the complaint in writing to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs and may be reported further as required by various laws. This notification will contain any recommendations to ameliorate the complaint. The University Council handles concerns related to a person's civil rights. Records of reported violations and the actions taken are maintained for 7 years and are made available for review by appropriate persons. **The Vice-President of Academic Affairs is the University's designated Civil Rights officer and will report, as appropriate, infractions to appropriate law enforcement.** This procedure is for assistance and awareness so the University can aid the student. It does not prevent the student from directly bringing the issue to law enforcement.

Please notify (a) the Office of the Director of Student Services, and

(b) the Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs at:

5104 N Lockwood Ridge Rd, Suite 102 Sarasota, FL 34234

Call (866)-582-8448

An appeal of the University's decision may be made to the Executive Director, Commission for Independent Education, 325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1414, Tallahassee, Florida 32399, and (888) 224-6684.

Appeals of Complaints Not Involving Law Enforcement

For issues that do not necessarily involve law enforcement, students will be notified about a complaint in writing and will be given a fair opportunity to refute the complaint. These complaints, which include matters of academic honesty, personal deportment, or feelings of safety, may be handled at the professor or advisor level. A complaint may be by or about a student, faculty, or staff. Some complaints will be moved immediately to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs for decision for further action. All decisions, except those involving law enforcement can be appealed, at the University level. All appeals will be processed in a timely fashion, but no longer than 30 days at any stage.

Complaints about faculty and staff are handled in a similar fashion except the initial review of the complaint will involve the person's immediate supervisor.