

# Academic Grievance Policy for Undergraduate Students

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## I. Overview

Azusa Pacific University provides a means by which students may file a grievance for academic and student life issues, excluding violations of the Student Standards of Conduct (<https://www.apu.edu/student-handbook/standards/>). The process described below should be used after all informal means have been exhausted. In the area of academics, protocol requires that student concerns or grievances about course content and relevancy, grading, teaching style, and the like be taken up first with the professor of the given class. Failure to resolve the matter at that point may require a meeting with the appropriate department chair, or finally the dean of the school or college.

In the event that the above procedures fail to resolve the problem, the student may file a grievance if a justifiable cause exists. Justifiable cause for grievance shall be defined as any act that, in the opinion of the student, adversely affects the student and is perceived as prejudicial or capricious action on the part of any university faculty or staff member or an arbitrary or unfair imposition of sanctions.

To file a grievance, the student must submit the written document listed below in section III.2. to the Office of the Provost designee for academic matters, or the Office of the Dean of Students for nonacademic matters. If the grievance concerns alleged discrimination or harassment, a copy of the grievance shall be submitted also to the director of human resources. A Grievance Committee will be formed by the Office of the Provost designee or the dean of students and proceed according to the guidelines stated below if, as stated above, a justifiable cause exists for the grievance.

The grievance procedure shall act as a vehicle for communication and decision making between students, staff, and faculty, and as a process through which a student-initiated grievance can be resolved internally.

Any student who has a grievance complaint against the university must follow this procedure or will waive any claim against the university. An individual may contact the Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (<https://www.bppe.ca.gov/>) for review of a complaint; the bureau may be contacted at P.O. Box 980818, West Sacramento, CA 95798-0818; (888) 370-7589 (phone); and (916) 263-1897 (fax).

## II. Grievance Committee Organization

### 1. Membership:

*For academic grievances:*

Associate provost or other Office of the Provost designee  
 Academic dean (not from school or college involved)  
 One faculty member  
 One upper-division student  
 Dean of students or designee

*For nonacademic grievances:*

Dean of students or designee  
 Two faculty members  
 Two students  
 Associate provost or other Office of the Provost designee  
 For any grievance concerning alleged discrimination or harassment, the director of human resources shall also serve as a member.

2. Chair: For academic grievances, the Office of the Provost designee shall preside. For nonacademic grievances, the associate dean of students will preside.
3. Voting: All members have equal vote and there shall be no alternates or substitutes unless one member must disqualify him/herself due to conflict of interest.
4. Meeting Time: The meeting will be scheduled within seven (7) business days following the filing of a written petition.

## III. Grievance Committee Guidelines and Meeting Format

1. The formal grievance procedure shall be initiated only after other attempts to resolve the matter have been exhausted (i.e., conferring with individual instructor, department chair, or staff member as appropriate). Except for grade appeals, the student has no more than ten (10) business days after meeting with the individual they believe has given them cause for grievance, or fifteen (15) business days after the incident that occasioned the grievance, in which to file his/her written petition. In the case of grade appeals, a written petition must be filed within forty-five (45) business days after the end of the semester in which the grade is received. The formal procedure must be initiated within these time limits. However, the time limit may be extended by the associate dean of students or Office of the Provost designee at their sole discretion upon presentation of good cause.

2. The grievance process is initiated by submission of a written petition to the chair of the Grievance Committee. The grievance document should be a complete set of materials that the student would like the Grievance Committee to review. Additional materials will be accepted later only in extenuating circumstances, at the discretion of the committee chair. The petition must include:
  - a. Names of the parties involved
  - b. A clear statement of the nature of the grievance
  - c. A narrative of the incident including:
    - i. What occurred
    - ii. When it occurred
    - iii. Where it occurred
    - iv. Who was present
  - d. The evidence on which the grievance is based
  - e. Why this constitutes capricious or arbitrary action on behalf of a staff or faculty member
  - f. What has been done to resolve the grievance per Part III.1. above.
  - g. The desired outcome(s)
  - h. Any supporting documentation
3. The chair of the Grievance Committee will submit a copy of the grievance to each person who will serve on the Grievance Committee for this incident, as well as to the faculty or staff member(s) involved and the dean of the school or college involved.
4. A meeting of the Grievance Committee will be scheduled to consider the matter within seven (7) working days of the date on which the petition was filed. The involved student and faculty or community member(s) may testify in person at the committee meetings. The meetings shall be held at times when both parties are available to testify.
5. Meetings of the Grievance Committee shall be attended only by the parties named in the grievance, members of the Grievance Committee, witnesses invited by the Grievance Committee, and the dean of the school or college involved. Witnesses may be present only during the time they are presenting their testimony. No one other than members of the Grievance Committee may be present during deliberations.
6. Either party may seek an advisor, who must be a faculty member or student in that school or college. The function of the advisor shall not include that of advocacy, and the advisor will not have a role in the committee's meetings. The student may not bring legal counsel or have a student represent him/her as counsel. The Grievance Committee may not have legal counsel present.
7. Accurate minutes of the grievance procedure shall be written and kept in a confidential file of the committee's proceedings. Such minutes shall include the committee's findings and decision. No other printed materials or notes may be taken from the meeting. The proceedings may not be recorded.
8. Except for communications with the applicable dean and academic chair after the conclusion of Grievance Committee proceedings, and communications with the faculty member(s) and student(s) involved advising them of the Grievance Committee's final decision, the parties and committee members may not discuss the case outside the meeting.
9. If a committee member is approached prior to a meeting by a student whose case is to be heard, the member should refuse to discuss the issue and should disclose at the time of the meeting that he/she has been approached.
10. Any committee member who has a potential conflict of interest, who holds a bias or preconceived notion as to the facts of the case and has formed an opinion about them, or who may hold ill will toward a particular student must disclose to the chair the nature of such feelings, bias, or potential conflict. He or she may be excused from participation upon request by such member or at the discretion of the chair, and replaced by the chair with a substitute committee member of comparable station to the extent possible under the circumstances. The names of the Grievance Committee members will be reviewed in advance of the committee meeting with the student, who can confirm that he/she is not aware of any bias against him/her on the part of any of the committee members.
11. In cases of conflicting information and/or when additional information is desired, the committee may request testimony from additional witnesses having information pertinent to the grievance.
12. The committee will decide on the matter by vote. Both parties will be notified in writing within one (1) week of the decision. The committee's decision shall be final.