

Academic Appeals Procedures

Northeastern University affirms that it is essential to provide an appeals mechanism to students who believe that they have been erroneously, capriciously, or otherwise unfairly treated. Information about the university appeals process and procedures can be found in this catalog (<https://catalog.northeastern.edu/graduate/academic-policies-procedures/appeals/>).

If a student feels that they have been the victim of harassment or of discrimination prohibited by law or by university policy, and that this constitutes a substantive basis for the appeal, they should consult with the Office for University Equity and Compliance (<https://ouec.northeastern.edu/>) as soon as they become aware of alleged prohibited harassment or discrimination, and they are not required to wait until a term grade or determination is received before seeking advice or redress. If the Office for University Equity and Compliance is advised of such alleged prohibited conduct as part of an academic appeal, the appeal shall first be pursued and investigated through the Office for University Equity and Compliance. Following a resolution of the harassment/discrimination issues, any remaining academic issues will be addressed, at the request of the student, according to the academic appeals procedures.

In cases that do not involve sexual harassment or discrimination, students may speak informally to their instructors or academic advisors about any determination or grade about which they have questions. If students choose to pursue an appeal, the College of Social Sciences and Humanities process is described in the appeals section that follows. The Graduate Academic Advisory Committee, which is comprised of an elected body of full-time CSSH faculty, serves as the Academic Appeals Committee for the CSSH.

Graduate Academic Advisory Committee

The GAAC shall be responsible for ensuring that the graduate curriculum of the college promotes the college's and university's evolving intellectual and pedagogical aims. The GAAC acts on all matters relating to the academic life of graduate students in the college in accordance with guidelines approved by the college and the GAAC. The responsibilities of the GAAC are:

- a. Oversight over the quality and scope of the college's graduate curricula, including recommendations for changes to the general program of the college, approval of graduate degree and certificate programs, and review of proposed changes to those programs.
- b. Review of student appeals on decisions concerning grades, academic dismissals, academic probation, change in requirements, permission to resume studies, academic warning, and repeating of courses. The GAAC shall adhere to all policies and procedures adopted by the faculty of the college and the Faculty Senate.

In addition, the GAAC shall adhere to policies and procedures issued by the Office of the Provost. Actions on graduate matters taken by the GAAC shall constitute the recommendations by the faculty on these matters. The GAAC shall make recommendations on behalf of the faculty directly to the dean (or the dean's designee). If the dean supports them, the recommendations shall, as needed, then be sent to the University Graduate Curriculum Committee for consideration. The GAAC's and dean's actions shall be reported periodically to the units involved and to the college council for informational purposes.

The GAAC is charged with review of student appeals on decisions concerning grades, academic probation, change in requirements, permission to resume studies, academic warning, and repeating of courses. Members of the GAAC from the student's own unit are recused from the appeal process. Graduate students may request permission to present their appeals in person. If a student believes that all pertinent information has not been presented, the student may request that the GAAC reconsider its decision. If the GAAC reaffirms its action, and the student is still not satisfied, an appeal for review may be made through the university's Academic Appeals Resolution Committee. The appeals procedure is described in this catalog (<https://catalog.northeastern.edu/graduate/academic-policies-procedures/appeals/>).

Grade Appeals

If a graduate student wishes to dispute a grade in a course taught by a member of the CSSH faculty, the first step is for the student to discuss their concerns with the faculty member who taught the course to see if it is possible to reach agreement on the issue(s). If the student is not able to resolve the issues with the faculty member who taught the course, the student should work with the department/program director to attempt a department-level resolution.

If these informal attempts to resolve the issue fail, the student can enter the formal procedure at the college level.

The student should meet with the associate dean for graduate studies who will attempt to resolve the issue by working with the instructor and the department/program. Contact the Graduate Office at gradcssh@northeastern.edu to schedule the meeting. If it is not possible for the associate dean to resolve the issue with the department/program, the associate dean will determine whether or not there is just cause to convene the GAAC. In the event of an alleged violation of the Student Code of Conduct, the associate dean will first seek a determination of the violation from the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (<https://osccr.sites.northeastern.edu/>).

The decision to convene the GAAC will be based upon the following:

- The student attempted to resolve the complaint with the professor and the department/program.
- The complaint is substantive in nature (adjudication could affect a student's course grade and/or academic record).
- The complaint has been brought forward in a timely manner.

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- The statement must be submitted no later than 28 calendar days from the day when the academic determination is made available to the student.
- If a student wishes to dispute a grade in their final term, this must be done within 28 calendar days of the degree conferral date.

FORMAL COMPLAINT

If the associate dean determines the appeal should be brought to the GAAC, the student must provide a formal written complaint to the associate dean within one week of the student's meeting with the associate dean.

- The written complaint should provide a detailed timeline as well as all available evidence supporting the student's complaint.
 - It is the student's responsibility to make their case. Students may submit any evidence such as emails, quizzes, examinations, etc.
- Once the associate dean receives a formal written complaint, the associate dean will provide a copy of the complaint to the faculty member and to the department/program director and convene a meeting of the GAAC.
- If the student fails to provide a well-reasoned written summary of the case, then the matter will be considered closed at the college level.
- The associate dean will make a good faith effort to identify a date and time for the meeting within 35 calendar days of the student's original submission of their statement.

APPEALS MEETING

- The GAAC serves as the Academic Appeals Committee for the CSSH.
- The GAAC is convened in order to determine whether a fair and due process was used to determine the student's grade.
- The role of the committee is to conduct a review when a grade appeal is filed by a student regarding one of the following reasons:
 - Concern that the course grading policy was not applied consistently to all students within a class and/or section.
 - Concern that the instructor's method of assigning grades differed from the method outlined in the instructor's course syllabus.
 - Concern that the instructor failed to provide a clear policy on how grades would be assigned.

The student and the faculty member have the right to attend and present their case orally to the GAAC. The faculty member and the student aren't required to attend; however, it is usually quite helpful to make an oral presentation and answer any questions that the GAAC may have. If the complainant indicates that they will present their case in person and then fails to attend the scheduled hearing, the case will be dismissed. The complainant and the faculty member both have the right to testify privately and separately before the committee. Lawyers are not permitted in these proceedings. Generally, the faculty member and complainant are each given a 15-minute period to present their case.

The student usually presents their complaint to the committee first. This is followed by a brief Q&A of the student by the GAAC. The GAAC may ask the complainant any questions they have based upon either the written statement submitted by the complainant or the complainant's oral presentation. The faculty member then presents their case, which is followed by a brief Q&A of the faculty member. After both the complainant and faculty member have addressed the GAAC, the GAAC then reviews the evidence, summarizes the case, and makes a recommendation to the associate dean concerning the resolution of the complaint.

If the GAAC believes it cannot resolve any issues without additional information, the GAAC may request any information needed from either the complainant, faculty member, or department/program. This information must be provided to the GAAC within one week of the meeting. If the requested information is not provided in the required time frame, then the GAAC may weigh this failure in making its final determination regarding the original complaint.

COMMITTEE PROCESS

- All decisions of the GAAC will be made based on a simple majority (51%) vote.
- Members of the GAAC from the student's own unit are recused from the appeal process.
- The associate dean is chair of the GAAC and only votes when there is a tie.
- The student bringing the complaint to the GAAC carries the burden of proof based on the weight of the evidence in demonstrating that the grade is incorrect or unjustified.
- If the GAAC decides that the grading process was unfair, the GAAC can request that the instructor changes the student's grade.
 - If an acceptable agreement involves a change of grade, the instructor is responsible for submitting a change of grade to the Office of the University Registrar in a timely manner following notification of the GAAC's decision.
- The student shall be notified within three business days of a decision being reached.

If the student is not satisfied with the GAAC's disposition of the matter, or if the grade appeal is not resolved within 35 calendar days after the written statement is submitted to the college, the student may further pursue the matter by requesting in writing that the university convene an Academic Appeals Resolution Committee to review the issue. This must be submitted within 10 calendar days of the notification from the college. This committee has been designated as the final authority on these matters. Students may obtain information on this process by contacting the Office of the Provost.

Academic Dismissal Appeal

If a student wishes to dispute an academic dismissal, the first step is to consult the graduate director about appealing to the department/program. If and when all departmental appeals are exhausted, the student can enter the formal procedure at the college level.

The student will meet with the associate dean for graduate studies who will attempt to resolve the issue by working with the department/program. Contact the Graduate Office at gradcssh@northeastern.edu to schedule the meeting. If it is not possible for the associate dean to resolve the issue with the department/program, the associate dean will determine if the complaint is substantive and there is just cause to convene the GAAC.

FORMAL COMPLAINT

The student must provide a formal written complaint to the associate dean within one week of the student's meeting with the associate dean. The statement must be submitted no later than 28 calendar days from the day when the academic determination is made available to the student. The written complaint should provide a detailed timeline as well as all available evidence supporting the student's complaint. Once the associate dean receives a formal written complaint, the associate dean will provide a copy of the complaint to the department/program director and convene a meeting of the GAAC. If the student fails to provide a thoughtful and well-reasoned written summary of the case, then the matter will be considered closed at the college level. In the event of an alleged violation of the Student Code of Conduct, the associate dean will first seek a determination of the violation from the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (<https://osccr.sites.northeastern.edu/>).

The associate dean will make a good faith effort to identify a date and time for the meeting within 35 calendar days of the student's original submission of their statement.

APPEALS MEETING

- The GAAC serves as the Academic Appeals Committee for the CSSH.
- The GAAC is convened in order to determine whether a fair and due process was used.

The student has the right to attend and present their case orally to the committee. The student isn't required to attend; however, it is usually quite helpful to make an oral presentation and answer any questions that the GAAC may have. If the complainant indicates that they will present their case in person and then fails to attend the scheduled hearing, the case will be dismissed. Lawyers are not permitted in these proceedings.

The student usually presents their complaint to the GAAC first. This is followed by a brief Q&A of the student by the GAAC. The GAAC may ask the complainant questions based upon either the written case submitted by the complainant or the complainant's oral presentation. The GAAC then reviews the evidence, summarizes the case, and makes a recommendation to the associate dean concerning the resolution of the complaint.

If the GAAC believes it cannot resolve any issues without additional information, the GAAC may request any information needed from either the complainant or department/program. This information must be provided to the GAAC within one week of the meeting. If the needed information is not provided in the time frame required, then the GAAC may weigh this failure in making its final determination regarding the original complaint.

COMMITTEE PROCESS

- All decisions of the GAAC will be made based on a simple majority (51%) vote.
- Members of the GAAC from the student's own unit are recused from the appeal process.
- The associate dean is chair of the GAAC and only votes when there is a tie.
- The student bringing the complaint to the GAAC carries the burden of proof based on the weight of the evidence in demonstrating that the dismissal is incorrect or unjustified.
- If the GAAC decides that the academic dismissal should be revoked, the GAAC can request that the department reinstate the student immediately.

If the student is not satisfied with the GAAC's disposition of the matter, or if the dismissal appeal is not resolved within 35 calendar days after the written statement is submitted to the college, the student may further pursue the matter by requesting in writing that the university convene an Academic Appeals Resolution Committee to review the issue. This must be submitted within 10 calendar days of the notification from the college. This committee has been designated as the final authority on these matters. Students may obtain information on this process by contacting the Office of the Provost.