



The American University of Kurdistan Policy of Student Grievance

Policy Number: AS009
Effective Date: May 28, 2023

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I. INTRODUCTION

- a. **Authority:** The Board of Trustees (herein referred to as “Board”) at The American University of Kurdistan (herein referred to as “AUK” or “University”) is authorized to establish rules and regulations to govern and operate the University and its programs.
- b. **Purpose:** The purpose of the Student Grievance Policy is to provide equitable and orderly processes to resolve grievances by students.
- c. **Scope:** This policy applies to all AUK students.

II. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. **Responsible Executive:** Provost
- b. **Responsible Administrator:** Provost
- c. **Responsible Office:** Office of the Provost
- d. **Policy Contact:** Provost

III. DEFINITION

Academic Grievance: An academic grievance occurs when a formal or informal grievance is submitted by a student who believes they have been harmed by being treated arbitrarily or capriciously within the context of a course.

Non-Academic Grievance: A non-academic grievance occurs when a formal or informal grievance is submitted by a student who believes they have been dealt with in an arbitrary or capricious manner which violated established policies or procedures and has caused actual harm to the student.

IV. POLICY STATEMENT

The policy refers to the formal process by which students are able to pursue grievances, as well as the timeframes by which the University responds. It also serves to confirm that students have the right to access appropriate levels of review and redress.

Students are encouraged to attempt to resolve differences between themselves and others in an informal manner prior to initiating a formal grievance under this policy. This may entail a conversation in which the views of both parties are aired in a mutually satisfactory manner or a conversation using a neutral third party for mediation. If an informal resolution cannot be achieved, the grievant may elect to begin the formal grievance procedure.

Students may pursue a grievance or lodge an appeal of decisions or determinations made through the Student Grievance Process as outlined. The University will deal with any and all grievances in a transparent, professional and fair manner.

V. POLICY PROCEDURES

a. Academic Grievance Procedures

The formal procedure must be started within 20 working days after the contested decision or grade was officially recorded. The Academic Grievance officially begins on the date the "Statement of Grievance Form" is received by the faculty member.

First Level: Academic Grievance Appeal to the Faculty Member

Any student who contests a grade/score on an assessment or the course final grade shall first attempt to resolve the matter with the faculty member. The student must explain her or his position to the faculty member and attempt to understand the faculty member's explanations for assigning the grade/score. The purpose of the meeting is to reach a mutual understanding of the student's situation and the faculty member's actions and to resolve differences in an informal and cooperative manner.

Should attempts at an informal resolution fail, the student may file a grade/score grievance via the Statement of Grievance Form to formally appeal the grade/score. After receiving a completed Statement of Grievance Form, the faculty member shall assure that a written decision outlining the express reasons is delivered to the student within 10 working days. Should the student fail to take further action within 5 working days after receiving the faculty member's decision, that decision shall stand. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision or

does not receive a response from the faculty member within 10 working days, and the student wishes to pursue the appeal s/he may proceed to the second level of grievance.

Second Level: Department Chair and the Academic Grievance Committee

If the student elects to pursue the appeal after the faculty member's decision (or indecision), s/he may take the matter to the Department Chair within 5 working days. The Chair shall review the case and ascertain within 10 working days whether the appeal procedures at the first level have been duly followed; if they have not, s/he will require that they be followed before taking further action. The Chair will provide his/her written assessment of the case on the Statement of Grievance Form, which is then sent to the Dean of the respective College.

In consultation with the Provost, the Dean makes a decision as to whether to dismiss the case or convene an Academic Grievance Committee, which shall consist of a minimum of three faculty members chosen by the Dean or the Dean's designee. Faculty from the same department as the faculty member involved in the case may not serve on the Committee. The Dean or designee shall serve on the Committee; the Provost functions as the chairperson without a vote. All deliberations of the Committee will be closed and confidential.

The Committee should meet as soon as possible, but no later than 10 working days after being charged by the Dean. A written recommendation shall be furnished by the Committee and transmitted through the Office of the Provost to all affected parties within 5 working days after the conclusion of the Committee's deliberations. The decision of the Academic Grievance Committee is final.

b. Non-Academic Grievance Procedures

The formal procedure must be started within 20 working days after the contested decision was officially recorded. The Non-Academic Grievance Process officially begins on the date the "Statement of Grievance Form" is received by the Director of the respective unit.

First Level: Non-Academic Grievance to the Unit Director

Any student who contests an administrative decision shall first attempt to resolve the matter with the Director of that Administrative Unit before filing a written grievance. The student must explain his/her position to the Director and attempt to understand the unit's reasons for assigning the decision. The purpose of the meeting is to reach a mutual understanding of the student's situation and the unit's actions and to resolve differences in an informal and cooperative manner.

Should attempts at an informal resolution fail, the student may file a grievance in writing on the Statement of Grievance Form. After receiving a completed Statement of Grievance Form, the Director of the respective unit shall assure that a written decision outlining the express reasons for that decision is delivered to the student within 10 working days. Should the student fail to take further action within 5 working days after receiving the Director's decision, then that decision shall stand. If the student is dissatisfied with the decision or does not receive a response from the Director within 10 working days, and the student wishes to file a formal appeal s/he may proceed to the second level of grievance.

Second Level: The Vice President for Administration & Finance and the Non-Academic Grievance Committee

If the student elects to continue the grievance after the Director's decision or recommendation has been received, s/he may take the matter to the VPAF (or the VPAF's designee) within 5 working days. The VPAF shall ascertain within 10 working days whether the procedures at the first level have been duly followed; if not, s/he will require that they be followed before taking further action. The VPAF will complete the written statement on the Statement of Grievance Form.

The VPAF makes the decision about whether to dismiss the case or establish a Non-Academic Grievance Committee, which shall consist of three staff members chosen by the VPAF or the VPAF's designee. Staff from the same Unit as the Unit involved in the case may not serve on the Committee. The VPAF or designee shall serve on the Committee as chairperson without a vote. All deliberations of the Committee will be closed and confidential.

The Committee should meet as soon as possible, but no later than 10 working days after the grievance form has been received and the VPAF has ascertained that grievance procedures at the first and second levels have been duly followed. Three staff members and the VPAF or designee shall constitute the Committee. The VPAF is not a voting member. A written recommendation shall be furnished by the Committee and transmitted through the office of the VPAF to all affected parties within 5 working days after the conclusion of the Committee's deliberations. The decision of the Non - Academic Grievance Committee is final.

Appeal of Committee's Findings:

Only if the student believes that a violation of the procedures herein outlined has occurred, may s/he appeal the decision of the Committee to the President, within 10 working days from the date of the Committee's written decision. The President has the discretion to take any action necessary to thoroughly complete a review of the procedure of grievance, and then will issue a decision, which will be binding and final. The decision will be conveyed in writing to the student and all relevant parties usually within 10 working days.

VI. POLICY HISTORY

- a. **Approved by:** Board of Trustees
- b. **Adopted:** May 25, 2023

APPENDIX: STUDENT GRIEVANCE FORM
Statement of Grievance Form

Student Name: _____ Date _____
Student ID # _____ E-mail _____

Check One: Academic Grievance Non-Academic Grievance

Date Submitted _____

Due Date _____ (10 working days from initiation date)

Name of Involved Faculty/Staff Member _____

Course (if academic grievance) or Unit (if non-academic grievance):

Specify your Grievance:

Requested Outcome (specify the solution/action you request):

By signing below: I acknowledge that the information submitted is true and that any attached documents will not be returned. It is advised that photocopies of any back-up documentation be attached to this grievance.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

RESPONSE TO STATEMENT OF GRIEVANCE

Documentation of process of the review of the student grievance
and suggested actions recommended

Response from Faculty-involved or Director-involved

By signing below, I acknowledge that the information submitted is true and that any attached documents will not be returned. It is advised that photocopies of any back-up documentation be attached to this grievance.

Faculty/Staff Member Signature _____ Date _____

RESPONSE TO FACULTY/DIRECTOR REVIEW OF STUDENT GRIEVANCE

Documentation of process of the review of the student grievance
and suggested actions recommended

Response from Dean or VPAF (including assessment of actions taken or recommended to be taken, and whether a Grievance Committee needs to be convened).

By signing below, I acknowledge that the information submitted is true and that any attached documents will not be returned. It is advised that photocopies of any back-up documentation be attached to this grievance.

Provost or VPAF Signature _____ Date _____