

Policy Number: 05.001

Policy Title: Academic Complaint Policy

Policy Type: Academic

Responsible Parties: Faculty, Academic Advisors, ADAA, VPAA, APRC

Governing Body: Faculty Assembly

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### Academic Complaint Policy

For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is an allegation or accusation brought against a faculty member by a student who seeks redress for an alleged wrong or injustice in a teaching and learning environment that does not involve a dispute with an assigned course grade or narrative evaluation. (For appeals regarding course grades or narrative evaluations, see the “Grade Mediation: Appealing a Grade or Narrative Evaluation” policy.)

Antioch College requires faculty and students to uphold the highest principles of academic integrity and to act in a manner that preserves freedom of inquiry and intellectual exploration. The Antioch College faculty is composed of individuals whose professional and pedagogical skills enhance the learning process and who, by their commitment to advancing knowledge, are expected to apply common principles of good teaching, strong mentoring, and fair evaluation of student performance in a course of study or work experience. The College identifies with the following AAUP Statement on Professional Ethics:

*As teachers, professors encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students. They hold before them the best scholarly and ethical standards in their discipline. Professors demonstrate respect for students as individuals and adhere to their proper roles as intellectual guides and counselors. Professors make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct and to ensure that their evaluations of students reflect each student’s true merit. They respect the confidential nature of the relationship between the professor and student. They avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. They acknowledge significant academic or scholarly assistance from them. They protect their academic freedom. — “Statement on Professional Ethics,” in Policy Documents and Reports, 10th ed., American Association of University Professors: Washington, 2006, p. 171.*

The assessment and evaluation of student performance is the responsibility of the faculty. The faculty member is the sole judge of student performance and only the faculty renders an evaluation of student work and progress in a course or work experience. Students who have reason to believe that a violation of professional ethics has occurred or that the assessment of their work was the result of error or capriciousness or was evaluated by criteria other than those stated in the course syllabus or appropriate for the course or work experience have the right to file an academic complaint, or to appeal a course grade or narrative evaluation.

Simple disagreement with the professor’s professional judgment about the quality of the work does not constitute legitimate grounds for filing a complaint. Before filing an

official complaint, students should speak with the faculty member regarding their concerns. This conversation will provide clarification and better understanding and may result in grade mediation and no need to file a formal complaint.

This Academic Complaint Policy does not replace or require changes to any of the other policies governing faculty behavior as specified in the Faculty Personnel Policy, such as the Sexual Harassment Policy; the Sexual Offense Prevention Policy; the Drug and Alcohol Policy; the Affirmative Action Policy; and so on. Each of these policies has their own processes for reporting and resolving alleged violations. This Academic Complaint Policy does not cover appeals for the change of assigned course grades or narrative evaluations; these situations are discussed in the “Grade Mediation: Appealing a Grade or Narrative Evaluation” policy in the Curriculum Catalog.

#### Procedure

1. At any step in the complaint procedure the student or the faculty member may invite another community member to accompany them to any of the meetings to help resolve the complaint. The time periods given in each step below must be somewhat flexible in order to accommodate the academic calendar.
2. It is strongly recommended that the student speak first to the work or classroom faculty member to find a resolution. The student shall approach the faculty member no later than the fifth week of their next study term on campus. In the case of adjunct faculty, visiting faculty, or faculty no longer employed at the College, the student shall approach another member of the division in which the course exists.
3. If a mutually satisfying resolution is not found, the student shall make an appointment to speak to their academic advisor by the end of the seventh week of the quarter. If the academic advisor is a party to the complaint, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAA) or other designee of the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) shall be contacted. The student shall present to their academic advisor (or ADAA or other designee) specific concerns and any supporting documentation. The academic advisor shall make every effort to resolve the complaint. The advisor may request the complaint in writing. The academic advisor will:
  - a) Mediate a resolution in consultation with the faculty member and the student.
  - b) If the complaint cannot be resolved at the divisional level within two weeks, the advisor will forward the complaint to the VPAA with a written report stating what was done and why the complaint could not be resolved at the faculty level. A copy of the report will be emailed to the student, as well.
4. If a mutually satisfactory resolution is not found at the divisional level, the student must write a formal letter to the VPAA with supporting documentation within two weeks of the date the report is sent about the nature of the complaint and the efforts taken to resolve the complaint. The VPAA will contact the faculty member in writing and will expect a written response. At this step, the complaint becomes a formal complaint. The VPAA will:
  - a) Mediate a resolution in consultation with the faculty member and the student.

- b) Request information from parties other than those named in the complaint. Requests for information from parties other than those named in the complaint must be conveyed in writing with copies of the request forwarded to the student and faculty member. Any additional information gathered and used in the complaint process must be submitted in writing, signed by the person releasing it, and made available in complete form to all parties involved in the complaint. Either party to the proceedings may respond in writing to this additional information. The VPAA will then review the file and communicate the results of the investigation in writing to the student and faculty member within 30 - 60 days of the receipt of the complaint.
  - c) Dismiss the complaint if it is found to be illegitimate or unfounded. If the complaint is dismissed, no letter will be placed in the file of the faculty member. Both the student and faculty member will be notified in writing as to the reasons the complaint was dismissed.
  - d) Make a final decision and act administratively to resolve the complaint while respecting the prerogative of the faculty member with respect to evaluation and crediting of student work. (As stated in the Grade Mediation Policy, the VPAA does not have the authority to change a course grade or narrative evaluation; however, the VPAA may act in other appropriate fashions.) Any actions taken by the VPAA to resolve the complaint will be communicated in writing to both the student and the faculty member. It is the VPAA's responsibility to assure that the complaints are followed to resolution.
5. If the complaint involves the VPAA in their role as a professor, the Academic Policy and Review Committee will review the complaint and will be empowered to function as the VPAA would.