

Columbian College of Arts and Sciences

Peer Review Procedure for Cases of Alleged Arbitrary or Capricious Academic Evaluation

Section II. B. Protection Against Improper Academic Evaluation, Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities (2007-08), states:

Except in instances that involve a student grievance based on allegations of illegal discrimination for which other remedy is provided under “Student Grievance Procedures,” a student who alleges an instance of arbitrary or capricious academic evaluation shall be heard and the allegation reviewed through faculty peer review procedures established by the dean and faculty of the school in which the contested academic evaluation took place. Should the peer review processes find in favor of and uphold the complaint of the student, yet the faculty member were to persist in refusing to alter the academic evaluation at issue, the Dean’s Council and the dean shall afford the student an appropriate remedy after consultation with the peer review body.

Section III. C. Professional Responsibilities, Faculty Code (2004), states:

If a student alleges an instance of arbitrary or capricious academic evaluation, the allegation shall be heard and reviewed by orderly faculty peer review procedures established by the dean and faculty of the school in which the contested academic evaluation takes place; should such peer review processes find in favor of and uphold the complaint of the student, yet the faculty member persists in refusing to alter the academic evaluation at issue, the Dean’s Council and dean shall afford the student an appropriate remedy after consultation with the peer review body.

Consistent with these University documents, the peer review procedure for cases of alleged arbitrary or capricious academic evaluation in the Columbian College is a three-step process as indicated below. In order to assure the availability of relevant materials, and unless a specific deadline is listed, each step should be pursued as expeditiously as possible.

1. The student contacts the faculty member or—if the faculty member is unavailable—the relevant department chair or program director to discuss thoroughly the manner and substance of the academic evaluation. The student must make such contact within the first four weeks of the semester following the semester for which the grade was issued (excepting summers).
2. If resolution is not achieved in step #1, the student contacts the department chair or program director who undertakes a complete review of the manner and substance of the academic evaluation. Should the chair or program director be the faculty member providing the evaluation, a senior member of the faculty to be selected by the dean and who is not involved in the academic evaluation will conduct this step of the review.
3. If resolution is not achieved in step #2, the student requests the dean to initiate the formal review process by providing the dean with a written explanation of the basis

for student's claim of arbitrary and capricious academic evaluation, including copies of any supporting documentation. The dean then sends the student's explanation to the chair or program director and charges that individual to form a three-person peer review committee. The committee consists of three members of the faculty of the department or program who are not involved in the academic evaluation. All faculty involved in the review process are to be full-time, regular, active-status members of the faculty. If a sufficient number of qualified faculty cannot be obtained from within a department or program, faculty from related programs may be appointed to the committee after consultation with the dean.

The peer review committee gives the faculty member the opportunity to prepare a written explanation of his or her view of the situation and then will convene to review the entire academic evaluation process and outcome. The committee invites the student and the faculty member to appear, separately, before the committee to make additional comments and to answer questions. The committee deliberates and communicates its decision to the dean in a written report, which the dean conveys to the student and faculty member.

If the peer review committee "find[s] in favor of and uphold[s] the complaint of the student, yet the faculty member persists in refusing to alter the academic evaluation at issue," the dean arranges for the Dean's Council to meet with the peer review committee. The Dean's Council then advises the dean on the steps to be taken to afford the student an appropriate remedy.

If the committee finds in favor of the faculty member, there is no further appeal of the academic evaluation, except on procedural grounds. If the student believes that in some identifiable manner the procedures outlined above have not been followed in some material and prejudicial way, the student may request the dean to review the procedural aspects of the case. Requests for review must be submitted in writing, including an explanation of the basis for the appeal, within ten (10) days after the peer review committee report has been given to the student. If the dean suspects that procedural violations may have occurred, the case is sent to the Dean's Council which examines the procedural aspects of the case. If it concludes that there have been material and prejudicial procedural violations, the Dean's Council may remand the case to the department or program for a re-hearing or may advise the dean on the steps to be taken to afford the student an appropriate remedy.