

Columbian School of Arts and Sciences

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

Section II. B. Protection Against Improper Academic Evaluation, 1998-99 Guide to Student Rights and Responsibilities, 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 (1996), 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 School is a three-step process as indicated below. In order to assure the availability of the faculty member making the academic evaluation in question, all requests for review must be made within four weeks of the mailing of the grade report by the Registrar's Office.

1. The faculty member and the student engage in a thorough discussion of the manner and substance of the academic evaluation.
2. If resolution is not achieved in step #1, the student, faculty member, and chair or program director engage in a complete review of the manner and substance of the academic evaluation. Should the chair/program director be the faculty member providing the evaluation, a senior member of the faculty selected by the chair/program director will conduct the discussion.
3. If resolution is not achieved in step #2, the student may request that the dean initiate the formal review process. In this process, the chair or program director of the unit in which the contested academic evaluation occurred forms a three-person peer review committee. The committee consists of the chair or program director and two other members of the faculty of the department or program who are not involved in the academic evaluation. Should the chair or program director be the faculty member alleged to have made the arbitrary or capricious academic evaluation, the dean chooses the three members of the peer review committee. 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 conducts a hearing at which it reviews the entire academic

evaluation process and outcome. The student and the faculty member shall each prepare a document explaining their view of the situation. If they wish to do so, either or both may appear before the committee to state their views on the contested academic evaluation.

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’s Council shall meet with the peer review committee and review the case of arbitrary or capricious academic evaluation. The Council shall then advise 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, the student may request that the Dean’s Council review the procedural aspects of the case. If the Dean’s Council concludes that there have been 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.

Revised October 1, 1999