

Student Academic Fair Practices (SAFP) Policy

Principles and Procedures

Preamble

Valparaiso University is a scholarly community whose aim is to create an environment for humane learning. Toward this end, students and faculty, working together in close relationship, pursue not only knowledge but wisdom. In their mutual devotion to intellectual discovery, each stimulates the other. The prerequisite for the continuing success of this endeavor is academic freedom – the freedom to teach and to learn. As full members of the college community, therefore, students, like faculty, are encouraged to develop their capacity for critical judgment and to engage in a sustained and independent search for the truth. The rights, freedoms, and responsibilities of students outlined below are essential for the realization of this goal.

The vitality of academic freedom depends on appropriate conditions in the classroom, on the campus, and in the larger community. The responsibility to secure and maintain these conditions is shared by the students, faculty, and administration.

The character of an institution of higher learning, furthermore, finds expression in the criteria it approves in offering admission to prospective students, and these criteria become significant factors in the safeguards of appropriate freedoms of students on campus. It is therefore fitting that they receive mention in this document.

Valparaiso University is a selective university. It chooses to offer admission to students who are intellectually qualified and whose presence in the campus community can be expected to contribute to a desired diversity of interests, talents, and backgrounds. No applicant is denied admission on the basis of race, color, creed, or sex, or other factors that have no bearing on a candidate's potential academic success. Admission is competitive and limited by the availability of facilities, programs, and other resources of the university. Subject to reasonable regulations and the rule of the university, the facilities and services of Valparaiso University are open to all enrolled students.

I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Students are responsible for learning and demonstrating an understanding of the content and skills of any course of study in which they enroll. Furthermore, students are free to express careful and reasoned criticism of data and opinion offered in any such course.

Students are entitled to objective professional evaluation of their academic work and to fair equitable treatment in the course of their academic relationships with members of the faculty. Members of the Valparaiso University faculty observe these criteria as part of their professional responsibilities. Misunderstandings have been and are to be resolved informally, in discussion between students and professors, and this manner of resolving problems and concerns continues to be deemed appropriate in this academic community.

In order to assure that students are accorded courteous, fair, and reasonable treatment by members of the faculty, the following statements of principles, students' rights and responsibilities, and grievance procedures are set forth as part of the policies and practices of the university. Thus the document intends to be consistent both with other official statements and goals of members of the university community as published in the **STUDENT GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY LIFE** and the **FACULTY HANDBOOK** and with rights guaranteed in the Constitution of the United States as applied in this institution.

The Statement of Students' Rights and Responsibilities that follows outlines the rights and responsibilities of students attending this university. The academic rights of students, by their definition, imply certain responsibilities of the faculty. The objectives of the procedures delineated here are intended to encourage prompt and informal resolution of both concerns and complaints and to provide a recourse, when necessary, to orderly formal procedures for the satisfactory resolution of a grievance.

II. STUDENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Students' Rights

1. Students have a right to pursue an education free from unrelated factors that have no bearing on a candidate's potential academic success.
2. Students have a right to fair and regular academic evaluation.
3. Students have a right to a classroom environment conducive to intellectual freedom.
4. Students have a right to be free from improper disclosure of their views, beliefs, and political association that professors or administrators may acquire in the course of their work as advisors and counselors. Such information shall be considered confidential unless the student gives permission to release the information or a law or an event requires public disclosure.

B. Students' Responsibilities

1. Students have a responsibility to help maintain the academic standards established by the university by participating fully in the learning process.
2. Students have a responsibility to act in a manner that does not infringe upon the rights of other members of the university community.
3. Students have a responsibility to contribute to an educational atmosphere that promotes respect for learning and human dignity.

III. STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

A. Definitions

1. *Student grievance*: A student grievance shall exist when a student alleges that a faculty member has infringed upon student rights as described in Section II.A. of this document.
2. *Student*: A student is any person who has officially enrolled for academic credit at Valparaiso University.
3. *Faculty member*: A faculty member is any person at Valparaiso University holding an academic appointment.
4. *Student*: A student that believes they are discriminated against must follow the processes set forth in the university's Nondiscrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Assault Policy.

B. Grievance Resolution Process

Informal Procedure

Level I: Student and Faculty Discussion

Students must, if they have a concern or complaint, contact the faculty member involved (or department chairperson if the faculty member is not available) no later than the end of the first full week of classes following the semester in which the alleged grievance occurred. At this discussion level the student shall have access to the final examination or any other material that has been

evaluated and that the student has not received. If the instructor is absent from campus, the departmental chairperson will have access to the appropriate documents. If at this level of information and calculation, the faculty member acknowledges an error, misjudgment, or unfair bias has occurred, the faculty member is expected to respond appropriately either by altering subsequent classroom practice or by changing the student's grade or both. It is expected that most, if not all, problems will be resolved at this level. If a satisfactory solution is not reached at this level, the student may proceed to Level II.

Formal Procedure

Level II: Mediation within the College

Within seven (7) academic days of the completion of the discussion at Level I, the student must send a letter to the appropriate dean (dean of the college in which the course is taught) and a copy to the faculty member, informing the dean of the nature of the unresolved grievance and of the student's intent to proceed with Level II. For informational purposes, the student shall also forward a copy of the letter to the chairperson of the Student Academic Fair Practices Committee (SAFPC). The procedure within Level II shall be tailored by each college to meet its needs. **(For a specific college, refer to section after Level III.)** The procedures adopted by each college will become the official policy of that college and together they will also become a part of these Principles and Procedures.

These procedures shall be consonant with the preamble of this document.

The following guidelines shall aid the colleges in their development of appropriate procedures: The purpose of this level is to provide an opportunity for mediation between the aggrieved student and the faculty member to whom the grievance is addressed.

The college shall provide a procedure for the selection of a mediator or mediators, either faculty or students or both, who shall seek to clarify misunderstandings and to provide objective evaluation of the grievance.

At this level the student may also seek the help of an advocate from the college in which the course is taught or from the greater university community, such as an ombudsman, faculty member, or fellow student. The faculty member also has a right to choose an advocate to be present at this level.

If the mediation process at Level II does not resolve the grievance to the satisfaction of the student, the student may proceed with Level III.

Level III: Valparaiso University Student Academic Fair Practices Committee (SAFPC)

The committee shall consist of seven (7) faculty members and seven (7) students drawn from the following areas: The College of Arts and Sciences, Business, Engineering, and Nursing and Health Professions, Christ College, the Graduate School, and the Law School. Not more than one faculty or student representative will be drawn from any one school or college. The president of the university and 1) the Student Senate, 2) the Graduate Student Advisory Council, and 3) the Student Bar Association shall jointly appoint faculty and student representatives as appropriate. When necessary, the president of the university and the relevant student organization shall appoint alternates, especially in the case of absences and/or possible conflict of interest. The terms of appointment shall be two (2) years in the case of faculty with the possibility of reappointment.

Students shall be appointed for terms of one year, with possibility of reappointment. The chairperson shall be elected by the committee and shall preside at meetings with voice and vote.

Robert's Rules of Order will prevail if there are procedural questions.

A petition stating the nature of the grievance, providing relevant data, and specifying a requested remedy, must be submitted by the student to the convener of SAFPC within seven (7) academic days after exhausting the procedures in Level II. The student shall also forward a copy of the petition to the faculty members involved. The convener of SAFPC will share this petition with the committee which will vote within seven (7) academic days as to whether or not it will consider the petition. A simple majority vote is needed to advance the petition to a hearing.

If the petition advances to a hearing, the SAFPC convener shall select a hearing committee to hear the petition within seven (7) academic days after the vote. A hearing committee consists of three (3) faculty and three (3) students selected from the SAFPC and must include the faculty and student representatives from the academic unit from which the petition originates. As its first order of business, a hearing committee selects its chairperson. The student and the faculty member involved will be called to the hearing to provide testimony and to answer questions from the hearing committee. The hearing committee may also solicit the opinions of the Level II participants.

All hearing committee meetings shall be private and all committee documents shall be confidential. Any hearing committee decision shall be communicated to the SAFPC convener within forty-eight (48) hours to the student, the faculty member involved, the appropriate dean, and the provost. The decision of the hearing committee shall be retained in a confidential committee file kept by the provost. It is expected that the faculty member and the students involved will accede to the hearing committee's recommendation.

Appeals from Level III by the student must be made in writing to the provost within seven (7) days after receiving the hearing committee's written decision. The provost shall deal with the student appeal in a manner appropriate to the specific requirements of the case. If there is any question about the student's academic status during the appeal process, the provost shall determine the student's status during the process.

College of Arts and Sciences Level II Procedure

Composition:

The Committee shall consist of:

1. The dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.
2. Three faculty members, one appointed by the dean from each academic area within the college (social sciences, humanities, natural sciences). Faculty alternates shall be appointed from each area. Faculty committee members involved in any grievance before the committee shall request an alternate attend the meeting in their place.
3. Two student members appointed by the dean. Student members must be full time students in the College of Arts and Sciences and elected members of the University Council. Each student representative shall also have an appointed alternate. Student committee members involved in any grievance before the committee shall request their alternate attend the meeting in their place.

4. Assistant and associate deans in the College of Arts and Sciences shall be ex-officio members of the committee.

Procedure:

1. When the student's letter of grievance is received in the Dean's Office, College of Arts and Sciences, the dean will set a hearing date and notify the committee members and the faculty person or persons involved. This date shall be set within ten (10) class days of receipt of the notification.
2. The student's letter of grievance shall include at least these areas of information but not be limited to these:
 - a. A statement of the problem or complaint;
 - b. Concrete evidence to support the student's case;
 - c. Necessary background documentation;
 - d. A statement of the desired outcome of the grievance procedure.
3. At this level, the student and the faculty member may each bring an advocate from the university community such as an ombudsman, a counselor, a faculty member, or another student.
4. The dean will chair a hearing of the situation before the committee. Both the student and the faculty member involved will be given a fair opportunity to make a statement and to ask and answer questions.
5. The involved student, faculty member, and their advocates shall then be excused. The committee will discuss the grievance and formalize their conclusions in a written recommendation to the dean adopted by a majority vote.
6. The dean will inform both parties of the decision verbally within 72 hours of the meeting and confirm the decision in writing within seven (7) days.
7. If the mediation process at Level II does not resolve the grievance, the dean should be notified that the student is proceeding to Level III.

College of Business Level II Procedure

Composition:

The Committee shall consist of:

1. Three faculty members, one of whom shall be appointed by the dean of the College of Business to serve as chair. Members shall be appointed by the dean from within the College of Business in September of each year. Faculty members who are a party in any grievance before the committee must request that an alternate be appointed in their place.
2. Two student members shall be appointed by the dean in September of each year. Student members must be full time students in the College of Business. Student committee members who are a party in any grievance before the committee must request that an alternate be appointed in their place.

Procedure:

1. Within ten (10) calendar days of the completion of the procedure provided at Level I, the student must notify the dean of the College of Business and the involved faculty member in writing of the nature of the unresolved grievance and of the student's intent to proceed with Level II.

2. Upon receipt of written notice from the aggrieved student, the dean shall set a hearing date and notify all parties in writing of the time and date. The date for the hearing shall be within fifteen (15) calendar days of receipt of the written notice of the student's intent to proceed to Level II.
3. The student's written notice of grievance shall include but not be limited to these areas of information:
 - a. A statement of the problem or complaint;
 - b. Evidence to support the student's case;
 - c. Necessary background documentation;
 - d. A statement of the desired outcome of the grievance procedure.
4. At this level, the student and the faculty member may each bring an advocate from within the university. Examples include an ombudsman, a counselor, a faculty member, or another student.
5. The chair shall provide for a hearing of the grievance before the committee. Both the student and the faculty member involved shall be given a fair opportunity to make statements and to ask and answer questions concerning the alleged grievance.
6. The involved student and faculty member (and their advocates, if present) shall then be excused. The committee will discuss the grievance and formalize their conclusions in a written recommendation to the dean. All actions and recommendations of the committee shall be by majority vote. Written recommendations shall be forwarded to the dean within ten (10) calendar days after the hearing.
7. The dean shall notify both parties of their decision in writing within ten (10) calendar days after receipt of the committee's recommendation.
8. If the mediation process at Level II does not resolve the grievance, the dean must be notified in writing by the student that she/he is proceeding to Level III. (Appeal to the Valparaiso University Student Academic Fair Practices Committee).
9. If the faculty member is no longer employed by the university or is not available for an unreasonable amount of time, the faculty/student grievance committee may represent the absent faculty member or appoint another person to do so.

Steps in the Process:

1. The process begins when a student "complains" to a faculty member or to the dean of some "unfairness" or lack of fair, proper, or consistent grading/feedback in a business course.
2. The student is asked if s/he has discussed the matter with the faculty member involved (a necessary first step). If s/he has, s/he is instructed that to proceed with the SAFF process they must submit a complaint in writing to the dean.
3. When the dean receives a written complaint requesting SAFF grievance resolution, the dean immediately gives a copy of the complaint to the faculty member and inquires about the situation, the nature of the discussion between the faculty member and the student, and whether there are some ways to resolve the situation without convening the SAFF committee.
4. Typically after the meeting with the faculty member, the dean meets with the student. The student may be instructed to meet with the faculty member again to see if there is some possible resolution outside the committee.
5. If the student and faculty member have not agreed on what they mutually consider a satisfactory resolution of the matter outlined in Level I, the dean gives a copy of the

complaint to the chair of the SAFP committee who proceeds with convening the committee and scheduling the hearing process.

6. After the hearings are completed, the dean receives from the SAFP committee chair a written summary of the findings of fact as well as the recommendations for resolution.
7. The faculty member is expected to comply with the committee's recommendation. If the student is not satisfied with the committee's recommendation and/or the faculty member does not heed the committee's suggestion, the student may appeal to the next SAFP level, the university-wide SAFP committee. Other remedies to resolve the matter may be pursued.

College of Engineering Level II Procedure

Composition:

The Committee shall consist of:

1. The dean of the College of Engineering.
2. One faculty member and one alternate from each of the three departments, appointed by the dean. A faculty committee member involved in any grievance before the committee shall request that an alternate attend the meeting.
3. Two student members and two alternates appointed by the dean in September of each year. Student members and alternates must be full time students in the College of Engineering and elected officers of the student chapters of A.S.C.E., I.E.E.E., or A.S.M.E. A student committee member involved in any grievance before the committee shall request that an alternate attend the meeting.

Procedure:

1. When the student's letter of grievance is received by the dean of the College of Engineering, the dean will set a hearing date and notify the committee members and the faculty person or persons involved. This date shall be set within ten (10) class days of receipt of the notification.
2. The student's letter of grievance shall include at least these areas of information but not limited to these:
 - a. A statement of the problem or complaint;
 - b. Concrete evidence to support the student's case;
 - c. Necessary background documentation;
 - d. A statement of the desired outcome of the grievance procedure.
3. The dean will chair a hearing of the situation before the committee. Both the student and the faculty member involved will be given a fair opportunity to make a statement and to ask and answer questions.
4. At this level, the student and the faculty member may each bring an advocate from the university community, such as an ombudsman, a counselor, a faculty member, or another student.
5. The involved student, faculty member, and advocates shall then be excused. The committee will discuss the grievance and formalize its conclusions in a written recommendation to the dean adopted by a majority vote.
6. The dean will inform both parties of the decision verbally within 72 hours of the meeting and confirm the decision in writing within seven (7) days.
7. If the mediation process at Level II does not resolve the grievance, the dean should be notified that the student is proceeding to Level III.

College of Nursing and Health Professions Level II Procedure

Grievance Composition:

1. When a grievance is filed, the academic officer shall convene two faculty members in addition to him/herself. A faculty committee member involved in any grievance before the committee shall request that an alternate attend the meeting.
2. Three student members and three alternates are selected by the dean from each of the sophomore, junior, and senior classes. Student members and alternates must be full time students in the College of Nursing and Health Professions. A student committee member involved in any grievance before the committee shall request that an alternate attend the meeting.

Procedure:

1. When the student's letter of grievance is received by the academic officer, he/she will set a hearing date and select the faculty participants. This date shall be set within ten (10) class days of receipt of the student's letter of grievance.
2. The student's letter of grievance shall include at least these areas of information but not limited to these:
 - a. Statement of the problem or complaint;
 - b. Concrete evidence to support the student's case;
 - c. Necessary background documentation;
 - d. Statement of the desired outcome.
3. At this level, the student and the faculty member may each bring an advocate from within the university, such as an ombudsman, counselor, faculty member, or student.
4. The academic officer will conduct a hearing of the grievance before the committee. Both the student and the faculty member involved shall be given a fair opportunity to make statements and to ask and answer questions.
5. The involved student, faculty member, and advocates shall then be excused. The committee will discuss the grievance and formalize its conclusions in a written recommendation to the dean adopted by majority vote.
6. The dean will inform both parties of the decision verbally within 72 hours and confirm the decision in writing within seven (7) days.
7. If the mediation process at Level II does not resolve the grievance, the dean should be notified that the student is proceeding to Level III.

College of Nursing and Health Professions Procedure: Appeal of Academic Policy

Composition:

The Committee shall consist of:

1. Two faculty members selected for service plus the academic officer.

Procedure:

1. The student who wishes to appeal academic policy must submit a written petition to the academic officer within ten (10) class days after receiving written notice of academic deficiency, conditions, or dismissal from the College of Nursing and Health Professions.
2. The student's letter of appeal shall include at least these areas of information but not limited to these:

- a. Any extenuating circumstances;
 - b. Substantiating evidence;
 - c. A statement of the desired outcome.
3. The student who wishes to appear before the committee to present additional evidence verbally must include the request in the letter of appeal.
4. The committee will discuss the appeal and formalize its conclusions in a written recommendation to the dean adopted by majority vote.
5. The dean will inform the student of the decision verbally within 72 hours and confirm the decision in writing within seven (7) days.

Law School Level II Procedure

Composition:

The Committee shall consist of:

1. One member of the Law School's tenured faculty, appointed by the dean, who shall act as chair;
2. Two members of the Law School faculty, appointed by the dean;
3. Two student members, appointed by the dean in consultation with the president of the Student Bar Association;
4. Committee members will be appointed only in response to the filing of a grievance and only in the absence of any conflict of interest.

Procedure:

1. The Level II procedure is triggered when a student submits a written grievance to the dean of the Law School, indicating a failure of the Level I procedure. Once the grievance is received, the dean will ensure that the faculty member involved has been notified that the matter is proceeding to Level II, and appoint committee members as described above.
2. The student's letter of grievance shall include at least the following:
 - a. A statement of the problem or complaint;
 - b. Any evidence supporting the student's case;
 - c. Any necessary background information;
 - d. A statement of why the Level I procedure was unsuccessful in resolving the grievance;
 - e. A statement of the desired outcome of the grievance.
3. The chair shall provide for a hearing of the grievance before the committee. The hearing shall be held within ten (10) days of the dean's receipt of the student's grievance. At the hearing, both the student and the faculty member involved will be given a fair opportunity to make a statement and to ask and answer questions. Committee members may also ask whatever questions they deem necessary.
4. At this level, both the student and the faculty member may each bring an advocate from the university community, such as an ombudsman, a counselor, a faculty member, or another student.
5. Following the hearing, the student, faculty member, and any advocates shall be excused by the committee. The committee will then discuss the grievance and formalize its conclusions in a written recommendation to the dean of the Law School which has been approved by a majority of the committee.

6. The dean will inform both parties of the decision of the committee verbally within 72 hours of the hearing and confirm the decision in writing within seven (7) days.
7. If the mediation process at Level II does not resolve the grievance, the student must notify the dean in writing that she/he is proceeding to Level III within fourteen (14) days of receipt of written notice of the decision of the committee.

Graduate School Level II Procedure

Mediation

Graduate students pursue Level II mediation through the Graduate School which provides an opportunity for mediation between the aggrieved student and the faculty member to whom the grievance is addressed. Within seven (7) academic days of the completion of the discussion at Level I, the student must send a letter to the dean of the Graduate School and a copy to the faculty member, informing the dean of the nature of the unresolved grievance and of the student's intent to proceed with Level II. For informational purposes, the student shall also forward a copy of the letter to the chairperson of the Student Academic Fair Practices Committee (SAFPC). The student's letter of grievance shall include at least these areas of information but not be limited to these:

1. A statement of the problem or complaint;
2. Concrete evidence to support the student's case;
3. Necessary background documentation, including written evidence that the Level I procedure has been exhausted;
4. A statement of the desired outcome of the grievance procedure.

After the student's letter of grievance is received in the dean's office, the dean will proceed as follows: If informal discussion between the dean and the two parties does not resolve the issue, the dean shall then appoint a committee to determine whether there is cause for further consideration of the grievance. Pursuit of an informal resolution notwithstanding, selection of the committee and notification of the hearing date will be completed within fifteen (15) academic days after receipt of the notification.

The Committee shall consist of:

1. The dean (or associate dean), who chairs the meeting.
2. Three faculty members, two appointed by the dean from the Graduate Educational Policy Committee and one from the Council of Graduate Program Directors. The faculty appointment from the Council of Graduate Program Directors shall not be drawn from the program in which the student is filing the grievance. Faculty members involved in any grievance before the committee or having any other conflict of interest regarding the student shall not be appointed to the committee.
3. Two student members appointed by the dean. Student members must be degree-seeking graduate students and members of the Graduate Student Advisory Council. Each student representative shall also have an appointed alternate. Students involved in any grievance before the committee or having any other conflict of interest regarding the faculty member involved shall not be appointed to the committee.

When the committee members convene, they have three charges. **First**, they must determine if there is sufficient evidence to hear the case. If so, **second**, they must consider the grievance and

make a recommendation regarding the proposed remedy. To aid their deliberations, the student, the faculty member involved, and their representatives (e.g., advocate from the university community, such as an ombudsman, a counselor, a faculty member, or another student) may be invited to supply additional information for consideration of the grievance. The committee may also solicit the opinions of the dean or director and any advisory committees of the college/program in which the student is enrolled. **Third**, the committee will discuss the grievance and formalize their conclusions in a written recommendation to the dean adopted by a majority vote.

Upon receipt of the written recommendation from the committee, the dean will attempt to inform both parties of the decision orally within five (5) calendar days (excluding university holidays) of the meeting and confirm the decision in writing within ten (10) calendar days (excluding university holidays). If the mediation process at Level II does not resolve the grievance and the student intends to proceed to Level III, the student should inform the Graduate School dean and follow **Level III: Valparaiso University Student Academic Fair Practices Committee** procedures (see in following section paying careful attention to timeline requirements for submitting a petition).

All committee meetings shall be private and all committee documents shall be confidential. If the student and faculty member are present, both will be given a fair opportunity to make a statement and to ask and answer questions. If present, the involved student, faculty member, and their advocates shall then be excused.