

A GUIDE FOR RESOLVING ACADEMIC ISSUES

Academic issues and interpersonal conflicts can arise from various sources, such as confusion or miscommunication about deadlines, perceived unfairness in grading, differences in expectations around class participation, or personality clashes during class. Also, students may have evidence suggesting that academic policies and procedures have been improperly applied in certain situations. Recognizing the nature of the conflict is the first crucial step towards resolution. Students should take time to reflect on the specific issues they are facing and their feelings about those issues. By understanding the problem, students can approach the resolution process with clarity, fostering respectful and positive dialogues with faculty/staff. Resolving issues respectfully not only minimizes the impact on academic performance but also promotes a positive learning environment and the overall student experience.

1 | GATHER INFORMATION & BE ON POINT

Challenging conversations are uncomfortable, but it is important to advocate for yourself and seek clarity when needed. When you do discuss your concerns, it is helpful to do the following:

- Document the specific instance of disagreement with your instructor in a detailed and factual way.
- Reflect on the situation and determine why you have a concern or do not agree with your instructor.
- Review relevant course materials to ensure you have all the necessary information.
- Organize your discussion points in order of importance.
- Make sure your questions, which will be based on your discussion points, are respectful, clear, and concise.
- Practice for the discussion with your instructor by anticipating their responses to your questions.

2 | INITIATING AN INFORMAL RESOLUTION

While it can be challenging, communicating with your instructor can be a direct way to get the help you need to resolve the issue you are facing. Remember, instructors expect dialogue with their students. Try to schedule a time to meet with your instructor through email or meet during office hours. One-on-one conversations can help you and your instructor understand each other's perspectives without the pressure of a formal setting. If you communicate via email, please allow time for your instructor to reply.

3 | COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR INSTRUCTOR

- 1 Try to use **"I" statements** to express your feelings. This avoids communicating in a manner that appears to place blame on the instructor. For example, saying *"I felt confused when the assignment guidelines were changed"* is non-confrontational way to communicate your opinion.
- 2 Listen to the instructor's viewpoint, without interrupting. This establishes respect and shows your interest in understanding the instructor's perspective.
- 3 Remain calm and professional throughout the conversation, this can help keep the discussion productive.
- 4 Finding common ground with the instructor increases the chances of a mutually beneficial solution.
- 5 Develop a plan with your instructor to resolve your issue and set clear expectations for the future.
- 6 After your initial communication, follow up with the instructor to ensure solutions are being implemented. Regular check-ins can help maintain progress and facilitate any necessary adjustments, thus preventing the issue from resurfacing.

If you are apprehensive about approaching your instructor, please consider contacting the student ombuds to seek advice on a pathway forward.

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4 | SEEKING A FORMAL RESOLUTION

Student feedback is vital for the improvement of **Florida State University**, and you are a key stakeholder in our campus community. FSU offers various processes for students to exercise their rights in the form of Formal Complaints and Appeals. It is typically recommended to resolve the issue at the source of the conflict first. Ultimately, students have the autonomy to choose whether to resolve a conflict informally or formally. If informal resolution methods do not solve your issue, you always have the option to file a Formal Complaint or Appeal.

FSU | STUDENT OMBUDS OFFICE

At **Florida State University**, student success is a top priority. The Student Ombuds Office will support students at any point during their FSU experience. The student ombuds serves as an impartial, informal, independent, and confidential resource for any undergraduate or graduate student. **The Student Ombuds Office** is dedicated to helping students find a path forward.

We can offer advice, discuss options, answer questions, and explain FSU policies. The Student Ombuds Office does not manage Formal Complaints or Appeals and cannot accept legal notices for FSU. Additionally, communication with the Student Ombuds Office does not constitute official notice to the University.

The Student Ombuds Office is available to any student regardless of whether the student pursues informal or formal resolution methods. Further, a student may visit the **Student Ombuds Office** at any point while working to resolve an issue.



GRANT ESCUE, J.D.

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studentombuds.fsu.edu
 Westcott Building, Suite 407,
 222 S Copeland St., Tallahassee, FL 32304

THE DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT SUPPORT AND TRANSITIONS

Supports, connects, and empowers students as they navigate their academic and personal journeys, helping students manage any challenges, crises, or stressful situations.

dsst@fsu.edu | 850-644-2428 | dsst.fsu.edu
 University Center A, Suite 4109, 282 Champions Way

CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Supports student success by working with individuals to provide emotional support, counseling, advocacy, and assistance in identifying immediate needs. Case Management Services may provide a student with a letter indicating the type of support that would benefit the student, as well as requesting consideration and/or flexibility for the student. The letter validates and verifies the existence of an extenuating circumstance. The letter does not, however, request to set aside a fundamental learning objective in a course.

THE OFFICE OF ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

Provides academic accommodations for students with all types of qualifying disabling conditions in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students must be registered and approved for the appropriate accommodations based on the student's qualifying disabling condition. Letters of accommodation are specific to each student, and each accommodation must be provided to the student in each of their courses.

THE VICTIM ADVOCATE PROGRAM

Provides free, confidential, and compassionate assistance to primary and secondary victims of crime, violence, or abuse involving Florida State University students. Faculty/staff who receive a letter from the Victim Advocate Program may never ask the student for information or documentation concerning the student's situation. Victim Advocate Program letters may address a student's immediate needs and/or needs throughout an academic term.

FILING AN APPEAL

General Academic Appeal

General Academic Appeals can begin at any time in the semester.

Grade Appeal

The Grade Appeals process cannot begin until the semester is over and final course grades have been formally posted.

The deadlines with respect to submitting a Grade Appeal are explained in the policy and corresponding flowchart.

If you are dealing with something serious that is not an academic problem and is not an emergency, you may make a report through <https://report.fsu.edu/> and the correct Office at FSU will receive your report automatically.

If you find yourself in an emergency, please contact the FSU PD at **850-644-1234** or **Call 911**.