

Michigan State University
College of Communication Arts and Sciences
Adopted Fall 2010

Academic Hearing Procedures for Graduate and Undergraduate Students

The *Academic Freedom for Students at Michigan State University (AFR)* and the *Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities (GSRR)* documents establish the rights and responsibilities of MSU students and prescribes procedures for resolving allegations of violations of those rights through formal grievance hearings. In accordance with the AFR and the GSRR, the College of Communication Arts and Sciences has established the following College Hearing Board procedures for adjudicating academic grievances and complaints. (See AFR Article 6 and 7; GSRR 5.4.1.)

I. JURISDICTION OF THE COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION ARTS AND SCIENCES HEARING BOARD:

- A. Normally, students will file for academic grievance hearings with the chair of the hearing board in the department/school in which the alleged violation occurred. (See AFR 7.III.B. and GSRR 5.3.6.2). The following section specifies the jurisdiction of the College of Communication Arts and Sciences Hearing Board in relation to other hearing boards.

- B. The College Hearing Board serves as:
 - 1. the appellate Board for academic grievance hearings initiated at the Department/School level by graduate students. (See GSRR 5.1.1. and 5.4.12.)

 - 2. the initial Hearing Board for academic grievance hearings involving undergraduate and graduate students who allege violations of student academic rights and graduate students seeking to contest an allegation of academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards or falsifying admission and academic records) in the following situations:
 - a. the Dean of the College concurs with a request by the Chair/Director of a Department/School to waive jurisdiction. (See AFR 6.II.A and 7.IV.B; GSRR 5.3.6.2.)

 - b. the Dean of the College administers the course or program where the alleged violation took place. (See AFR 6.II.A.)

 - c. the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education or the Dean of The Graduate School selects the College Hearing Board to hear a case of ambiguous jurisdiction. (See AFR 6.II.A, 7.II.B; GSRR 5.5.7. See also *Integrity of Scholarship and Grades* policy, Sections 5, 8 and 9.)

 - 3. the initial Hearing Board for academic disciplinary hearings for undergraduate or graduate students in the College who are accused of academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violating professional standards

or falsifying admission and academic records) and when the Dean, or designee, of the student's college seeks to impose sanctions in addition to, or other than, a penalty grade. The students, after meeting with the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education or the Dean of The Graduate School, may opt for a hearing before the College Hearing Board. (See AFR 6.II.A., GSRR 5.5 and *Integrity of Scholarship and Grades* policy, Sections 5, 8 and 9.)

- B. Students may not request an academic grievance hearing based on an allegation of incompetent instruction. (AFR 2.II.A-D; GSRR 2.2.2 and 2.2.4.)

II. COMPOSITION OF THE COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION ARTS AND SCIENCES HEARING BOARD:

- A. The College shall constitute a Hearing Board pool that will be available for hearing during the summer as well as academic year. Hearing Board pool members will be composed of students and faculty. Each academic unit in the college will contribute two graduate students and two undergraduate students to the pool. Units will decide how to select students. The faculty pool will be composed of the two representatives to the College Advisory Council (CAC) from each academic unit. The term for being in the pool will be the same as the term for CAC. (See AFR 6.II.B, C, and D; GSRR 5.1.3 and 5.1.6.)
- B. For hearings involving graduate students, the Hearing Board shall include two graduate students and two faculty members drawn randomly from the pool. In addition, a Chair of the Hearing Board shall be drawn randomly from the pool of faculty after “conflicts of interests” have been eliminated. The Chair shall be the faculty member with rank. All members of the Hearing Board shall have a vote, except the Chair, who shall vote only in the event of a tie. (See GSRR 5.1.3, and 5.1.5.)
- C. For hearings involving undergraduate students, the Hearing Board shall include two undergraduate students and two faculty members drawn randomly from the pool. In addition, a Chair of the Hearing Board shall be drawn randomly from the pool of faculty after “conflicts of interests” have been eliminated. The Chair shall be the faculty member with rank. All members of the Hearing Board shall have a vote, except the Chair, who shall vote only in the event of a tie.
- D. The College will train hearing board members about these procedures and the applicable sections of the AFR and GSRR. (See AFR 7.IV.C; GSRR 5.1.3.)

III. REFERRAL TO COLLEGE HEARING BOARD:

- A. Grievance Hearing
1. After consulting with the instructor and appropriate unit administrator, undergraduate students who remain dissatisfied with their attempt to resolve an allegation of a violation of student academic rights may request an academic grievance hearing. The hearing will occur at the College level if one of the conditions outlined in 1.A.2 above exists. At any time in the

grievance process, students may consult with the University Ombudsman. (See AFR 7.III.A, 7.IV.H; GSRR 5.3.)

2. After consulting with the instructor and appropriate unit administrator, graduate students who remain dissatisfied with their attempt to resolve an allegation of a violation of student academic rights or academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards or falsifying admission and academic records) may request an academic grievance hearing. The hearing will occur at the College level if one of the conditions outlined in 1.A.2 above exists. At any time in the grievance process, students may consult with the University Ombudsman. (See AFR 7.III.A, 7.IV.H; GSRR 5.3.)
3. The deadline for submitting the written request for a hearing is the middle of the next semester in which the student is enrolled (including summer). If either the student (the complainant) or the respondent (usually, the instructor or an administrator) is absent from the university during that semester, or if other appropriate reasons emerge, the Hearing Board may grant an extension of this deadline. If the university no longer employs the respondent before the grievance hearing commences, the hearing may still proceed. (See AFR 7.III.C; GSRR 5.3.6.1.)
4. A written request for an academic grievance hearing must (1) specify the alleged violation(s) of the AFR and GSRR, (2) identify the individual against whom the grievance is filed (the respondent) and (3) state the desired redress. Anonymous grievances will not be accepted. (See AFR 7.III.B and C; AFR footnote 35.)

B. Disciplinary Hearing

1. For complaints that involve allegations of academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards, or falsifying academic and admission records), the complainant (instructor) or the Dean of the College, or designee, may request an academic disciplinary hearing to impose sanctions in addition to, or other than, a penalty grade. Undergraduate students may request an administrative hearing before the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education or a hearing before the College Hearing Board; graduate students may request an administrative hearing before the Dean of The Graduate School or a hearing before the College Hearing Board. However, if the student's Dean, or designee, calls for an academic disciplinary hearing, the student has **10** class days to request an academic grievance hearing to contest the allegation in the unit in which the misconduct occurred. Disciplinary hearings are held in abeyance until the conclusion of the grievance hearing, including appeals. (See AFR 7.V; GSRR 5.5. See also *Integrity of Scholarship and Grades* policy.)
 - a. If a disciplinary hearing by either the Dean of The Graduate School or the College Hearing Board is pending the outcome of a grievance hearing by a graduate student to contest an allegation of academic misconduct, and the initial Hearing Board decides for the instructor,

the disciplinary hearing would proceed promptly, pending an appeal, if any, within **5** class days by the student to the University Graduate Judiciary (UGJ). If the initial Hearing Board finds for the graduate student, the academic disciplinary hearing would be dismissed, pending an appeal, if any, by the instructor to the UGJ. (See GSRR 5.4.12.3.)

- b. If a disciplinary hearing by either the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education or the College Hearing Board is pending the outcome of a grievance hearing by an undergraduate student before the University Academic Integrity Hearing Board (UAIHB), and the UAIHB finds for the instructor, the academic disciplinary hearing would promptly proceed, pending an appeal, if any, within **5** class days by the undergraduate student to the University Academic Appeal Board (UAAB). If the UAIHB finds for the student, the academic disciplinary hearing would be dismissed, pending an appeal, if any, by the instructor to the UAAB. (See AFR 7.V and 7.VII.)

C. Ambiguous Jurisdiction

In cases of ambiguous jurisdiction for grievance or disciplinary hearings, the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education will select the appropriate Hearing Board for hearings involving undergraduate students and the Dean of The Graduate School will select the appropriate Hearing Board for cases involving graduate students. (See AFR 7.III.B; GSRR 5.3.)

IV. PRE-HEARING PROCEDURES

- A. After receiving a student's written request for a hearing, the appropriate unit administrator will promptly refer the grievance to the Chair of the Hearing Board. (See AFR 7.IV.D.1; GSRR 5.3.2, 5.4.3.)
- B. Within **5** class days, the Chair of the Hearing Board will:
1. forward the request for a hearing to the respondent;
 2. send the names of the pool of Hearing Board members to both parties and, to avoid conflicts of interest between the two parties and the Hearing Board members, request written challenges, if any, within **3** class days of this notification;
 3. rule promptly on any challenges, impanel a Hearing Board and send each party the names of the Hearing Board members. If the Chair of the Hearing Board is the subject of a challenge, the challenge shall be filed with the Dean of the College (See AFR 7.IV.D; GSRR 5.1.7.); and
 4. send the Hearing Board members a copy of the request for a hearing and the written response, and send all parties a copy of these procedures.

- C. When serving as the initial Hearing Board and within **5** class days of being established, the College Hearing Board shall review all requested and submitted information, and:
1. accept the request, in full or in part.
 2. reject the request and provide a written explanation to appropriate parties; e.g., lack of jurisdiction. (The student may appeal this decision.)
 3. invite the two parties to meet with the Hearing Board in an informal session to try to resolve the matter. (Such a meeting does not preclude a later hearing.)
- (See AFR 7.IV.D.4 and AFR footnote 35; GSRR 5.4.6.)
- D. When serving as the appellant board for graduate students and within **5** days of being established following any challenges, the College Hearing Board will forward the request for a hearing to the respondent, review all requested and submitted information, and:
1. decide that sufficient reasons for an appeal do not exist and that the decision of the initial Hearing Board stands; or
 2. direct the initial Hearing Board to rehear the case, reconsider the case, or clarify its decision, or
 3. decide that sufficient reasons exist for an hearing.
- (See GSRR 5.4.12.4. See also AFR footnote 35.)
- E. If the College Hearing Board calls for a hearing, the Chair of the Hearing Board shall promptly negotiate a hearing date, schedule an additional meeting only for the Hearing Board should additional deliberations on the findings become necessary, and request a written response to the grievance from the respondent, and:
- F. At least **5** class days before the scheduled hearing, the Chair of the College Hearing Board shall notify the respondent and the complainant in writing of the (1) time, date and place of the hearing; (2) the names of the parties to the grievance; (3) a copy of the hearing request and the respondent's reply; and (4) the names of the College Hearing Board members after any challenges. (See AFR 7.IV.D.5; GSRR 5.4.7.)
- G. At least **3** class days before the scheduled hearing, the parties must notify the Chair of the College Hearing Board of the names of their witnesses and advisor, if any, and, if necessary, request permission for the advisor to have voice at the hearing. The Chair may grant or deny this request. The Chair will promptly forward the names given by the complainant to the respondent and visa versa. (See AFR 7.IV.D.6 and AFR footnote 37; GSRR 5.4.7.1.)
- H. The Chair of the Hearing Board may accept written statements from either party's witnesses at least **3** class days before the hearing, in lieu of a personal appearance. (See AFR 7.IV.D.10)

- I. In unusual circumstances and in lieu of a personal appearance, either party may request permission to submit a written statement to the College Hearing Board or request permission to participate in the hearing through an electronic communication channel. Written statements must be submitted to the College Hearing Board at least **3** class days before the scheduled hearing. (See AFR 7.IV.D.9; GSRR 5.4.9c.)
- J. Either party to the grievance hearing may request a postponement of the hearing. The College Hearing Board may either grant or deny the request. (See AFR 7.IV.D.8; GSRR 5.4.8.)
- K. At its discretion, the College Hearing Board may set a reasonable time limit for each party to present its case, and the Chair of the College Hearing Board must inform the parties of such a time limit in the written notification of the hearing. (See Section IV.E. above.)
- L. Hearings are closed unless the student requests an open hearing, which would be open to all members of the MSU community. The College Hearing Board may close a hearing to protect the confidentiality of information or to maintain order. (See AFR 7.IV.D.13; GSRR 5.4.10.4.)
- M. Members of the College Hearing Board are expected to respect the confidentiality of the hearing process. (AFR 7.IV.D.13 and 7.IV.F.; GSRR 5.4.11.)

V. HEARING PROCEDURES:

- A. The Hearing will proceed as follows:
 - 1. Introductory remarks by the Chair of the College Hearing Board: The Chair of the Hearing Board introduces hearing panel members, the complainant, the respondent and advisors, if any. The Chair reviews the hearing procedures, including announced time restraints for presentations by each party and the witnesses and informs the parties if their advisors may have a voice in the hearings and if the proceedings are being recorded. Witnesses shall be excluded from the proceedings except when testifying. The Chair also explains:
 - In academic grievance hearings in which a student alleges a violation of academic rights, the student bears the burden of proof.
 - In hearings involving graduate students seeking to contest allegations of academic misconduct, the instructor bears the burden of proof.
 - In academic disciplinary hearings, the Hearing Board is asked only to determine if sanctions in addition to, or other than, a penalty grade are warranted.

- All Hearing Board decisions must be reached by a majority of the Hearing Board, based on a "preponderance of the evidence."

(See AFR 7.IV.D.14 and AFR footnote 37; GSRR 5.4.10.1. For various definitions, see AFR Article 11 and GSRR Article 8.)

2. If the complainant fails to appear in person or via an electronic channel at a scheduled hearing, the College Hearing Board may either postpone the hearing or dismiss the case for demonstrated cause. (See AFR 7.IV.D.11; GSRR 5.4.9.a.)
3. If the respondent fails to appear, in person or via an electronic channel, at a scheduled hearing, the College Hearing Board may postpone the hearing, hear the case in the respondent's absence, or dismiss the case. (See AFR 7.IV.D.11; GSRR 5.4.9.b.)
4. If the respondent is absent from the University during the semester of the grievance hearing or no longer employed by the University before the grievance procedure concludes, the hearing process may still proceed. (See AFR 7.III.C; GSRR 5.3.6.1.)
5. To assure orderly questioning, the Chair of the Hearing Board will recognize individuals before they speak. All parties have a right to speak without interruption. Each party has a right to question the other party and to rebut any oral or written statements submitted to the Hearing Board. (See AFR 7.IV.D.16; GSRR 5.4.10.2.)
6. Presentation by the Complainant: The Chair recognizes the complainant to present without interruption any statements relevant to the complainant's case, including the redress sought. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the complainant by the College Hearing Board, the respondent and the respondent's advisor, if any.
7. Presentation by the Complainant's Witnesses: The Chair recognizes the complainant's witnesses, if any, to present, without interruption, any statement directly relevant to the complainant's case. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the witnesses by the College Hearing Board, the respondent and the respondent's advisor, if any.
8. Presentation by the Respondent: The Chair recognizes the respondent to present without interruption any statements relevant to the respondent's case. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the respondent by the College Hearing Board, the complainant and the complainant's advisor, if any.
9. Presentation by the Respondent's Witnesses: The Chair recognizes the respondent's witnesses, if any, to present, without interruption, any statement directly relevant to the respondent's case. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the witnesses by the College Hearing Board, the complainant and the complainant's advisor, if any.

10. Rebuttal and Closing Statement by Complainant: The complainant refutes statements by the respondent, the respondent's witnesses and advisor, if any, and presents a final summary statement.
11. Rebuttal and Closing Statement by Respondent: The respondent refutes statements by the complainant, the complainant's witnesses and advisor, if any, and presents a final summary statement.
12. Final questions by the Hearing Board: The College Hearing Board asks questions of any of the participants in the hearing.

VI. POST-HEARING PROCEDURES

A. Deliberation:

After all evidence has been presented, with full opportunity for explanations, questions and rebuttal, the Chair of the Hearing Board shall excuse all parties to the grievance and convene the Hearing Board to determine its findings in executive session. When possible, deliberations should take place directly following the hearing and/or at the previously scheduled follow-up meeting.

B. Decision:

1. In grievance (non-disciplinary) hearings involving undergraduate and graduate students in which the College Hearing Board serves as the initial hearing body, and, based on a "preponderance of the evidence," a majority of the Hearing Board finds that a violation of the student's academic rights has occurred and that redress is possible, the Hearing Board shall direct the Dean, or designee, to implement an appropriate remedy, in consultation with the Hearing Board. If the Hearing Board finds that no violation of academic rights has occurred, it shall so inform the Dean, or designee. (See AFR 7.IV.D and E; GSRR 5.4.11.)
2. In grievance (non-disciplinary) hearings involving graduate students in which the College Hearing Board serves as the initial hearing body to adjudicate an allegation of academic dishonesty and, based on a "preponderance of the evidence," the Hearing Board finds for the student, the Hearing Board shall recommend to the Dean, or designee, that the penalty grade be removed, the Academic Dishonesty Report be removed from the student's records and a "good faith judgment" of the student's academic performance in the course take place. If the Hearing Board finds for the complainant (instructor), the penalty grade shall stand and the Academic Dishonesty Report regarding the allegation will remain on file.
3. In disciplinary hearings involving academic misconduct by undergraduate or graduate students in which the College Hearing Board serves as the initial hearing body and, based on a "preponderance of the evidence," finds that disciplinary action in addition to, or other than, a penalty grade is warranted, the College Hearing Board shall recommend to the Dean, or designee, an appropriate sanction. If the Hearing Board recommends no sanctions in

addition to, or other than, are warranted, the Chair of the Hearing Board shall so inform the Dean, or designee. (See AFR 6.II.D and 7.VI.)

4. When acting as an appellant Board, the Hearing Board may direct the Department/School Hearing Board to rehear the initial case or reconsider or clarify its decision.

C. Written Report:

The Chair of the College Hearing Board shall prepare a written report of the Hearing Board's findings, including redress for the complainant, if applicable, or sanctions, if applicable, and forward a copy of the decision to the appropriate unit administrator within **3** class days of the hearing. The report shall indicate the rationale for the decision and the major elements of evidence, or lack thereof, that support the College Hearing Board's decision. The report also should inform the parties of the right to appeal within **5** class days following notice of the decision. The Chair shall forward copies to the parties involved, the responsible administrators, the University Ombudsman and, in hearings involving graduate students, the Dean of The Graduate School. All recipients must respect the confidentiality of the report and of the hearing board's deliberations resulting in a decision. (See AFR 7.IV.E and F; GSRR 5.4.11.)

VII. APPEAL OF COLLEGE HEARING BOARD DECISION:

- A. In hearings involving undergraduate students, either party may appeal the decision of the College Hearing Board, serving as the initial Hearing Board, to the University Academic Appeal Board. Such decisions involve:

1. academic grievances alleging violations of student rights;
2. the appropriateness of academic disciplinary sanctions for alleged violations of regulation or policies concerning academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards or falsification of admission and academic records).

(See AFR 6.IV.A and 7.V.F and 7.VII.)

- B. In hearings involving graduate students, either party may appeal a decision by the College Hearing Board, acting as the initial Hearing Board, to the University Graduate Judiciary. Such decisions involve:

1. academic grievances alleging violations of student rights or alleged violations of regulations and policies involving academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, professional standards or falsification of admission and academic records);
2. the appropriateness of academic disciplinary sanctions for alleged violations of regulations and policies concerning academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards or falsification of admission and academic records).

(See GSRR 5.4.12.)

- C. All appeals must be in writing, signed, and submitted to the Chair of the University Academic Appeal Board or the University Graduate Judiciary within **5** class days following notification of the College Hearing Board's decision. While under appeal, the original decision of the College Hearing Board will be held in abeyance. (See AFR 7.VII.A; GSRR 5.4.12.)
- D. A request for an appeal of a College Hearing Board decision to the University Academic Appeal Board or the University Graduate Judiciary must cite the specific applicable procedure(s) the initial Hearing Board allegedly failed to follow or allege that findings of the initial Hearing Board were not supported by the "preponderance of the evidence." The request must state the redress sought. Presentation of new evidence normally will be inappropriate. (See AFR 7.VII.A and B; GSRR 5.4.12.1 and 5.4.12.2.)
- E. The Chair of the Hearing Board forwards the request for an appellant hearing to the appropriate Hearing Board, which then may:
1. decide that sufficient reasons for an appeal do not exist and that the decision of the initial Hearing Board stands; or
 2. direct the initial College Hearing Board to rehear the case or reconsider or clarify its decision; or
 3. decide that sufficient reasons exist for an appellant hearing and schedule the hearing promptly.
- (See AFR 7.VII.D; GSRR 5.4.12.4.)
- F. If the appellant panel hears the case, it may affirm, reverse, or modify the decision of the initial Hearing Board and prepare a written report of its findings, rationale, and recommended redress, if any, within **10** class days of the hearing. If it finds that redress is possible, it shall direct the appropriate administrator to implement an appropriate remedy.

VIII. RECONSIDERATION:

If new evidence should arise, either party to a hearing may request the College Hearing Board to reconsider the case within **30** days upon receipt of the hearing outcome. The written request for reconsideration is to be sent to the Chair of the Hearing Board, who shall promptly convene the College Hearing Board to review the new material and render a decision on a new hearing. (See AFR 7.IV.G; GSRR 5.4.13.)

Approved by College Advisory Council (12/3/2010)