

Student Petitions and Grievances

Academic Operations Manual

Approving Authority: SJU Senate Council

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Office of Accountability: Vice President Academic and Dean

Administrative Responsibility: Associate Dean

1 Introduction

1.1 Policy Statement

St. Jerome's University recognizes the right of a student to petition the University of Waterloo to make an exception to or ask for relief from normal faculty, University of Waterloo, or St. Jerome's University rules and regulations. St. Jerome's University also recognizes the right of a student to initiate a grievance.

This policy is intended to complement University of Waterloo Policy 70 insofar as Policy 70 provides direction with regard to matters pertaining to courses taught by St. Jerome's University instructors. The specific scope and direction for (1) student petitions and (2) student grievances differ according to the terms in 1.2.1 and 1.2.2, respectively.

1.2 Scope and Direction

This policy applies to students who were, at the time of the event(s), enrolled in a course taught by a St. Jerome's University instructor; the petition or grievance must be specific to the course taught by the St. Jerome's University instructor.

This policy also applies to students affected academically by a non-course related academic decision or action, upon which a petition or grievance is based, made by a St. Jerome's University academic authority.

1.2.1 Student Petitions for Exception to Academic Regulations

All petitions are handled under University of Waterloo [Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances](#).

A petition is a request by a student seeking exception to or relief from normal faculty or University of Waterloo rules and regulations. Typical examples include, but are not limited to, adding or dropping a course after the deadline, removing a WD/WF grade for late drop, increased or reduced course load and reconsideration of an end of term promotion decision or other academic decision.

1.2.2 Student Grievances

All grievances are handled under this St. Jerome's University policy and follow the procedure below (see Section 2).

While in a petition a student acknowledges that the rules were applied fairly and they are asking that an exception be made, the fundamental criterion for initiating a grievance is that a student believes that a decision or action of a St. Jerome's University academic authority affecting some aspect of their academic life has been unfair or unreasonable.

St. Jerome's University recognizes that a grievance can allege such things as:

- a. an error in academic judgment on the part of an instructor – for example, a student questions a grade or the assessment of their performance (on an assignment, essay, project, laboratory report, exam, etc.);
- b. an error or injustice on grounds other than the academic judgement of work – for example, a student questions a grade or the assessment of their performance by an instructor or committee, alleging that:
 - i. the method of evaluation was not fair and reasonable in the circumstances;
 - ii. the decision maker was biased against the student (on other than a human rights basis, see Note below);
 - iii. the instructor deviated substantially from the course outline without reasonable notice; or
 - iv. the application of University of Waterloo regulations governing program or degree requirements was unfair or unreasonable;
- c. a decision of a St. Jerome's University academic authority in relation to their University academic life has been unfair or unreasonable.

Note: A grievance alleging a human rights violation such as harassment or discrimination based on race, colour, sex, etc. should be handled under University of Waterloo [Policy 33 - Ethical Behaviour](#). For guidance on the applicable policy, a student should contact the Conflict Management and Human Rights Office (CMHRO) or the Student Success Office at the University of Waterloo.

In consultation with the Associate Dean, the Vice President Academic and Dean at St. Jerome's University shall decide whether to suspend or terminate proceedings under this policy if legal action is started by either party to a dispute. Before such

suspension or termination, the Vice President Academic and Dean shall duly notify the University of Waterloo.

For information and assistance, students are encouraged to contact the office of the Associate Dean at St. Jerome's University or the office of the Associate Dean at their home faculty.

This policy is guided by principles indicated in University of Waterloo [Policy 70](#), Section 2.

2 Grievance: Procedure

2.1 Introduction

The grievance process is divided into three stages, with each successive stage becoming increasingly formal. At each stage in the process, parties to a grievance are entitled to be accompanied by a support person for advice and support. Normally legal counsel and agents are not part of the grievance process.

1. A *request* is the first stage and is initiated by a student going directly to the individual or chair of the committee whose action or decision is being questioned. This communication can be either in person or in writing. Experience has shown informal communication to be an effective resolution mechanism. This step must be taken before a challenge is started.
2. A student who is not satisfied with the outcome of a request may initiate a *challenge* by delivering either a [Notice of Challenge \(Form 70B-SJU\)](#) to Associate Dean of their home faculty or a [Notice of Reassessment Challenge \(Form 70C-SJU\)](#) to the chair of the department at St. Jerome's University hosting the course, indicating the ground(s) on which the challenge is being made.
3. A student who is not satisfied with the outcome of a challenge may initiate an *appeal* by delivering a [Notice of Appeal \(Form 72A\)](#) (see University of Waterloo [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#)) provided that a ground for appeal can be established.

2.2 Procedural Stages

2.2.1 Request

A student is to communicate directly with the individual whose action or decision is being questioned within one month of the action or of being notified of the decision or mark. This communication can be either in person or in writing. If the individual requires it, the student shall put the request in writing.

Within 10 working days of receipt of the request the individual shall respond to the student's communication in writing. If the student is satisfied with the response, the matter is at an end.

2.2.2 Challenge

(a) Challenge

If a student is not satisfied with the result of a request, they are encouraged to seek advice from the appropriate academic advisor or department chair before proceeding with a challenge.

A student who wishes to proceed to the challenge stage must deliver a [Notice of Challenge \(Form 70B-SJU\)](#) within 10 working days of receiving the response to the request or, if there was no timely response, within 10 working days of when the response was due (20 working days from the request).

i.(a) grievance in an academic setting

The student shall deliver a [Notice of Challenge \(Form 70B-SJU\)](#) to the Associate Dean of their home faculty. If the grievance relates to an action of the Associate Dean (other than a discipline decision made under [Policy 71](#) which must be appealed under [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#)), the form shall be delivered to the Vice President Academic and Dean at St. Jerome's University, who shall exercise the responsibilities of the Associate Dean in these procedures. If the grievance relates to an action of the Vice President Academic and Dean, the form shall be delivered to the President of St. Jerome's University, who shall exercise the responsibilities of the Associate Dean in these procedures.

If the grievance concerns a matter outside the jurisdiction of St. Jerome's University (e.g., a student questioning the academic judgment of an instructor in a faculty at the University of Waterloo or at an affiliated institution), the Associate Dean of St. Jerome's University shall forward the request to the Associate Dean of the appropriate faculty or institution, who shall carry out the procedures described in University of Waterloo Policy 70.

i.(b) grievance in an academic support setting

In the case of a grievance against a decision or action of an individual in an academic support unit at St. Jerome's University, the student shall deliver a [Notice of Challenge \(Form 70B-SJU\)](#) to the Associate Dean of St. Jerome's University. The Associate Dean shall forward the grievance to the appropriate superior of the individual whose action/decision is being

grieved who shall exercise the responsibilities of the Associate Dean described in ii. below.

- ii. The Associate Dean shall take whatever steps are seen to be appropriate in the circumstances to review the student's written complaint and may attempt to resolve the grievance. Normally within 20 working days of receiving the *Notice of Challenge* the Associate Dean shall deliver to the student a written decision with reasons. If this timeline will not be met, the Associate Dean will advise the student in writing and provide a revised timeline. The Associate Dean shall provide a copy of the decision to the St. Jerome's University Registrar, the Secretariat and Office of General Counsel at the University of Waterloo, the Associate Dean of the student's home faculty, and select University of Waterloo departments with a legitimate interest (e.g., Registrar's Office, Graduate Studies Office, Co-operative Education and Career Services).

The student has the option of appealing the decision within 10 working days of notification of the result provided a ground for appeal can be established. See [Section 2.2.3 below](#).

(b) Reassessment Challenge

If reassessment of a piece of work is involved, the student shall deliver a [Notice of Reassessment Challenge \(Form 70C-SJU\)](#) and a copy of the relevant documentation to the chair of the department at St. Jerome's University offering the course within 10 working days of receiving the response to the request or, if there was no timely response, within 10 working days of when the response was due (20 working days from the request). If the original assessment of the work was completed by the chair, the form shall be delivered to the Vice President Academic and Dean of St. Jerome's University who shall exercise the responsibilities of the chair in these procedures.

The chair shall determine within 5 working days of receipt of the *Notice of Reassessment Challenge* if the request meets the criteria for a reassessment and shall advise the student in writing of the decision, with reasons if denying. If a reassessment is proceeding, the chair shall select a qualified new assessor or assessors (who may be external to St. Jerome's University and the University of Waterloo) within 15 working days. The student will provide the chair with a clean copy of the work which shall be provided to the assessor(s) by the chair, together with relevant contextual information such as terms of reference for the work and the grading scheme used. The chair shall take steps to ensure the anonymity of the student and the impartiality of the new assessor(s). (For work not in the student's possession, such as an exam, the chair will provide a copy for the assessor(s)). Normally within 15 working days of delivery of the materials to the new assessor(s), the chair shall secure the outcome of the reassessment, which may be a raising, lowering, or maintaining of the student's grade. The chair shall notify the student

and the instructor of the decision in writing with reasons, normally within 5 working days of receiving the assessor's report. A copy of the decision shall also be filed with the Registrar's Office at St. Jerome's University, the Secretariat and Office of General Counsel at University of Waterloo, and the Associate Dean of the student's home faculty, as well as provided to select University of Waterloo departments with a legitimate interest (e.g., Registrar's Office, Graduate Studies Office).

The student has the option of appealing the decision within 10 working days of notification of the result provided a ground for appeal can be established. See [Section 2.2.3 below](#).

2.2.3 Appeal

Any appeal must be launched with the appropriate University of Waterloo committee (e.g., a Faculty Committee on Student Appeals or the University Committee on Student Appeals).

Within 10 working days of notification of the decision, a student who can establish a ground for appeal may appeal by delivering a [Notice of Appeal \(Form 72A\)](#) and supporting documents:

- If a grievance in an academic setting – to the chair of the Faculty Committee on Student Appeals of the faculty from which the decision came
- If a grievance in an academic support setting – to the chair of the University Committee on Student Appeals

following the Appeal Procedure (see University of Waterloo [Policy 72 - Student Appeals](#)).

Appendix A

Glossary

Except for the definitions provided below, the definitions in the Glossary of the University of Waterloo Policy 70 apply to the present Policy, with the necessary adaptations.

Academic authority:	at St. Jerome's University: President, Vice President Academic and Dean, Associate Dean, instructors (e.g., faculty and contract academic staff), Registrar, and academic advisors. A teaching assistant (TA) is not an academic authority.
Appeal:	a proceeding undertaken to have a decision reviewed by taking it to a higher authority (i.e., Faculty Committee on Student Appeals (FCSA) at the University of Waterloo or University Committee on Student Appeals (UCSA))
Associate Dean:	Associate Dean (undergraduate or graduate) of a faculty or their delegate; at Renison University College, Administrative Dean; and, at St. Jerome's University, the Associate Dean
Chair	the chair of the department/director of the program hosting the course or their delegate
Dean	Dean of a faculty or their designate and, at St. Jerome's University, Vice President Academic and Dean
Deliver	submit in person to the individual or submit and have signed for by a staff member in the department/school; if emailed or faxed, it will be deemed delivered on the day after it was sent; if sent by mail, it will be deemed delivered on the fifth working day after it was mailed
Faculty	one of the six at the University of Waterloo: Applied Health Sciences, Arts, Engineering, Environment, Mathematics, and Science
Home faculty	the faculty or the affiliated or federated institutions of Waterloo (i.e., the AFIW) in which a student is registered
Instructor	the person assigned to teach a course or their delegate
Member of the University	a student or an individual employed by St. Jerome's University or the University of Waterloo
Notification:	
of decision	* if sent by email or fax, the next working day after it was sent * if sent by mail, the fifth working day after it was mailed

of mark	for each specific piece of work, the earliest of the following: receipt of the marked assignment from the instructor; informed in class that marked materials can be picked up at a certain place as of a certain date; the date on which official grades appear on Quest
Support person	includes a student, friend or family member, does not usually include a lawyer or paralegal
Student	an individual who is registered (paid their fees or has arranged to pay the fees) at the University of Waterloo or an individual who was a student, has not graduated, and can resume studies at the University of Waterloo without having to initiate a formal petition or re-application
Working day	Monday to Friday, inclusive, excluding statutory and University holidays. In most UW offices, regular business hours are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with some closed for lunch.
Writing	includes any of email, fax and letter