In complying with the policies of the Board of Regents, Georgia State University has adopted an Intellectual Property Policy concerning the ownership and subsequent rights to intellectual property created by faculty, staff, and students. The Intellectual Property Policy pertains to any patentable inventions, biological materials, copyrightable materials, software, and trade secrets regardless of whether formal protection is sought. It is the responsibility of individual creators to disclose intellectual property to the University in a timely manner in accordance with the policy. To obtain a copy of the Intellectual Property Policy, contact University Research Services and Administration, 217 Alumni Hall, 404/413-3500.

1050.80 Student Complaints, Petitions for Policy Waivers and Variances, and Appeals

I. PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY

Georgia State University seeks to maintain the highest standards of integrity and fairness in its relationships with students. The Undergraduate Catalog and the Graduate Catalog (both found at www.gsu.edu/es/catalogs_courses.html), and the Student Code of Conduct http://www.gsu.edu/studenthandbook/Student_Code_of_Conduct.html set forth policies and requirements for Georgia State students. Students are expected to know and comply with these policies. Students may, however, seek relief or resolution when they believe that:

A. The application of these policies and procedures will create undue hardship for them or will not recognize their extraordinary or extenuating circumstances; or
B. Specific actions, practices, or decisions on academic or non-academic matters have been made or carried out in an arbitrary, discriminatory, or inequitable manner.

The procedures set forth below cover complaints, petitions, and appeals related to University-wide and college-based policies. Individual colleges or departments may have additional or more specific procedures that may also apply to complaints, petitions, and appeals. Students are referred to the office of the dean of the particular college for information about additional or more specific procedures that apply. In case of conflict among policies, this University policy takes precedence over College and Departmental policies.

The following policies include their own complaint, petition and waiver procedures. This policy may not be used in lieu of these policies:

1. Any policy for anyone other than a student to make a complaint, file a grievance, or request a waiver, such as policies that govern faculty and staff.
2. All policies in the student code of conduct
3. Hardship withdrawal policy
4. Discriminatory and sexual harassment policies
5. Disability policies
6. College of Law Honor Code
7. Student parking policy

The procedures set forth below are applicable to undergraduate and graduate students of the University.

All appeals under these procedures will be made based only on the written record. A student’s appeal under
these procedures will be granted only if the student can prove by preponderance of evidence that a decision was arbitrary, discriminatory, or inequitable.

II. STUDENT COMPLAINTS ON ACADEMIC MATTERS

A. College-Level Academic Complaints

1. Final Course Grade Appeals

- Students are encouraged to discuss concerns and disputes over final course grades with the instructor prior to filing a formal grade appeal, in an effort to gain understanding about the basis of his/her grade. Instructors are encouraged to be available to students for such discussion regarding grades so that grade disputes, to the extent possible, are resolved informally. The Office of the Ombudsperson can provide assistance to students, instructors and administrators with resolving disputes informally through voluntary facilitated discussions, in an effort to bring resolution to the matter prior to the initiation of a formal complaint.

- In situations where such informal resolution does not occur or is not successful, the student may appeal the final course grade to the Department Chair. The appeal must be in writing and describe the precise reason for the appeal. Any pertinent information must be submitted with the appeal in order to be considered in this or subsequent appeals. The appeal must be submitted within 10 business days of the beginning of the academic term (fall, spring, and summer) that follows the term in which the final grade was submitted by the instructor. For example, if a student took an incomplete in a fall term course and completed the course works in the following spring semester, then an appeal of that grade must be submitted within 10 business days of the beginning of the summer term. The Department Chair will provide a decision in writing to the student, normally within 10 business days of the receipt of the complaint in the Department.

- The student may appeal the decision of the Department Chair, as described in section 2-c through 2-e below.

2. Other College-Level Academic Complaints

- Judgments on the suitability of academic decisions made within a college are most appropriately made by individuals with expertise in the particular academic discipline involved. For this reason, resolution of student complaints about college level academic decisions, actions, or practices is the responsibility of the department and college involved. Normally, such complaints can be resolved quickly and informally through discussion with the faculty member directly involved. The Office of the Ombudsperson can provide assistance to students, instructors and administrators with resolving disputes informally through voluntary facilitated discussions, in an effort to bring resolution to the matter prior to the initiation of a formal complaint.

- In situations where such informal resolution does not occur or is not successful, the student may submit a formal complaint to the Chair of the appropriate academic department. The student’s complaint must be submitted in writing and be accompanied by pertinent documentation describing (a) the specific action, practice, or decision that is problematic; (b) the impact of that decision; (c) what resolution is being sought; (d) and why it should be granted. To promote prompt resolution, complaints must include current contact information and be submitted at the earliest possible time. Consideration will not be given to any complaint submitted later than
the end of the term immediately following the term in which the matter in question arose. The Department Chair will provide a decision in writing to the student, normally within 10 business days of the receipt of the complaint in the Department.

- The student may appeal the Department Chair's decision within 10 business days of being notified of the Chair's decision. Such appeal will be made, in writing, to the Dean of the College in which the Department is located. At the discretion of the Dean, an advisory panel may be appointed to review the written documentation and make a recommendation to the Dean. The Dean will issue a decision to the student in writing, normally within 10 business days of the receipt of the appeal.

- The student may appeal the Dean's decision to the Provost, in writing, within 10 business days of being notified of the Dean's decision. The Provost will issue a decision to the student, in writing within 20 business days of receiving the appeal.

- The student may appeal the Provost's decision to the President, in writing, within 10 business days of being notified of the Provost's decision. The President will issue a decision to the student in writing within 20 business days of receiving the appeal.

- The student may appeal the President's decision to the Board of Regents, in writing, within 20 business days of being notified of the President's decision. Decisions regarding grades may not be appealed to the Board of Regents (BOR Policy 407.01).

B. University-Level Academic Complaints

1. Judgments on the suitability of academic decisions made at the University level are most appropriately made by individuals with expertise in the particular area. Normally, such complaints can be resolved quickly through discussion with the Academic Administrator directly involved. (See the University Organizational Chart at http://www.gsu.edu/administrative_organization.htm.) Students can contact the Office of the Ombudsperson for assistance in preparing for discussion with academic administrators. The Office of the Ombudsperson can also provide assistance to students and academic administrators with resolving disputes informally through voluntary, facilitated discussions, in an effort to bring resolution to the matter prior to the initiation of a formal complaint.

2. In situations where such informal resolution does not occur or is not successful, the student may submit a formal complaint to the Associate Provost for Academic Programs. The student's complaint must be submitted in writing, and be accompanied by pertinent documentation describing (a) the specific action, practice, or decision that is problematic; (b) the impact of that decision; (c) what resolution is being sought; and (d) why it should be granted. To promote prompt resolution, complaints must include current contact information and be submitted as early as possible, but no later than the end of the term immediately following the term in which the matter arose. The Associate Provost for Academic Programs will normally issue a decision to the student in writing, within 10 business days of receiving the complaint.

3. The student may appeal the Associate Provost's decision to the Provost within 10 business days of being notified of the decision. The Provost will respond in writing to the appeal within 20 business days of receiving the appeal.

4. The student may appeal the Provost's decision to the President in writing within 10 business days of being notified of the Provost's decision. The President will respond in writing to the appeal within 20 business days of receiving the appeal.

5. The student may appeal the President's decision to the Board of Regents in writing within 20 business days of being notified of the President's decision. Decisions regarding residency and the Guaranteed Tuition Plan may not be appealed to the Board of Regents (BOR Policy
III. NON-ACADEMIC COMPLAINTS

1. Judgments on the suitability of non-academic decisions are most appropriately made by individuals with expertise in the particular area. Normally, such complaints can be resolved quickly through discussion with the Administrator in charge of the department making the decision. (See the University Organizational Chart at www.gsu.edu/administrative_organization.html.) Students can contact the Office of the Ombudsperson for assistance in preparing for discussion with non-academic administrators. The Office of the Ombudsperson can also provide assistance to students and non-academic administrators with resolving disputes informally through voluntary, facilitated discussions, in an effort to bring resolution to the matter prior to the initiation of a formal complaint.

2. In situations where such informal resolution does not occur or is not successful, the student may submit a formal complaint to the Vice President or Associate Provost who oversees the area. The student’s complaint must be submitted in writing, and be accompanied by pertinent documentation describing (a) the specific action, practice, or decision that is problematic; (b) the impact of that decision; (c) what resolution is being sought; and (d) why it should be granted. To promote prompt resolution, complaints must include current contact information and be submitted as early as possible, but no later than the end of the term immediately following the term in which the matter arose. The Vice President or Associate Provost will provide a decision to the student in writing, normally within 10 business days of the receipt of the complaint.

3. The student may appeal the Vice President’s or Associate Provost’s decision to the Provost in writing within 10 business days of being notified of the decision. The Provost will respond in writing to the appeal within 20 business days of receiving the appeal.

4. The student may appeal the Provost’s decision to the President in writing within 10 business days of being notified of the Provost’s decision. The President will respond in writing to the appeal within 20 business days of receiving the appeal.

5. The student may appeal the President’s decision to the Board of Regents in writing within 20 business days of being notified of the President’s decision. Decisions regarding traffic citations may not be appealed to the Board of Regents (BOR Policy 407.01).

IV. STUDENT PETITIONS FOR ACADEMIC POLICY WAIVER or VARIANCE

A. College-Level Policy Waiver or Variance Petitions

1. Students may petition for a waiver or variance of a department-level or college-level policy. The appropriate College Office of Academic Assistance can provide the student with college policies and petition procedures.

2. The student must submit a petition, in writing, to the Office of Academic Assistance of the College which has made the policy in question. The petition must include the following: (a) the policy from which the student is seeking a waiver or variance, (b) the deviation being sought; and (c) the reason(s) why the exception should be granted. The Office of Academic Assistance representative will determine whether the petition needs to be addressed at the departmental or college level, and will forward the petition to the appropriate administrator who will notify the student of his or her decision.

3. The student may appeal the decision, in writing, following the procedures stated in Section II.A.2.c through f above, the College-Level Academic Complaint Policy and Procedures. If
the original decision was rendered by a Department Chair, the appeal should be initiated at the level of the Dean; if the original decision was rendered by the Dean (or his or her designate), the appeal should be initiated at the level of the Provost.

B. University-Level Policy Waiver or Variance Petitions

1. Students may request a waiver or variance of a policy established by the University or the Board of Regents (BOR).

2. All requests for waivers or variances from university and BOR level policies will be made based only on the written record.

3. All petitions must include the following:
   - The section number from the Catalog (or other official University document) of the policy or requirement from which the student is requesting a waiver
   - the deviation being sought;
   - the reason(s) why the exception should be granted
   - a current copy of the student’s academic evaluation record
   - a current copy of the student’s Georgia State University transcript (unless the petitioner is not yet a Georgia State student)
   - transcripts from all other colleges the student has attended (if the petitioner has attended other colleges).

4. Financial Aid Appeals (Appeals of Rules Currently in Section 1200 of the Catalog)
   - Appeals of financial aid rules will be made in the first instance by the Director of Financial Aid.
   - If the petition is denied, the student may appeal to the Financial Aid Appeals Committee, a committee appointed by the Associate Provost for Academic Programs. The student must appeal in writing and within 10 business days of being notified of the decision of the Director of Financial Aid.

5. Add, Drop and Withdraw Appeals (Appeals of Rules Currently in Section 1332 of the Catalog)
   - Appeals of the add, drop and withdrawal rules will be made in the first instance by the University Registrar.
   - If the petition is denied, the student may appeal to the Registration Appeals Committee, a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Admissions and Standards. The student must appeal in writing and within 10 business days of being notified of the decision of the University Registrar.
   - The Registrar will copy the Chair of the Registration Appeals Committee on all letters to students notifying them of results of their petitions. Every semester, the University Registrar will distribute to the Senate Committee on Admissions and Standards a report that indicates (at a minimum) the number of petitions filed, the number granted, and the number denied. Any member of Admissions and Standards may review the documents of any petition when there is a legitimate educational interest.
   - This motion policy does not change the Hardship Withdrawal policy.

6. Course Load, Scholastic Discipline, Course Substitution in the Core, and Regents Test Appeals (Appeals of Rules Currently in Sections 1330.30, 1360, 1410, and 1420 of the Catalog)
   - Appeals of rules regarding course load, scholastic discipline, course substitution in the core, and Regents Test will be made in the first instance by the Director of the Student Advisement Center. However, appeals for waivers of Section 1330.30 (Course Load) will be considered by the student’s college if the student has declared a
college and will follow the procedure outlined in Section IV.A above.

- If the petition is denied by the Director of the Student Advisement Center, the student may appeal to the Academic Regulations Appeals Committee, a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Admissions and Standards. The student must appeal in writing and within 10 business days of being notified of the decision of the Director of the Student Advisement Center.

- The Director of the Student Advisement Center will copy the Chair of the Academic Regulations Appeals Committee on all letters to students notifying them of results of their 2 petitions. Every semester, the Director of the Student Advisement Center will distribute to the Senate Committee on Admissions and Standards a report that indicates (at a minimum) the number of petitions filed, the number granted, and the number denied. Any member of Admissions and Standards may review the documents of any petition when there is a legitimate educational interest.

7. Academic Regulation and Graduation Requirement Appeals (Appeals of Rules currently in other parts of Sections 1300 and 1400 of the Catalog)
   - Appeals of other university-level academic rules and graduation requirements will be made in the first instance by the Academic Director of Student Retention.
   - If the petition is denied, the student may appeal to the Academic Regulations Appeals Committee, a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Admissions and Standards. The student must appeal in writing and within 10 business days of being notified of the decision of the Academic Director of Student Retention.
   - The Academic Director of Student Retention will copy the Chair of the Academic Regulations Appeals Committee on all letters to students notifying them of results of their petitions. Every semester, the Academic Director of Student Retention will distribute to the Senate Committee on Admissions and Standards a report that indicates (at a minimum) the number of petitions filed, the number granted, and the number denied. Any member of Admissions and Standards may review the documents of any petition when there is a legitimate educational interest.

8. Subsequent Appeals
   - The student may appeal the decisions of the Admissions Appeal Committee, Financial Aid Appeals Committee, the Registration Appeals Committee, and the Academic Regulations Appeals Committee to the Associate Provost for Academic Programs in writing within 10 business days of being notified of the decision. The Associate Provost will respond in writing to the appeal within 20 business days of receiving the appeal.
   - The student may appeal the Associate Provost's decision to the Provost in writing within 10 business days of being notified of the decision. The Provost will respond in writing to the appeal within 20 business days of receiving the appeal.
   - The student may appeal the Provost's decision to the President in writing within 10 business days of being notified of the Provost's decision. The President will respond in writing to the appeal within 20 business days of receiving the appeal.
   - The student may appeal the President's decision to the Board of Regents in writing within 20 business days of being notified of the President's decision.

V. DEADLINES

A. The University strives to resolve complaints and petitions by the deadlines established in this Policy.
However, each situation is unique and may prevent the meeting of a deadline. Every effort will be made by the parties involved to minimize the delay and proceed through the processes outlined in this Procedure as close to the deadlines as possible.

B. All deadlines established in this Policy are stated in terms of business days. If a deadline falls on a weekend or scheduled holiday, the deadline will be the next scheduled workday of Georgia State University.

C. Students lose their right to continue to the next step of the procedures if they miss a stated or agreed-upon deadline.

VI. MEDIATION

Students who have filed formal complaints or petitions or those who have had formal complaints filed against them under Sections II A or B of this Policy (except for grade appeals) may request that the matter be submitted to mediation in an effort to achieve resolution. Mediation is a voluntary, confidential process whereby a neutral person facilitates discussion between the parties in a mutual attempt to reach resolution on the issues raised by the parties.

In the event mediation is agreed upon by both parties, the timelines under this policy shall be suspended until which time the mediation is completed. In the event that mediation results in agreement, the student’s complaint will be considered resolved. In the event that mediation does not result in resolution of the matter, the student may appeal to the next level of review under this policy.

Information derived from mediation discussion may not be used as the basis for higher levels of appeal, nor can the mediator be asked to provide information or make any decision at any level of the formal appeals process. Persons interested in mediation should contact the Office of the Ombudsperson.

GLOSSARY

POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES

Policy: A written statement (rule or principle) used to govern the actions of Georgia State University’s employees, faculty, students, visitors, and others who come in contact with Georgia State University. For the purposes of this document, academic policies are those pertaining to scholarly programs (e.g., program degree requirements), or the students’ progress through those programs (e.g., program prerequisites, financial aid, registration). Non-academic policies are those pertaining to functions that only indirectly support the students’ academic endeavors (such as housing, recreation, or parking).

University-Level Student Policies: Policies established under the authority of the university and applied to all students in all colleges. These policies are implemented and enforced by central academic or administrative offices (for example, the Registrar’s Office, the Student Financial Aid Office, or the University Library).

College-Level Student Policies: Policies established under the authority of a college and applied to all students enrolled in courses or programs offered by that college: Andrew Young School of Policy Studies; College of Arts and Sciences; College of Education; Lewis School of Nursing; School of Health Professions; Institute of Public Health; Robinson College of Business.
Procedure: A guideline that explains how policies are to be carried out or implemented; may or may not be in writing.

Practice: A commonly accepted way or pattern of doing things; typically not in writing.

ARBITRARY, DISCRIMINATORY, INEQUITABLE

Arbitrary: In an unreasonable or capricious manner, in disregard of facts, or without determining principle.

Discriminatory: In a manner that is unfair or denies privileges to persons because of their race, sex, color, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability.

Inequitable: In a manner that fails to treat similarly situated persons the same way.

COMPLAINTS, PETITIONS and APPEALS

Complaint: An objection to a decision, action or practice with a request that it be changed or reversed; a claim seeking remedy, relief, or resolution. Complaints may be against a decision or action that was based on either University-level or College-level policy.

Petition for Waiver or Variance: A request for a suspension (waiver) or modification (variance) of a particular policy which, if applied normally, would cause undue hardship for the individual.

Waiver: An agreement that suspends a particular policy for an individual in a specific situation due to the special circumstances of that individual. (When a waiver (or suspension) of a policy is granted, the individual does not have to comply with some or all of the particular requirements set within that policy).

Variance: An agreement that modifies a particular policy for an individual in a specific situation due to the special circumstances of that individual. (When a variance (modification) of a policy is granted, the individual must comply only with the modified requirements.)

Appeal: A request that a decision on a complaint or petition be reconsidered at a higher level in the University.

PEOPLE

Academic Administrator: The head of a centralized university office or department that has responsibility for academic-related student processes (such as the Registrar’s Office, the Office of Admissions, the Student Financial Aid Office, the Office of Student Accounts, the Student Advisement Center); typically reports through an Associate Provost.

Administrator in Charge: The head of a University office with responsibility for non-academic student processes (such as the Housing Office, the Office of Parking and Transportation, the Bookstore); typically reports through a Vice President.