

**Academic Hearing Procedures for the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology  
Michigan State University  
February 13, 2012**

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 prescribe procedures for resolving allegations of violations of those rights through formal grievance hearings. In accordance with the AFR and the GSRR, the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of Michigan State University will follow these Hearing Board procedures for adjudicating academic grievances and complaints. (See AFR Article 6 and 7; GSRR 5.4.1.)

**I. JURISDICTION OF THE** Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology of Michigan State University **HEARING BOARD:**

- A. The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board serves as:
  - 1. The initial Hearing Board for academic grievance hearings involving graduate and undergraduate students who allege violations of 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).(See AFR 6.I.A and 7.I.B; GSRR 2.3.9 and 5.1.1.)
- 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** Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology **HEARING BOARD:**

- A. The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology shall constitute a pool of Hearing Board members comprised of faculty, graduate students and undergraduate students. The pool of six Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Faculty Hearing Board members shall be selected by the Faculty Advisory Committee at the time when normal committee assignments are made. The pool of graduate student and undergraduate student Hearing Board Members will be comprised of all BMB graduate and undergraduate students in good standing. All members (faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students) are to serve a term of one calendar year, starting with the first day of classes of Fall Semester. (See AFR 6.II.B, C, and D; GSRR 5.1.3 and 5.1.6.)
- B. For hearings involving graduate students, the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board shall include 2 graduate students drawn from a randomized list of all BMB graduate students in good standing and 2 faculty drawn from the pool of Hearing Board members and it will also include an additional faculty member, acting as the Chair of the Hearing Board. For hearings involving

undergraduate students, the College Hearing Board shall include 2 undergraduate students drawn from a randomized list of all BMB undergraduate students in good standing and 3 faculty drawn from the pool of hearing board members.

- C. The Chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board shall be the faculty Hearing Board member with highest rank and longest service. All members of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board shall have a vote, except the Chair, who shall vote only in the event of a tie. (See AFR 6.II.C; GSRR 5.1.3, and 5.1.5.)
- D. The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology 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 Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology HEARING BOARD:**

- A. After consulting with the instructor and appropriate unit administrator, undergraduate or graduate students who remain dissatisfied with their attempt to resolve an allegation of a violation of student academic rights may request an academic grievance hearing. When appropriate, the Department Chair, in consultation with the Dean, may waive jurisdiction and refer the request for a hearing to the College Hearing Board. At any time in the grievance process, students may consult with the University Ombudsperson. (See AFR 7.III.A; GSRR 5.3.)
- B. 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 academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, violations of professional standards or falsifying admission and academic records) may request an academic grievance hearing. When appropriate, the Department Chair, in consultation with the Dean, may waive jurisdiction and refer the request for a hearing to the College Hearing Board. At any time in the grievance process, students may consult with the University Ombudsperson. (See AFR 7.III.A; GSRR 5.3.)
- C. In cases of ambiguous jurisdiction, 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.)
- D. The deadline for submitting the written request for a hearing is the middle of the semester following the alleged violation (excluding 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 Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology 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.)

- E. A written request for an academic grievance hearing must (1) specify the alleged violation(s) of academic rights in sufficient detail to justify a hearing, (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 footnotes 26 and 35.)

#### **IV. PRE-HEARING PROCEDURES**

- A. After receiving a student's written request for a hearing, the Chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology 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 Department Chair, or designee; and (See AFR 7.IV.D; GSRR 5.1.7.)
  - 4. Send the Hearing Board members a copy of the request for a hearing and send all parties a copy of these procedures.
- C. Within **5** class days of being established, the Hearing Board shall review the request for judicial compliance and jurisdiction. After considering all submitted information, the Hearing Board take one of the following actions:
  - 1. Accept the request, in full or in part and promptly schedule a hearing and request a response from the respondent.
  - 2. Reject the request and provide a written explanation to appropriate parties; e.g., lack of jurisdiction. (The student may appeal this decision, see section VII.)
  - 3. Invite the two parties to meet with the College 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 footnotes 26 and 35; GSRR 5.4.6.)
- D. If the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board calls for a hearing, the Chair of the Hearing Board shall promptly negotiate a hearing date with

the parties and schedule an additional meeting only for the Hearing Board should additional deliberations on the findings become necessary.

- E. At least **5** class days before the scheduled hearing, the Chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology 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; (4) the names of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board members after any challenges; and (5) the limit of 30 minutes for a Hearing Board Presentation. (See AFR 7.IV.D.5; GSRR 5.4.7.)
- F. At least **3** class days before the scheduled hearing, the parties must notify the Chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board the names of their witnesses and advisor, if any, and request permission for the advisor to have voice at the hearing. The Chair will promptly forward the names given by the complainant to the respondent and visa versa. (See AFR 7.IV.D.6; GSRR 5.4.7.1.)
- G. The Chair of the Hearing Board may accept written statements from either party's witnesses at least **3** class days before the hearing. (See AFR 7.IV.D.10.)
- H. In unusual circumstances and in lieu of a personal appearance, either party may request permission to submit a written statement to the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board or request permission to participate in the hearing through an electronic communication channel. Written statements must be submitted to the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board at least **3** class days before the scheduled hearing. (See AFR 7.IV.D.9; GSRR 5.4.9c.)
- I. Either party to the grievance hearing may request a postponement of the hearing. The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board may either grant or deny the request. (See AFR 7.IV.D.8; GSRR 5.4.8.)
- J. At its discretion, the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board may set a reasonable time limit for each party to present its case, and the Chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board must inform the parties of such a time limit in the written notification of the hearing.
- K. Hearings are closed unless the student requests an open hearing, which would be open to all members of the MSU community. The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board may close an open hearing to protect the confidentiality of information or to maintain order. (See AFR 7.IV.D.13; GSRR 5.4.10.4.)
- L. Members of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board are expected to respect the confidentiality of the hearing process. (AFR 7.IV.D.13, 7.IV.F.)

**V. HEARING PROCEDURES:**

- A. Prior to Initiation of the Hearing:

1. If the complainant fails to appear in person or via an electronic channel at a scheduled hearing, the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board may either postpone the hearing or dismiss the case for demonstrated cause (See AFR 7.IV.D.11; GSRR 5.4.9a.)
2. If the respondent fails to appear in person or via an electronic channel at a scheduled hearing, the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology 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 5.4.9b.)
3. If the respondent is absent if 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)

B. The Hearing will proceed as follows:

1. Introductory remarks by the Chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology 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.
- 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, Footnote 37; GSRR 5.4.10.1. For various definitions, see AFR Article 11 and GSRR Article 8.)

2. 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.)

3. 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 Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board, the respondent and the respondent's advisor, if any.
4. Presentation by the Complainant's Witnesses: The Chair recognizes the complainant's witnesses, if any, to present, without interruption, any statement relevant to the complainant's case. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the witnesses by the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board, the respondent, and the respondent's advisor, if any and the complainant.
5. 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 Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board, the complainant, and the complainant's advisor, if any.
6. Presentation by the respondent's Witnesses: The Chair recognizes the respondent's witnesses, if any, to present, without interruption, and statement relevant to the respondent's case. The Chair then recognizes questions directed at the witnesses by the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board, the complainant, and the complaint's advisor, if any and the respondent.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. Final questions by the Hearing Board: The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board asks questions of any of the participants in the hearing.

## **VI. POST-HEARING PROCEDURES**

### **A. Deliberations:**

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. (See Section III.I above.)

B. Decision:

1. In grievance (non-disciplinary) hearings involving undergraduate and graduate students and a majority of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board finds, based on a "preponderance of the evidence," that a violation of the student's academic rights has occurred and that redress is possible, it shall direct the Chair of the Department to implement an appropriate remedy, in consultation with the Hearing Board. If the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board finds that no violation of academic rights has occurred, it shall so inform the Chair. (See AFR 7.IV.D.E; GSRR 5.4.11)
2. In grievance (non-disciplinary) hearings involving graduate students in which the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology 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 Chair of the Department 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, pending an appeal, if any, within **5** class days, of the Department/School Hearing Board's decision to the College Hearing Board. If an academic disciplinary hearing is pending, and the Hearing Board decides for the complainant, the graduate student's disciplinary hearing before either the College Hearing Board or the Dean of The Graduate School would promptly follow, pending an appeal, if any, within **5** class days. (See GSRR 5.4.12.3.)

C. Written Report

1. The Chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board shall prepare a written report of the Hearing Board's findings, including recommended redress for the complainant, if applicable, and forward a copy of the decision to the appropriate unit administrator within 3 class days of the hearing. The administrator, in consultation with the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board, shall then implement an appropriate remedy. (See AFR 7.IV.E; GSRR 5.4.11.)
2. The report shall indicate the rationale for the decision and the major elements of evidence, or lack thereof, that support the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology 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. (See AFR 7.IV.E and 7.IV.F; GSRR 5.4.11 and 5.4.12.3.)
3. The Chair of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board shall forward copies of the Hearing Board's report and the administrator's

redress, if applicable, to the parties involved, the responsible administrators, the University Ombudsperson and the Dean of The Graduate School in cases involving graduate students. (See AFR 7.IV.F; GSRR 5.4.11.)

4. All recipients must respect the confidentiality of the report and of the Hearing Board's deliberations resulting in a decision. (See GSRR 7.IV.F; GSRR 5.4.11.)

## **VII. APPEAL OF DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR BIOCHEMISTRY HEARING BOARD DECISION:**

- A. In hearings involving undergraduate students, either party may appeal the decision of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board to the University Academic Appeal Board in cases involving alleged violations of student rights, including grade appeals. (See AFR 6.IV.A and 7.VII.)
- B. In hearings involving graduate students, either party may appeal a decision by the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board to the College Hearing Board for cases involving (1) academic grievances alleging violations of student rights heard initially by the Hearing Board and (2) alleged violations of regulations involving academic misconduct (academic dishonesty, 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 for undergraduate students or the College Hearing Board for graduate students within 5 class days following notification of the Hearing Board's decision. While under appeal, the original decision of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board will be held in abeyance. (See AFR 7.VII.A; GSRR 5.4.12, 5.4.12.2 and 5.4.12.3.)
- D. A request for an appeal of a Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board decision to either the University Academic Appeal Board or the College Hearing Board must allege, in sufficient particularity to justify a hearing, that the Hearing Board failed to follow applicable procedures for adjudicating the hearing or that findings of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board were not supported by the "preponderance of the evidence." The request also must include the redress sought. Normally, the appellate board will not accept new evidence. (See AFR 7.VII.A and B; GSRR 5.4.12.)

## **VIII. RECONSIDERATION:**

If new evidence should arise, either party to a hearing may request the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology 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 Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Hearing Board, who shall promptly convene the Hearing Board to review the new material and render a decision on a new hearing. (See AFR 7.IV.G; GSRR 5.4.13.)

**IX. FILE COPY:**

The Chair of the Department shall file a copy of these procedures with the Office of the Ombudsperson and with The Graduate School. (See AFR 7.IV.A.; GSRR 5.4.1.)

Approved by Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Faculty (02-13-2012)