

# Traversing the Rugged Terrain of Student Grievances

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## Resources and Policies to Address Specific Student Complaints

Students may experience specific issues or concerns for which University resources, policies, and procedures have been established. We encourage students to review any specific policies and information linked below that may be applicable to their specific complaint regarding their student experience. If the concern falls within an established policy below, we recommend that the student follow the outlined procedures and contact the specific office or unit responsible for assisting students with their concern.

- **[University Policy 411, Student Grievance Procedure](#)** applies to problems arising in the relationship between a student and the University that are not governed by other specific grievance procedures
- **[University Policy 501, Nondiscrimination](#)** applies to allegations of discrimination and discriminatory harassment against students, faculty, or staff
- **[University Policy 502, Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence](#)** applies to allegations of sexual misconduct or interpersonal violence against students, faculty, or staff
- **[University Policy 504, Title IX Grievance Policy](#)** applies to allegations of sexual harassment, as defined by Title IX, against students, faculty, or staff
- Student conduct procedures under **[The Code of Student Responsibility](#)** and the **[Code of Student Academic Integrity](#)**
- Appeals from denials of admission or readmission to the University under **[Admission Appeals Process](#)**
- Review of decisions concerning **[residency status, deposits, tuition, and fees](#)**
- **[University Policy 410, Policy and Procedure for Student Appeals of Final Course Grades](#)**
- **[Undergraduate student academic appeal and grievance procedures](#)**
- **[Graduate student academic and termination appeals](#)**
- Serious grievances related to the **[student's education records](#)**
- Grievances related to **[delivery of special services to students with disabilities](#)**
- Review of **[traffic and parking violation notices](#)**

# Student Grievance Procedure

## SEARCH UNIVERSITY POLICIES

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

University Policies

New & Revised University Policies

▶ Chapter 100 Personnel Policies and Regulations

Chapter 200 Academic Policies

Chapter 300 Research, Intellectual Property, and Information Technology

▼ Chapter 400 Student and Alumni Matters

## University Policy: 411

### I. Purpose

A. The primary objectives of this Student Grievance Procedure are to ensure that students have the opportunity to present grievances to the University regarding a certain action or inaction by a member of the University community and that the University has a consistent way of resolving those grievances in a fair and just manner. [Additional resources](#) are available from the [Office of the Registrar](#).

B. A student may pursue a grievance if they believe that a member of the University community has violated their rights.

C. This Student Grievance Procedure applies to problems arising in the relationship between a student and the University that are **not governed by** other specific grievance procedures (such as [University Policy 406, Code of Student Responsibility](#); [University Policy 501, Nondiscrimination](#); [University Policy 502, Sexual Misconduct and Interpersonal Violence](#); [University Policy 504, Title IX Grievance Policy](#); and [University Policy 410, Policy and Procedures for Student Appeals of Final Course Grades](#)).

D. Upon request from any student, the Office of the Dean of Students will provide guidance about the appropriate system for redress of a particular complaint.



# Main steps

## 1. Informal Resolution

- Student encouraged, but not required, to address concern directly with person alleged to have caused grievance
- Via discussion or in writing
- Person must respond promptly



# Main steps

## 2. Initial Review

- If the student skips informal resolution or is unsatisfied with its outcome, the student presents the grievance in writing to chair or director (“administrator”)
- Written grievance must be received not later than forty-five (45) calendar days after the student first became aware of the situation underlying the grievance
- The administrator should conduct an informal investigation as warranted to resolve any factual disputes
- If requested by the student, the administrator will appoint an impartial fact-finding panel to conduct an investigation
- Based on the panel’s report, if any, the administrator shall make a determination and submit their decision in writing to the student and to the person alleged to have caused the grievance within ten (10) calendar days of receipt of the panel’s report



# Main steps

- Initial Review: Impartial Panel
  - No more than three people
  - Administrator must state the terms and conditions of the investigation
  - Panel has no authority to make recommendations or impose final action
  - Panel's conclusion is limited to determining and presenting facts to the administrator in a written report
- Initial Review: Administrator's Determination
  - Includes the reasons for the decision,
  - Indicates the remedial action to be taken if any, and
  - Informs the student of the right to seek review by the appropriate VC



# Main steps

## 3. Appeal Procedures

- Within ten (10) calendar days, a student who is not satisfied with the administrator's response may appeal to the appropriate VC
- The vice chancellor's action will be limited to a review of the basis for the administrator's decision
- The vice chancellor may, but is not required to, direct that further facts be gathered or that additional remedial action be taken
- Within fifteen (15) calendar days of appeal, the vice chancellor shall submit their decision in writing to the student and to the person alleged to have caused the grievance
- The written disposition shall include the reasons for the decision and shall direct a remedy for the aggrieved student if any
- Within fifteen (15) calendar days, the student may appeal to the Chancellor



# Important Takeaways

- Student may engage the grievance process only for issues not addressed by other policies
- Informal resolution is encouraged
- If the process moves to other steps, timelines are important
- The student may request a panel, and only the student may appeal decisions
- Make sure fact-gathering includes conversation with and/or solicitation of information from both parties

# Scenario 1

Charlotte, a student in your intro biology class, comes to you two weeks before the end of the semester. She is very frustrated with her most recent quiz grade. She says that you did not cover the concepts in class that you put on the quiz, which is unfair, and she also says that she feels like you have been treating her differently than the males in the class all semester. She points out that, at least once every three classes, you are 10 minutes late without any reason, and that you have made derogatory comments about women during the semester (including, for example, that women's bone and muscle structure inherently makes them physically weaker than men). She says that two other females in the class share similar concerns. She knows that the final exam counts for 30% of her grade, and she's worried that you will not grade her fairly, so she's planning to file a written grievance with the department chair tomorrow.



# Scenario 1: Questions

- What is your immediate response to Charlotte's accusations?
- May Charlotte grieve these concerns under University Policy 411?
- If not, what other policies may be implicated?
- If University Policy 411 is implicated, what should you suggest as the next step?



# Scenario 2

You, as a new department chair, receive an email from a graduate student expressing some concerns with one of the tenured faculty members in your department. The graduate student's email states in whole: "I wanted to raise some issues about Dr. Smith. I know she's been here a long time, but she has basically completely ignored me for the past semester even though she's supposed to be my advisor. When I've tried to set up a meeting to talk with her about some of my dissertation questions, she completely ghosts me even after multiple follow-ups. I'm at my wits end, which is why I'm reaching out to you." That description does not comport with what you know of Dr. Smith. You walk down the hall to talk to Dr. Smith, who, as you expected, says that she is never inaccessible to any of her students. To prove it, she pulls up an email on her computer showing that she clearly responded to one of this student's emails last Monday. In your email back to the graduate student, you tell him that you've looked into his concerns and do not think they are supported. You tell him you are confident that he and Dr. Smith can continue to work well together moving forward.



# Scenario 2: Questions

- Should the student's email be considered a grievance under University Policy 411?
- What mistakes, if any, can you identify in the department chair's handling of the situation?
- What resources could the department chair have utilized here?



# Scenario 3

You recently agreed to participate as a member of a fact-finding panel under University Policy 411. At your first meeting with the department chair and two other members of the panel, you learn the following information:

- The chair wants to provide information to the panel verbally, because this student is “known to be contentious” and he wants to minimize any paper trails.
- The complaining student has raised three main issues: (1) this faculty member yelled at her in front of her peers on two separate occasions, which humiliated and traumatized her; (2) this faculty member copied part of her thesis and pasted it into a recently published article without permission or attribution; and (3) this faculty member made demeaning and dehumanizing comments related to this student’s work in Canvas.
- One member of the panel says he has also experienced yelling from this faculty member, so “I know we’ll have a lot of witnesses to support that one!”
- The chair says the panel is welcome to fit their work into their schedules as they see fit. The chair thinks that having a report ready anytime before the end of next semester should be fine.

# Scenario 3: Questions

- What concerns, if any, do you have about the content of this meeting?
- Which, if any, of the student's concerns should \*not\* be addressed by the fact-finding panel?
- What resources could the fact-finding panel utilize here?



**Questions?**



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