

## **Grievance Policy**

The Division of the Social Sciences constitutes a community of scholars committed to free academic inquiry and exchange, which in turn depend on forthright professional relations among students, faculty and staff. Graduate training is a complex enterprise with many competing approaches and visions, which can generate legitimate concern and conflict about academic matters. The division has established policy to assist students who have a complaint in seeking resolution through informal and formal grievance procedures. These procedures consider complaints about academic impropriety arising from actions by a member of the faculty or administration, or a Department or Program committee, regarding academic matters.

### **Scope**

Grievance procedures provide an avenue of resolution about issues such as, but not limited to, teaching assignments, publication rights, unreasonable demands on an RA or TA, misapplication of policies and practices, disruption or restriction of academic freedom in performance of responsibilities as student or faculty, interpersonal conflicts that unfairly and negatively affect the student's progress, or retaliation for voicing a complaint or concern.

Evaluation of the quality of a student's academic performance is entirely the prerogative of instructors. Similarly, determination of a student's progress, promotion, and academic standing is the prerogative of the degree program's Department or Committee. These grievance procedures do not apply to disputes concerning grades or progress evaluations, unless the student alleges that the grade or progress evaluation was not rendered solely on academic criteria. They do not apply to complaints about the quality of instruction or program support, or to complaints expressing dissatisfaction with policies of general application on the grounds that they are unfair or inadvisable.

Complaints about sexual harassment or about discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnic origin, disability or other protected classes, are addressed under the University's unlawful discrimination and harassment policy.

### **Informal Process**

Graduate student grievances regarding academic matters are generally addressed within the student's department. We emphasize an informal and direct process based on candid discussions between the student and the party whose decision prompts the complaint. The student should first try to resolve the matter by speaking directly with the faculty member(s) involved. If there is no satisfactory resolution, the student should discuss the matter with the Director of Graduate Studies or the Chair of the Department, according to departmental guidelines. If the faculty member belongs to a unit different from the student's department, the student should take the matter to the DGS or Chair of the faculty member's department. If there is significant difficulty in discussing the matter with faculty or with departmental officers, the student may take the complaint to the Dean of Students in the Social Sciences. The student may also seek advice and help from the University Ombudsman.

### **Formal Grievance**

If there is no satisfactory resolution from these informal efforts, the student may file a formal grievance. The student submits a written statement to the Chair of the Department. The statement must describe the matter in dispute, the adverse effects on the student, the grounds on which the grievance is brought, the informal efforts to resolve the matter, and the remedy the student seeks. The grievance must be filed in a timely manner, and in any case no later than 45 days after the end of the quarter in which the event that gave rise to the grievance occurred.

The Chair may attempt to resolve the matter informally, or refer the grievance, or any part of it, to delegated faculty member(s) or committee. The Chair may also determine that the grievance is not a departmental matter and direct it to the appropriate office. He/she may refer the grievance to the committee that made the original determination in dispute, for reconsideration. In referring the matter, the Chair will provide directions and a deadline for a decision to be rendered. He/she may also decide the matter him/herself.

The Chair will notify the party whose decision occasioned the complaint that a grievance has been filed and the person(s) who will review the grievance, and will provide a copy of the grievance. He/she will notify the student that the grievance has been received, to whom it will be referred for review, and the date by which a decision will be rendered. No more than 45 days should elapse between the filing of the grievance and its disposition. If the Chair determines that more time will be required due to the absence of key persons or other exigencies, he/she will notify the student of the delay, as well as the party whose decision is in dispute. Once a decision has been reached, the Chair will communicate the decision to the student in writing, along with the grounds for the decision. The Chair will provide a copy of the notification to the party whose decision had occasioned the grievance.

The Chair will report to the academic Dean and Dean of Students that a formal grievance has been filed, provide a copy of the grievance, and inform the deans of the departmental disposition of the grievance when the decision has been made.

## **Appeal**

Either party to the dispute may appeal the Chair's decision to the Dean of the Division. The appeal must be made in writing to the Dean within 15 days of the communication of the Chair's decision to the parties involved. The appeal will be considered only on the grounds that procedures for adjudicating the complaint were not adequately followed, or that new and material information unavailable to the Chair bears significantly on the issue. The Dean

may appoint a delegate or a committee from the Division's faculty to review the case and make recommendations, or decide the appeal on his or her own. The Dean will not conduct a second investigation on appeal, but may require the Chair to review and reconsider, and to submit a subsequent decision. The Dean may sustain the Chair's decision or adjust outcomes of the decision. The Dean's decision will be final, and communicated in writing to the parties involved within 30 days of receipt of the request for appeal. If more time is required to come to a decision because of review and reconsideration, both parties will be notified within 20 days of receipt of the request for appeal, with a deadline for a final response.