

Academic Grievance Procedures¹

In instances where a student has concerns about an academic process, students are strongly encouraged to meet and hold informal discussions with the faculty member; such discussions can be effective in resolving problems encountered in the academic process. If the discussion between the student and faculty member does not resolve the problem(s), the faculty member(s) and student should (a) document measures proposed and/or taken to attempt to resolve the problem, and (b) contact the corresponding program chair to initiate the Informal Process. In cases where a faculty member has concerns regarding the performance of dispositions of students, program-specific procedures regarding academic review or dispositions should be followed.

Informal Process

The Informal Process is initiated in the event the above referenced documented meeting between the student and faculty member does not resolve the problem. To begin the process, the corresponding program chair should initiate a meeting with all involved parties to review the program's policies regarding the issue in dispute. At this meeting, attempts to resolve the problem at the program level are documented using the [Informal Process Form](#). In the event of a grievance, this form will be submitted to the School of Education Grievance Committee to document attempts to resolve the issue at the program level.

Formal Process

In cases where direct discussions and Informal Process have failed to resolve the problem(s) from the student's perspective, he or she may file a formal grievance using of the School of Education's Grievance Procedure. ¹ The following procedure governs specifically academic matters such as ethical questions as well as those of scholarly competence. Thus, controversies arising from charges of, e.g., cheating in examinations, falsification of research data, plagiarism, evaluation of students, failure of the institution to recommend certification, and dismissal from programs are included within the meaning of "academic matters" that are "grievable" under these procedures.

With regard to the evaluation of students, the academic grievance procedures apply only to those cases in which the evaluation of the student is alleged to be capricious, in significant violation of clearly established written school policies, a result of improper procedures, or improperly discriminatory. An evaluation of a student is capricious if the evaluation is: 1) based partially or entirely on criteria other than the student's performance; 2) based on standards different from those standards of evaluation applied to other students; or 3) based on a substantial departure from announced standards of evaluation. In cases other than those noted above, an evaluation of a student is not a basis for an academic grievance. In the event a student is disputing the application of a policy or decision as improper, the student must cite the specific criteria upon which he or she believes the decision properly should have been based.²

¹ These procedures are intended for use in the management of controversies in academic matters involving students in the School of Education, i.e. those in undergraduate Education minors and B.S.Ed. programs, M.Ed., Ed.S., and Ed.D. programs. Students in Ph.D. or M.A. programs should consult the grievance procedure in use at The Graduate School.

² Controversies arising from clearly non-academic matters fall within the jurisdiction of the Division of Student Affairs. Such cases may include: allegations of discriminatory treatment arising from the student complainant's age, race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, national origin, or religion. In cases in which jurisdiction is unclear or mixed, the Dean of the School of Education, in consultation with the Vice President for Student Affairs, will determine the correct jurisdiction.

Steps in Filing a Grievance Petition with the Associate Dean of Student Academic Services

- 1) If the student is unable to achieve a satisfactory solution to the problem at the informal level and wishes to formally grieve the matter, the student must submit a written request within 30 days of the documented program meeting by filing a Statement of Grievance Form, with the Associate Dean of Student Academic Services (ADSAS.) The request for a hearing must specify the nature of the dispute and include the student's copies of the documented attempts to resolve the matter (including the Informal Process Form) Specifically, a student who believes that he or she has valid grounds for a grievance under these procedures should submit a written and signed statement of grievance ([Statement of Grievance Form](#)), setting forth the specific allegations, including time line of events with dates, persons involved and outcome, relevant university policies, and desired outcome of the grievance. If any other University personnel are involved, the student will include the role of these parties in the student's grievance, unless such disclosure would violate the student's right to confidentiality.

Should the student need assistance in putting the grievance into an appropriate format, the student may seek the assistance of the ADSAS, who will provide assistance regarding format and procedures, but who may not comment substantively on the merits of the grievance.

- 2) The ADSAS will refer the dispute to the School of Education Grievance Committee (SEGC), which is a standing committee of the Academic Council and consists of three faculty members from the School of Education, other than the ADSAS. If any of the three faculty members comprising the committee are involved in the dispute, replacement committee members will be appointed from the School of Education at the recommendation of the Dean.
- 3) The Chairperson of the Grievance Committee will establish a time and date for the hearing and notify the student and faculty involved, along with the other members of the Committee.
- 4) An effort will be made to schedule the hearing within 30 days of the receipt by the SEGC Chairperson of the materials filed by the student in support of the formal grievance.
- 5) The SEGC may request information from other sources as needed.
- 6) Upon receipt of the formal grievance, the Chairperson of the SEGC shall give those faculty member(s) relevant to the grievance and the program director a copy of the student's grievance documents.

Conduct of the Hearing

The hearing will be private and all persons present at the hearing will consider and treat all information presented to be confidential. If, however, the student disseminates information disclosed during the hearing, the student's interest in the confidentiality of the hearing will be deemed waived. Both the student and the faculty member involved may request assistance in presenting their case at the hearing by any person other than an attorney. The student and faculty member(s) must inform the Chairperson of the SEGC of the name(s) of their representative and any witnesses five working days before the hearing date. Prior to the hearing, copies of all written information to be considered by the SEGC shall be provided to all parties and will include:

- An explanation of committee procedure;
- An exchange of all documentation developed prior to the hearing that was not previously released and a list of student and faculty representatives (if any) and the names of witnesses for both the student and faculty member(s);
- Any University rules and policies relevant to the content of the grievance

At the hearing, the SEGC shall provide all parties the opportunity to present written and oral information relevant to the grievance. Individuals appearing before the committee have the responsibility of presenting truthful information. The committee in reaching its decision will evaluate the credibility of the witnesses. Presentation of evidence will be made only during the hearing. Any party may present witnesses or other evidence. The conduct of the hearing is informal, and the committee is not bound by rules of evidence or court procedures. Matters of procedure will be decided by the Chairperson of the SEGC. All decisions of the committee will be determined by a majority vote of the SEGC members present. The student and faculty member(s) will be informed in writing of the Committee's decision within two weeks of the hearing.

A copy of the decision will be forwarded to the Dean of the School of Education who then will subsequently inform the Chairperson of the SEGC and the relevant Program chair(s) of his or her disposition of the decision.

Group Actions

Two or more students with substantially the same grievance may join in a group action. A single statement of grievance shall be submitted and processed in the manner described herein for individual grievances, but all those joining in such a group action must sign the statement.

Appeal Process

The student may appeal the decision of the SEGC in writing to the Dean of the School of Education within 30 days of receiving the SEGC's decision. The appeal should clearly indicate the alleged errors that occurred in the SEGC hearing. The Dean may approve, modify, or reverse the decision of the SEGC and will notify the student, the faculty members(s), the Chairperson of the SEGC, and the relevant Program chair(s) of her/his decision within two weeks of receiving the appeal, if practicable. The decision of the Dean is final in all cases.

Withdrawal of Grievance

A grievant may withdraw his or her grievance from further consideration at any time by submitting a written request to the ADSAS who will inform the Chairperson of the SEGC. No reason needs to be given for such a request to withdraw.