

What is a grievance?

A grievance can be defined as “a real or imaginary wrong causing resentment and regarded as grounds for complaint.”¹ Examples of student grievances include:

- Instance of discrimination and/or harassment
- Title IX issue (e.g., sexual harassment and/or discrimination)
- Appeal of final course grade
- Improper application of accommodations
- Arbitrary and/or capricious actions by a faculty member
- Policy or procedure applied unfairly and/or in a different manner than it was applied to others

A grievance is considered a higher-level complaint than a gripe. Examples of student gripes include a disagreement over a graded assignment, a dislike of a particular teaching style, or a dissension on assignment deadlines. This procedure should **NOT** be used for gripes; informal conversations with the faculty member may alleviate these gripes.

Who can help a student through the grievance process?

Numerous individuals can assist a student through the grievance process. Some examples would include a trusted faculty member, their academic advisor, their student success coach, and a trusted staff member.

Using the decision tree as guidance for the grievance process

The accompanying decision tree is available for guidance through the grievance process. It provides a series of “Yes/No” decision steps to be made in response to the questions posed. The information provided below gives more details about the decision tree.

A. If a student has a grievance about a faculty member, the student should make a good faith effort to informally speak with the faculty member to resolve the grievance. If this is possible, then both the student and the faculty member may request that an additional party (e.g. a faculty or staff member or a student) be present to observe the conversation. The additional party should be selected by the student. It is recommended that the student, the faculty member, and the observer(s) (if applicable) each write and retain a summary of the conversation. Documentation will be kept by the student, faculty member, and observer(s).

NB: As stated in the [University’s Non-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment and Retaliation Policy](#), “Retaliation is prohibited against any person who brings a good faith report under this Policy or has information about or is involved in a resolution process under this Policy. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, intimidation, threats, harassment, and other adverse action threatened or taken against any reporter or other persons involved in a university process. Retaliation may result in immediate disciplinary action.”

¹ Source: Collins English Dictionary. Copyright © HarperCollins Publishers

B. If the situation remains unresolved after the student speaks with the faculty member, the student may approach the department chair/program director. The chair/program director will notify the faculty member of the meeting before it takes place, though the faculty member will not attend. Before the meeting, the department chair/program director will receive all documents created during the first step of the process and will share a copy of the materials with the faculty member. Either the student or the department chair/program director may request that a third party be present for the conversation. The additional party should be selected by the student. All those present should write and retain a summary of the conversation at this stage. The faculty member may respond to the summary documents in writing if desired. The department chair/program director will keep the documentation. The department chair/program director will use their discretion to determine the next steps in the process. Note: If the grievance is against a faculty member who is the department chair/program director, then the student should contact the Associate Dean of the College for Inclusion and Faculty Development.

C. If the situation remains unresolved (in the view of the student or the faculty member) after the student has met with the department chair/program director, the Office of the Dean of the College will collect documentation pertinent to the situation and will interview the student, faculty member, and department chair/program director. Documentation will be kept in the Office of the Dean of the College. The faculty member will be made aware of all meetings at this stage of the process. The Dean will make a final decision unless the situation is determined to be an incident that should be referred to the Equity and Equal Opportunity Office (EEO), in which case the University's associated EEO protocols [[file a report here](#)] will determine the next steps.

At each stage, every effort should be made to ensure a timely response and resolution.

Please see Section IV of the [University's Non-Discrimination, Anti-Harassment and Retaliation Policy](#) for definitions of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

PROCEDURE FOR HANDLING STUDENT GRIEVANCES

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TEMPLATE FOR INFORMATION COLLECTION:

Student first and last name:	
Student email address:	
Faculty first and last name:	
Faculty email address:	
Relationship to the student:	
Date of behavior:	
Department chair first and last name:	
Department chair email address:	
Please provide a detailed narrative with specifics about the grievance.	
Describe any efforts that have been made to resolve the grievance.	
What resolution or outcome would the student like to see?	
Include any supporting documentation related to the grievance.	