

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
Graduate School of Social Work
Student Grievance Policy
(September 6, 2006)

A grievance is an actual incident, or issue, which can be substantiated, and is regarded by a student as a just cause for protest. Persons against whom a grievance may be submitted include a classroom instructor, faculty advisor, administrator, or other faculty member of the Graduate School of Social Work.

Procedures: Notice of Intent to File a Grievance

- A Notice of Intent to file a grievance must be submitted to the Office of the Dean, GSSW, within thirty (30) business days after the date of the incident giving rise to the grievance, or within thirty (30) business days of the time when the student became aware, or should have become aware, that a grievable incident has occurred, whichever occurs first.
- When the Notice of Intent is submitted, the student will receive a copy of this policy, together with a Formal Grievance Cover Sheet from the Deans' Office. Written acknowledgement of receipt of these items is required.
- Upon completion and return to the Deans' Office, a copy of the Notice of Intent will be transmitted to the involved Faculty Member.
- After a Notice of Intent has been submitted, the student must attempt to resolve the issue informally before she or he may file a formal grievance.
- At a minimum, the student must meet with the respondent to discuss the matter in a good faith effort on both parts and to attempt a resolution.
- Additional attempts to resolve the issue informally may be demonstrated by, but are not limited to, the following:
 - A meeting between the student and his or her faculty advisor, with or without the respondent present
 - A meeting between the student and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, with or without the respondent and the student's faculty advisor
 - Participation in an alternative dispute resolution such as mediation.

Outcomes

- If the issue is resolved informally, the Notice of Intent will be destroyed, and no record will be maintained.
- If the issue is not resolved informally, the student may
 - decide to terminate the process altogether OR
 - proceed to file a formal grievance

If the student decides to terminate the process, this will be considered a final action that cannot be reversed via filing a grievance at a later date.

Procedure for Filing a Formal Grievance

If the decision is to proceed with a Formal Grievance, a written statement, accompanied by a Grievance Cover Sheet, must be submitted to the Office of the Dean, GSSW, within sixty (60) business days from the date of submitting the Intent to File. The statement should include:

- A one page (maximum) description identifying the grievable issue or incident, including date and place (if applicable)
- The name of the respondent (i.e., against whom is the grievance being filed?)
- The names of any witnesses to the incident (if applicable)
- Evidence to support the grievance
- The outcome desired by the student

Grievance Process

- Upon receipt of the formal grievance statement and cover sheet, the Dean of the GSSW, or his/her designee, will – within 10 business days - appoint an ad hoc Student Grievance Committee (“the Committee”).
- The Committee will consist of three (3) full-time GSSW faculty and two (2) GSSW students. Faculty who hold administrative appointments of Associate or Assistant Dean are not eligible to serve.
- The Committee will convene within 10 business days from the time of its composition in order to select a chair and the chair must be a faculty member.
- The Committee chair will identify potential hearing dates with the Committee and the student filing the grievance. Reasonable attempts to schedule the hearing will be made by all parties. However, the hearing must be held within 20 business days from the date the formal grievance was filed.
- The chair will inform all parties (including the Dean of the GSSW) of the date, time and location of the hearing.
- The student has the right to withdraw his/her grievance up to 72 hours prior to the scheduled hearing, but must do so in writing, to the Dean of the GSSW. In this case, the Dean will notify the Committee and the respondent, and no further action will be taken at the college level.

Hearing Procedures

- The hearing will be called to order by the chair who will explain the hearing procedures to the student, the Committee, and the respondent.
- The hearing is closed; only the Committee, the student, and the respondent are present, unless witnesses have been identified and are called in advance by the chair of the Student Grievance

Committee to provide additional information. When the grievance involves the field practicum, the field practicum instructor and/or preceptor will be called by the chair as a witness for the hearing. The student may bring a support person (an attorney or other representative) to the hearing, but this person is not permitted to advocate for or otherwise participate in any part of the discussions. The student must inform the chair of the Student Grievance Committee at least 48 hours prior to the hearing if an attorney will be present. No persons under age 18 are permitted to be present at a grievance hearing. The University's Office of General Counsel will be present at the hearing if an attorney is present for the student and further will likewise not be permitted to advocate for or otherwise participate in any part of the discussions.

- The student will be given ten (10) minutes in which to make an opening statement and then may present his/her evidence.
 - The respondent is given ten (10) minutes to open and then may provide evidence refuting the allegation(s).
 - The Committee is given the opportunity to question the parties or to request further evidence/testimony.
 - Both the student and the respondent are given an opportunity to make brief closing statements.
 - All parties, except Committee members, are dismissed.
 - The Committee deliberates, with the Chair presiding.
- No tape or video recording of the hearing will be made without written permission from all parties, and only when the Committee feels it is necessary to do so.

Grievance Outcomes

- The findings and directives of the Committee are final.
- Within 5 business days of the close of the hearing, the Committee chair will transmit a written report to the Dean of the GSSW. The report must include a summary of the grievance, the respondent's rebuttal, and the Committee's findings and directives.
 - The Committee may find in favor of the student and direct the respondent to take appropriate corrective action.
 - The Committee may find in favor of the respondent and recommend no corrective action.
 - Within 5 business days of receipt of the Committee's report, the Dean transmits the report to the student and the respondent.
- Grievance Reports will be held in the Office of the Dean, GSSW, for a period corresponding to the UH Document Retention Policy, after which time they will be destroyed.

Appeal Process

- If the student is dissatisfied with the decision of the Committee, he or she may appeal in writing to the Dean of the GSSW within 30 calendar days of when the decision is mailed from the Dean's Office. The Dean has the authority to reverse the Committee's decision only if there were serious errors in process or procedure that may have altered the final outcome.
- If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeal to the Dean, he or she may petition for a university level review by the Graduate and Professional Studies Grievance Committee (GPSGC) which is under the purview of the Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies. This petition for appeal must be made in writing and filed with the Dean of Graduate and Professional Studies within 30 *calendar* days of the final disposition in the GSSW.

Amended 5-13-2005
12-02-2005
9-06-2006