

STUDENT COMPLAINTS-ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC CONCERNS

This policy provides guidelines for the collection and record retention of student complaints submitted to an institutional officer of UT Health San Antonio School of Nursing. The purpose of this policy is to provide a mechanism for tracking the timeliness of responses to complaints as well as the outcome of complaints. In addition, this policy provides a mechanism for identifying patterns or systemic problems with institutional quality or with factors related to the General Institutional Requirements or Criteria for Accreditation.

Definitions

1. Complaint Log - a confidential record of student complaints, which identifies the persons, involved with individual complaints and the outcomes of the complaints.
2. Student complaint - focused principally on complaints made formally by a student, and addressed to an institutional officer with the responsibility to handle the complaint.
3. Minor complaints –complaints that, after appropriate evaluation, are deemed to have little or no effect on the well-being of students, faculty, staff or the school of nursing as a whole.
4. Institutional Officer – a dean, an associate dean, or anyone in an administrative role who has the responsibility to handle the complaint.

Applicability

This policy applies to institutional officers with responsibility to handle student complaints.

Procedure

1. Complaints must be dealt with in a timely manner and in a way that demonstrates fairness to students, faculty and staff. The student has 10 business days after the occurrence to submit a complaint. Within 7 business days of the receipt of complaint, the institutional officer will respond to the student in writing with feedback regarding status of the complaint resolution.
2. Complaint logs must be reviewed by the officers of the institution or their designees to assess patterns to the complaints that might suggest problems with institutional quality or with factors related to the General Institutional Requirements or Criteria for Accreditation. Complaint logs will be reviewed by the appropriate Associate Deans in September of each year to draft a report that will be shared with Committee on Undergraduate Studies (COUS), the Committee on Graduate Studies (COGS), Faculty Council and Faculty Assembly
3. Complaint logs must be used to record receipt of a student complaint and at a minimum must contain the date of receipt, persons involved and the resolution of the complaint. The amount of detail provided may vary according to the complaint but should be sufficiently documented to provide the issues and resolutions.
4. Complaints from parents, employers, community residents, or former students or alums do not need to be recorded although they may be tracked if a unit wishes to do so. Minor complaints do not need to be recorded on the complaint log. However, the complaint log should include complaints that are of a non-academic as well as an academic nature, provided these complaints are from current or recent students.
5. The privacy of students as well as the privacy of other parties must be enforced in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Responsibility Act (FERPA). Do not share complaint logs with anyone if

the logs contain student and/or other names on it. Electronic copies of student complaint logs must be password protected.

Supporting Documentation

1. Student Complaint Process Academic Flow Chart
2. Student Complaint Process Non-Academic Flow Chart
3. Confidential Record of Student Complaint Form
4. Complaint Log

Records Retention

1. The Office for Academic Affairs maintains records of student complaints related to academic matters and the Office of Admissions and Students Services maintains records of student complaints related to non-academic matters.
2. The Confidential Record of Student Complaint Form will be retained for six years following the student's graduation and then destroyed per University policy.
3. The Complaint Log will be retained for the period of program re-accreditation and subsequently destroyed per University policy.

Academic Appeals and Grievances

Student academic appeals and grievances are handled through established policies and procedures for the School of Nursing as outlined in the General Academic Policies section of this Catalog.

The Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services is available to explain, discuss, and facilitate this process with students and refer as appropriate to the appropriate Associate Dean. This office also deals with issues directly related to other student life concerns, including, governance, mentoring, counseling and resource needs, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinator (EEOC) and concerns related to harassment, threat, or violence.

Procedure for Academic Review

Section I: Purpose of Procedure

The purpose of Academic Review is to provide the student who has a concern about grades with the opportunity to pursue the concern through administrative channels if initial discussions with the faculty member/s who assign the grades are not perceived as fair or equitable. A grievance is an accusation or complaint about a grade or unfair action regarding academic achievement in the nursing program. The student has the right to grieve a grade or unfair action if the student's perception is that the grade received was awarded capriciously, arbitrarily, or prejudicially. The student is required to provide a rationale explaining his or her perception at this time.

A student may only grieve the final grade for the course. For individual assignments, students may review the procedure for requesting a second reviewer on graded assignments.

The student may appeal the same grade only once. From the time the grade is released, the student has 10 business days to initiate Step 1 of the grievance procedures. A grievance is not the same as a request for a second reader of a graded paper. Confidentiality is essential for all academic review/grievance procedures. Students may seek counsel or advice concerning the academic review process from the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services.

Section II: Procedure to be followed

Prior to initiation of an academic review or grievance, the student must contact the faculty involved to discuss the concern. If resolution is not achieved, the student may pursue an academic review or grievance.

Grade Appeal Process

Step 1

1. A written petition must be submitted by the student to the faculty of the class. This petition should contain:
 1. Name of student
 2. Course
 3. Grade which is being challenged.
 4. Dates student received grade.
 5. Name of faculty member/s involved.
 6. Dates student met with the faculty.
 7. Student's reason for grieving the grade and a brief statement of the student's concerns.
 8. Evidence of how the grade was awarded arbitrarily, capriciously, or prejudicially.
2. Within seven business days (unless there are special circumstances, such as progression in the program, that require more rapid action), the faculty will respond to the student in writing with a decision. For the purpose of this grades appeals process, business days are established by the Health Science Center.
3. The student should retain a copy of the documents submitted for his or her records.
4. If the student concern is not resolved by the faculty in charge of the course then the grievance moves on to Step 2.

Step 2

1. A written petition will be submitted by the student to the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services who will engage the appropriate Associate Dean (Undergraduate Studies or Graduate Studies).
2. The petition should contain the same information included in Step 1.
3. The appropriate Associate Dean will review the grievance.

4. An informal hearing with the student filing the grievance may be called if the student, faculty or Associate Dean feels it would be beneficial to discuss the complaint.
5. Within seven business days (unless there are special circumstances, such as progression in the program, that require more rapid action), the appropriate Associate Dean will respond to the student in writing with a decision. A written copy of the decision will also be provided for the faculty in charge of the course for which the grade is grieved.
6. If the student is not satisfied with the decision, the grievance may proceed to Step 3.

Step 3

1. The written petition, including the same information as listed in Step 1, will be submitted by the student to the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services who will brief and forward the petition to the Dean of the School of Nursing.
2. Information supporting the decision in Step 2 should also be forwarded to the Dean by the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services. This petition should contain the nature of the problem as stated in Step 1. A statement that an attempt was made to resolve the issue directly with both the faculty and/or the appropriate Associate Dean must be included.
3. The student should keep a copy of the documents submitted for his or her record.
4. The Dean may convene an impartial (e.g.: faculty who are outside the course or the department and a student) Grades Appeals Committee (GAC), which shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Dean. The manner of appointments and the number of members on the GAC shall be determined within the School of Nursing. The Chairperson of the GAC shall be appointed by the Dean. A decision will be made within seven business days unless there are special circumstances, such as progression in the program, that require more rapid action. The Chairperson of the GAC will make a recommendation to the Dean. The Dean will respond to the student in writing with a decision. A copy of the document stating the recommended decision will be sent to the faculty in charge of the course and the appropriate Office of Academic Affairs staff member(s).
 - The decision of the GAC will be directed specifically to the charge (grade is indicative of the student's achievement or the grade is not indicative of the student's achievement). A rationale will be provided. If the GAC recommends reconsideration of the grade, the faculty member will implement the overturned decision within seven business days unless there are special circumstances, such as progression in the program, that require more rapid action.
 - A written report of the review is provided to the Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Services following the recommendation. The written record will be maintained in compliance with the records retention policy.
 - The timeline for meetings of the GAC will be conducted under the Health Science Center regular hours of operations. Under unusual circumstances deadlines may be extended.

Procedure for Second Readers of Papers and/or Projects

If a student disagrees with the grade given on a paper or project, he/she must discuss this with the faculty member who graded the paper. If an agreement is not reached, the following procedure will be followed to request a second reader.

1. The student must submit a written petition for a second reader to the faculty member in charge of the course no later than seven business days after receiving the grade. The petition should state which portions of the criteria are being challenged.
2. The student must also submit, to the faculty member in charge of the course, an unmarked and unaltered copy of the original paper. The student's name will be removed from the paper to allow for a blind review.
3. Through an impartial process, the faculty member in charge of the course will assign a faculty member, who is familiar with the course level and content, to serve as second reader.
4. The second reader's evaluation will be returned to the original instructor for her/his consideration. The grade is reviewed by the second reader and faculty responsible for the course with the original faculty member assigning a final grade.
5. A request for a second reading may result in a final grade that is the same, higher, or lower than the first grade.

Non Academic Appeals and Grievances

Student appeals and grievances are handled through established policies and procedures for the School of Nursing as outlined in the General Information section of this Catalog. The Associate Dean of Admissions and Student Services is available to explain, discuss, and facilitate this process with students at any point in the process as well as to deal directly with any other student issues, including student life, governance, mentoring, counseling and resource needs, ADA, EEOC, and concerns related to harassment, threat, or violence.



