

WCGSMS Grievance Procedure for Graduate Students  
Relating to Graduate Training, Education, and Support  
Updated March 2020

This procedure is intended to provide a mechanism through which grievances can be fully investigated and decisions rendered. It covers grievances that involve individual graduate students on issues relating to graduate education and support.

It is expected that most grievances will take the form of alleged violations of terms of written agreements and guidelines. However, these procedures should continue to recognize as "grievances" a broader range of more subtle and sensitive matters having to do with such issues as remuneration, joint publication, etc.

Students are encouraged to report any instances or perceived instances of mistreatment to the Trainer-Learner Committee (TLC). The TLC is charged with monitoring, reviewing, investigating and aiding in the resolution of mistreatment issues. Details of the TLC and the range of possible mistreatment can be found in the Trainer-Learning Environment and Student Mistreatment Policy. The University-wide [Policy 6.4, Prohibited Discrimination, Protected-Status Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Assault and Violence, and Bias Activity Procedures](#), supersedes all college and university procedures that purport to handle discrimination, including sexual harassment complaints. Any person or group believing that they have experienced sexual misconduct in the context of academic pursuit, the living/learning environment or employment should report the matter promptly, for guidance regarding appropriate action, counseling and other support services as outlined on the [Sexual Misconduct and Campus Security](#) page.

## **Procedural Steps**

### **Step 1. Speak Directly to the Source of the Grievance**

Whenever appropriate, the aggrieved shall first speak directly to the person(s) who is the alleged cause of the complaint, or who bears responsibility for the cause.

### **Step 2. Contact the Trainer-Learner Committee, a graduate Program Director, or the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs**

If a satisfactory resolution is not reached at Step 1 or the aggrieved prefers to move directly to Step 2, the aggrieved may contact the Trainer-Learner Committee, a graduate Program Director, or the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

The aggrieved may file a grievance with the Director(s) of her/his Program or the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs if the matter is beyond a Program issue. A letter describing the issue should be dated and filed as soon as possible but not more than 4 calendar months after the event giving rise to the grievance. (In a case in which the complaint is about a recurring pattern of behavior, this time limit shall refer to the most recent instance of the behavior.) A copy of this letter should be sent to the Dean of WCGSMS. Records of investigation are maintained confidentially in the Dean's office.

If the letter describes the grievance as involving issues of prohibited discrimination, protected status (including sexual) harassment and bias activity as described by University Policy 6.4, WCGSMS shall send a copy to the Title IX office, which shall then investigate that aspect of the charge.

If the Program Director is the "source" of the grievance, the grievance letter should be sent to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. If there is a real or perceived conflict of interest involving the Program Director(s) and/or Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, the aggrieved may choose to bypass Step 2 and proceed directly to Step 3.

After notification, the Program Director shall meet with both parties and discuss the issue in an informal manner. Within twenty working days of having received the original letter, the Program Director shall provide a written response recommending a resolution to the problem. The recommended resolution must be consistent with University policy.

If, in the judgment of the Dean of WCGSMS, the subject of the grievance involves matters of college or university-wide implication or is otherwise beyond the authority of the Program Director to resolve, the grievance, upon the request of the Dean, shall be moved to Step 3 below.

### **Step 3. Bring the Case to the Dean of WCGSMS**

If one of the parties is not satisfied with the resolution at Step 2, she/he should notify the Dean of WCGSMS in writing within 10 working days of receiving the decision. Upon receiving such notification, the Dean or her/his representative, shall meet with both parties to discuss the issue. The Dean may, as she/he feels necessary, request that others be present to help her/him arrive at a fair and informed decision (as, for example, in a case where the grievance involves specialized expertise in a field), and/or convene an ad hoc committee of faculty to investigate and review the situation before and/or after the meeting. Within 20 working days of having received notification, the Dean shall issue a decision. If, under extraordinary circumstances, this deadline is not met, then the Dean shall notify all parties of the delay.

### **Step 4. Appeal a Decision**

If one of the parties is not satisfied with the Dean's decision in Step 3, she/he shall inform the Dean of WCGSMS of her/his intent to appeal the issue to a five-person Grievance Appeal Committee (GAC). This notification must occur in writing within 25 working days after receiving the Dean's decision.

Within 10 working days, four GAC members will be impaneled by the Dean of WCGSMS as follows:

- Two graduate student members of the Graduate Student Executive Committee. (Neither of these GAC members should be in the same Program as the two parties.)
- Two faculty members of the WCGSMS Executive Committee.

Within 5 working days, a Chairperson of the GAC will be chosen from the WCGSMS faculty by the Dean of WCGSMS, with the mutual consent of the parties involved. If the parties cannot agree on the recommendation for a chairperson, then the Dean of WCGSMS will submit a panel of three names to the parties involved. They shall indicate their preference for the persons in numerical order. The one receiving the lowest total points shall be designated as the Chairperson.

Within 20 working days after the Dean is notified of the aggrieved's intention to take the issue to the appeal committee, the appeal committee shall meet to discuss the issue. The meeting shall include a hearing granted to both parties. The appeal committee shall arrive at a decision by a majority vote and shall, within 5 working days after the hearing, issue a final written recommendation.

The recommendation shall be forwarded by the Chairperson of the appeal committee to the Provost of Medical Affairs and Dean of the Medical College. The Provost of Medical Affairs and Dean of the Medical College will issue a final determination as quickly as circumstances permit, and will inform the parties if arriving at the final determination will take longer than 20 working days after receiving the recommendation from the appeal committee Chairperson.

If invited by both parties, the Ombudsperson may be present at the appeal committee meeting as a neutral observer.

## **General Provisions**

- a. Both parties in a grievance shall have the right to be present at each meeting outlined in the procedure and to bring along an advisor or other witness, who are there for support but are not permitted to speak.
- b. Both parties shall have the right to all cited documents.
- c. The graduate student shall suffer no reprisals or harassment for using the grievance procedure. Her/his supervisors shall make reasonable allowance to adjust schedules to allow attendance at meetings described herein, and shall not dock pay or otherwise punish the student.
- d. If several graduate students share a common grievance, they may file a grievance jointly and pursue it according to the above procedure.
- e. No decision will be construed as setting a precedent for any subsequent decision.

## **Time Limits**

The WCGSMS Dean shall monitor the time limits described above, as follows:

- a. The time limits are as prescribed in the procedural steps.
- b. The date at which the grievance is considered filed shall be the date the grievance is received by the addressee, as per signed receipt or electronic record.
- c. If the aggrieved fails to respond within the time limits described herein, then the issue will be presumed settled and the grievance will be closed.