Grievance Procedure for Graduate Students Relating to Graduate Education and Support

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 and faculty 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.

The University-wide Policy 6.4, Prohibited Discrimination, Protected-Status Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Assault and Violence, and Bias Activity Procedures adopted July 8, 1996, supersedes all college and university procedures that purport to handle discrimination, including sexual harassment complaints. Complaints alleging sexual harassment by a staff or faculty member or a student employee should be filed with the Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations – 607-254-7232. Complaints alleging student vs. student sexual harassment should be referred to the Judicial Administrator – 607-255-4680.

Procedural Steps

Step 1. Speak Directly to the Source of the Grievance

Whenever possible, 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 Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)

If a satisfactory resolution is not reached at Step 1, the aggrieved may file a grievance by sending a letter describing the issue to the DGS in her/his field. This letter 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 the Graduate School. 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, the Graduate School shall send a copy to the Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations, which shall then investigate that aspect of the charge. If the DGS is the "source" of the grievance, Step 2 should be skipped and the grievance letter sent directly
to the Dean of the Graduate School.

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

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

**Step 3. Bring the Case to the Dean of The Graduate School**

If one of the parties is not satisfied with the resolution at Step 2, she/he should notify the Dean of the Graduate School 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). 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. Refer the Case to the Graduate Grievance Review Board (GGRB)**

If one of the parties is not satisfied with the Dean’s decision in Step 3, she/he shall inform the Dean of the Graduate School of his/her intent to take the issue to the Graduate Grievance Review Board (GGRB). This notification must occur in writing within 25 working days after receiving the Dean's decision.

The GGRB shall be established within the academic area (Humanities, Social Sciences, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences).

Within 5 working days, four GGRB members will be impaneled by the Dean of the Graduate School as follows:

- Two graduate student members elected by the representatives to the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) in that academic area. (Neither of these GGRB members should be in the same department as the two parties.)
Two faculty members in that academic area selected from the members of the General Committee (GC) of the Graduate School.

Within 5 working days, the chairperson of the GGRB will be chosen from the Graduate Faculty by the Graduate Dean, with the mutual consent of the parties involved. If the parties cannot agree on the recommendation for a chairperson, then the Graduate Dean 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 GGRB, the Board shall meet to discuss the issue. The meeting shall include a hearing granted to both parties. The Board 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 GGRB to the Provost. The Provost 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 GGRB Chairperson.

If invited by both parties, the Ombudsman may be present at the GGRB 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 a friend or other witness.

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.

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

• The time limits are as prescribed in the procedural steps.

• 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.

• 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.