



The University of Texas at Austin

College of Natural Sciences

Grievance Policy for Graduate Students – Rev. 10/9/2015

The graduate student grievance policy described below is outlined on the Graduate School's Grievances webpage: http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/student_services/grievances.html

"Graduate students have the right to seek redress of any grievance related to academic or nonacademic matters. Every effort should be made to resolve grievances informally between the student and the faculty member involved or with the assistance of the graduate adviser, Graduate Studies Committee chair, or department chair."

If the grievance cannot be resolved informally, students have recourse through the formal grievance procedures described below.

I) Academic Grievances (http://www.utexas.edu/ogs/student_services/academicgrievance.html)

Many graduate student grievances are related to the student's academic responsibilities and thesis/dissertation research, and meeting the requirements for their graduate degree. (Examples include adherence to degree requirements, changes in supervising committee membership, situations involving program termination.) When these grievances cannot be resolved at the departmental level, the **Graduate School** will handle the formal grievance process, which is outlined in the Handbook of Operating Procedures, [The Graduate School – Section D](#).

A graduate student must submit a formal written grievance to the Graduate School within 6 months of the acquisition of knowledge of the grievance. The Grad School will notify the chair of the GSC, the department chair or program director, and the dean of the college when a grievance is filed. A brief synopsis of the formal grievance process is outlined below:

1. Following the submission of a formal grievance, every effort should be made to resolve the grievance at the level of the Graduate Studies Committee Chair, in consultation, if necessary, with the GSC or an executive subcommittee of the GSC.
2. If the grievance remains unresolved, the GSC Chair has two options:
 - a. If the GSC Chair believes that further review of the grievance will duplicate the review and decision already completed, then the GSC Chair will notify the Graduate School and the grievance becomes an appeal to the Graduate Dean (to be conducted beginning with step 4 below).
 - b. If further review is warranted, the GSC Chair will convene an ad hoc panel of 3-5 GSC faculty members to carry out the review.
3. Findings of the ad hoc panel will be reported to the student and the GSC in writing, and copies will be retained in the files of the Chair of the GSC.
4. If the grievance still remains unresolved, the grievance may be appealed to the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School who may convene an ad hoc committee to review the case.

5. The ruling of the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School will be sent to the student, the GSC Chair, the Chair of the ad hoc panel (if any), the Graduate Advisor, the Department Chair and the college Dean.
6. The ruling of the Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School may be appealed in writing to the Provost for a final decision.

Exception to the academic grievance policy:

Grade disputes – Grade disputes are handled according to departmental review policies (not through the Graduate School). The order of review is course instructor, graduate advisor, department chair or director of the program, and the dean of the college. The decision of the dean is final.

Associate Dean, Dean Neikirk, is the Grad School contact for questions/concerns about academic grievances: neikirk@mail.utexas.edu

II) Non-academic grievances:

1) Discrimination: Grievances involving any form of discrimination or harassment should be filed directly with the Office for Inclusion and Equity, <https://www.utexas.edu/equity/about>. See the Handbook of Operating Procedures [Nondiscrimination Policy](#).

2) Misconduct: General guidelines indicate that an internal resolution should be pursued in cases of student or faculty/staff/supervisor misconduct. Otherwise:

- Issues involving student misconduct should be handled through [Student Judicial Services](#). SJS investigates alleged violations of institutional rules and implements any disciplinary action.
- Issues involving faculty, staff or supervisor misconduct should be presented first to the department chair, then to the college Dean, and then to the Graduate School (if necessary, in that order).

III) Employment Grievances for Teaching Assistants and Assistant Instructors ([HOP 9-2050](#)):

Such grievances may include issues related to academic freedom of individual TAs/AIs, non-renewal of a TA or AI, withholding of salary or promotion. When there is a grievance, the teaching assistant or assistant instructor may request the informal assistance of the Faculty Grievance Committee and Hearing Panel, or a formal complaint can be filed with the chairperson of the Faculty Grievance Committee.

IV) Employment disputes involving Graduate Research Assistants ([HOP 9-2030](#)):

Whenever possible, grievances should be resolved informally between the GRA and the employing faculty member. Employment disputes by GRAs should be handled according to departmental review policies. The order for review for employment disputes is:

The faculty member employing/supervising the GRA

The graduate advisor

The department chair or head of the hiring unit that employs the GRA

The dean of the college

The decision of the dean is final.