



STUDENT GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE and the GRIEVANCE PROCESS of the SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK¹

The purpose of the Student Grievance Committee (SGC) is to hear grievances by students made against School of Social Work faculty, administrators, and/or staff. The SGC Chair, Three faculty/field staff members, and One faculty alternate are elected by the faculty. The SW Student Collective (Main Campus/TUCC/Ambler) appoints one student representative; SW Alliance (TUH) appoints another student representative.

A student may bring a grievance against a School of Social Work faculty member, administrator or staff person² for actions that fall into one or more of these categories:

1. Arbitrary and capricious action, including but not limited to, evaluation or grading.
2. Violation of standards of professional behavior particularly as delineated in the NASW Code of Ethics and Temple University policies.

Any action, such as harassment, not adequately or fully covered by this Grievance Process may be addressed by working with the School's Ombudsperson and/or following the University's procedures.

Grievance Steps:

As discussed below, a student's formal written grievance petition, and any supporting documentation, must be received by the School's Chair within 45 calendar days of the alleged incident (note that the time periods for a grievance involving a grade begin the day that the grade is posted).

A. Informal resolution process:

Prior to filing a formal written grievance petition, the student should take each of the following steps within 21 calendar days of the alleged incident:

1. Meet with the professor, administrator, or staff person to discuss and hopefully resolve the situation (Note: if the incident involves harassment, intimidation or threats toward the student, then the student should go immediately to his/her advisor or program director);
2. Discuss and seek input from his/her academic advisor regarding the situation (this step can be by-passed if the advisor is the subject of the grievance);

¹ Revised and approved by faculty – October 1, 2012, after consultation with University Counsel

² If a student has a grievance against a faculty member, administrator, or staff member from a unit other than the School of Social Work, then that student must follow the grievance procedures of that unit.

3. If the situation is related to field education – meet with field liaison and if necessary, Assistant Director for Field Education (if the field liaison is the subject of the grievance, the student should go to the Assistant Director for Field Education);
4. Meet with the BSW or MSW Program Director (depending on student's status) to discuss and hopefully resolve the situation. If the student is at TUH or one of the auxiliary programs, then s/he meets with the TUH Assistant Chairperson or auxiliary site designate.

The student must keep a written record of these, and any other, meetings that includes date, person(s) involved, what was discussed and any actions taken. The student should also keep any other documentation relevant to his/her grievance.

The student is encouraged to consult with the School's Ombudsperson at any point during this process, as that individual can assist the student with preparing for meetings and/or composing a grievance petition.

B. Formal written grievance petition process:

If the student believes that a satisfactory resolution has not been reached, the student may proceed with a formal written grievance petition. A student must submit to the School's Chair a written grievance petition that includes:

1. A statement that the grievance falls within the purview of the Student Grievance Committee.
2. Facts that clearly delineate and support the grievance, attaching copies of all relevant documentation.
3. A description of the specific steps that the grievant has taken in an attempt to resolve the conflict before submitting the written grievance. The student is encouraged to keep and present in support of the grievance a written record of all meetings and what he/she finds to be an unsatisfactory outcome of each informal resolution step, if such is the case.
4. Specific suggestion(s) for resolution.

This grievance petition, and any supporting documentation, must be received by the Chair within 45 calendar days of the alleged incident (the 45 calendar day period for a grievance involving a grade begins the day that the grade is posted).

The Chair then may take one or more of the following actions:

1. Deny the grievance on the grounds that the complaint as presented does not fall within the purview of the Student Grievance Committee and/or the student did not follow appropriate steps.
 - a. The Chair must provide, in writing, the reason for denying the grievance. This document should be sent to the student, the student's advisor, and the person against whom the grievance was filed.
 - b. If there is a more appropriate venue to address the student's grievance, such as a University policy or procedure, then the Chair must indicate that in writing.
 - c. The student may appeal this denial via appropriate College or University avenues.
2. Attempt a resolution between the student and faculty, administrator or staff person.

3. Determine that the grievance does fall within the purview of the Student Grievance Committee. If this occurs, then the Chair will inform the person named in the grievance and provide him/her with a complete copy of the grievance petition. The person named in the grievance will be given 14 calendar days to submit to the Chair a written response to the grievance. The chair may extend this deadline if good cause is shown, but will make every effort to obtain a response as expeditiously as possible.

The Chair will then refer the grievance to the Student Grievance Committee Chair. Upon receipt of the grievance documentation and the response, the Chair of the Student Grievance Committee will convene a meeting within 14 calendar days to discuss the complaint and determine who, if anyone, should appear before the committee and/or what additional materials might be needed. This deadline may be extended should the Chair of the Student Grievance Committee determines there is good cause to allow additional time. The SGC may decide on the merits of the case based on the written information provided or it may request a meeting with the student and person against whom the grievance was filed.

If the SGC decides to meet with the student and person named in the grievance, it should do so as soon as possible and reasonable effort should be made to have such a meeting within 14 days of SGC's first meeting, unless good cause is shown as to why that is not possible. The SGC Chair shall by email notify the student, the person named in the grievance, and any other persons the committee wishes to interview (i.e. if a field related matter, then the committee could invite the student's field liaison). The School's Chair should be copied on all correspondence.

The student and the person named in the grievance may bring an advocate to the meeting; this advocate should have a relevant role (i.e. an academic advisor, not a parent). The student and the person named in the grievance are responsible for presenting their positions and will participate in any interview or meeting. The advocate serves in an advisory role only. The advocate cannot be the student's attorney. (Note: if an attorney representing the student attempts to join the meeting or be otherwise involved, then the grievance process is halted immediately and referred to university counsel.)

The Chair of the SGC will conduct the grievance hearing. Each individual will be allowed to briefly summarize his/her position. The student should bring all written documentation that has been generated regarding the grievance. The committee may ask questions or request additional information (though such requests ideally should be made before the meeting). Absent extenuating circumstances, as determined by the SGC, evidence not previously disclosed in either the grievance or the response to the grievance will not be accepted at the hearing.

After hearing the facts and reviewing the statements, the SGC will vote in private on whether or not to support the grievance. A simple majority vote is required. There can be separate votes and results for different aspects of the complaint. The student bears the burden in proving the validity of his/her grievance by a preponderance of the evidence. The SGC will compose a brief written report that indicates the vote and summarizes the key points of the grievance, the committee's decision with rationale, and recommendations. This report must be submitted to the SSW Chair within 10 calendar days of the hearing. A copy of the report also should be sent to the student and the person named in the grievance. Note: If the SGC requests additional material, that

material must be provided within 14 calendar days of the request. If necessary, the committee will re-convene with this additional material and hear from the parties regarding the new material. Following the rehearing, or notice that no further hearings will be held, the SGC will render its decision within 10 calendar days of that time. If the additional material is not forthcoming within the time frame requested, then the SGC will base its report on the information available.

Once the SSW Chair has received the SGC's report and recommendation, the School's Chair will send a report that includes his/her level of agreement with the SGC and the SGC's recommendations, to the CHPSW Dean who makes the final determination on the grievance. The Dean may uphold, modify or reject the SGC/SSW Chair recommendations. The Dean's decision will be sent in writing to the student, the person named in the grievance, the School's Chair, and the SGC Chair. Depending on the Dean's determination, the School's Chair may decide to distribute this decision to the relevant Program Director, Field Coordinator, the School's Ombudsperson, the CHPSW Associate Dean, and/or student's academic advisor. A copy of the Dean's decision will be placed in the student's permanent file. If the student does not agree with the Dean's decision, then s/he would need to pursue appeal options available through the University.