

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS

These guidelines are designed to provide for fair and equitable resolution of problems for students.

If a student experiences a problem in any area of academic performance whether it is school based, agency based, with an individual faculty member, field instructor or field liaison, the following process shall be used to resolve the problem. These steps must be followed in order:

1. The student is expected to take responsible action by following the procedures as listed below, going only as far as necessary for satisfactory resolution.

A. If the concern is field based:

- 1: the student shall first make a reasonable effort to resolve his or her grievance by discussing their concern with the agency based field instructor. The field instructor shall accommodate a reasonable request to discuss and attempt to resolve the problem. If the situation cannot be resolved or the field instructor is not available, the student may proceed to step 2
- 2: the student shall submit a concise written statement of particulars and must include information to how, in the student's opinion, University policies or procedures were violated within 2 weeks of the triggering incident to the field liaison. The field liaison shall meet with the student to address this concern within 7 academic days* of receipt of the written statement. The field liaison shall provide a written response to the student's concerns within 7 academic days* of the meeting with the student. The written response shall go to the student, the field instructor, and into the student's file. If this meeting does not resolve the concern, the student may proceed to step 3.
- 3: the student shall submit a concise written statement of particulars and must include information to how, in the student's opinion, University policies or procedures were violated within 7 academic days of receipt of the written response from the field liaison to the USF School of Social Work Student Affairs Committee. The Student Affairs Committee shall meet with the student to discuss this concern within 7 academic days* of receipt of the written statement. The Student Affairs Committee shall provide a written response to the student's concerns within 7 academic days* of the meeting with the student. The written response shall go to the student, the field liaison, the field instructor, and into the student's file. If the concern is not resolved, the student may proceed to step 4.
- 4: the student shall submit a concise written statement of particulars and must include information to how, in the student's opinion, University policies or procedures were violated within 7 academic days* of receipt of the written response from the Student Affairs Committee to the Director of the School of

Social Work. The Director shall meet jointly or individually with the student and the instructor to see if the grievance can be resolved within 7 academic days* of receipt of the written statement. The Director shall provide a written response to the student's concerns within 7 academic days* of the meeting with the student. The written response shall go to the student, the field instructor, the field liaison, the Student Affairs Committee, the Dean and into the student's file. If this meeting does not resolve the concern, the student may proceed to step 5.

- 5: If the grievance cannot be resolved, the Director of the School of Social Work shall notify both the student and the instructor, informing the student of his/her right to file a written request within three weeks of the meeting to advance the grievance to the College Level. The field liaison and the Student Affairs Committee may file a written response to the grievance petition. Upon receipt of the student's request to move the process to the College Level and the instructor's response to the grievance (if provided), the Director shall immediately notify the College Dean of the grievance, providing copies of the student's initiating grievance statement, any instructor's written response to the grievance, and the written request from the student to have the process advanced to the College Level (which may include additional responsive or final statements by the student).

Should the student not file a written request to move the grievance to the next Level within the prescribed time, the grievance will end.

If the grievance concerns the Director or other officials of the department, the student has a right to bypass the departmental process and proceed directly to the College Level.

B. If the concern is classroom based:

- 1: the student shall first make a reasonable effort to resolve his or her grievance by discussing their concern with the instructor. The instructor shall accommodate a reasonable request to discuss and attempt to resolve the problem. If the situation cannot be resolved or the instructor is not available, the student may proceed to step 2
- 2: the student shall submit a concise written statement of particulars and must include information to how, in the student's opinion, University policies or procedures were violated within 2 weeks of the triggering incident to the USF

School of Social Work Student Affairs Committee. The Student Affairs Committee shall meet with the student to address this concern within 7 academic days* of receipt of the written statement. The Student Affairs Committee shall provide a written response to the student's concerns within 7 academic days* of the meeting with the student. The written response shall go to the student, the instructor, and into the student's file. If this meeting does not resolve the concern, the student may proceed to step 3.

- 3: the student shall submit a concise written statement of particulars and must include information to how, in the student's opinion, University policies or procedures were violated within 7 academic days of receipt of the written response from the Student Affairs Committee to the Director of the School of Social Work. The Director shall meet jointly or individually with the student and the instructor to see if the grievance can be resolved within 7 academic days* of receipt of the written statement. The Director shall provide a written response to the student's concerns within 7 academic days* of the meeting with the student. The written response shall go to the student, the instructor, the Student Affairs Committee, the Dean and into the student's file. If this meeting does not resolve the concern, the student may proceed to step 4.

- 4: If the grievance cannot be resolved, the Director of the School of Social Work shall notify both the student and the instructor, informing the student of his/her right to file a written request within three weeks of the meeting to advance the grievance to the College Level. The instructor and the Student Affairs Committee may file a written response to the grievance petition. Upon receipt of the student's request to move the process to the College Level and the instructor's response to the grievance (if provided), the Director shall immediately notify the College Dean of the grievance, providing copies of the student's initiating grievance statement, any instructor's written response to the grievance, and the written request from the student to have the process advanced to the College Level (which may include additional responsive or final statements by the student).

Should the student not file a written request to move the grievance to the next Level within the prescribed time, the grievance will end.

If the grievance concerns the Director or other officials of the department, the student has a right to bypass the departmental process and proceed directly to the College Level.

Terms and Guidelines

An **“academic grievance”** is a claim that a specific academic decision or action that affects that student’s academic record or status has violated published policies and procedures, or has been applied to the grievant in a manner different from that used for other students. Grievances may relate to such decisions as the assignment of a grade seen by the student as incorrect or the dismissal or failure of a student for his or her action(s). Academic grievances will not deal with general student complaints.

“Instructor” shall mean any classroom instructor, thesis/dissertation/directed study supervisor, committee member or chair, or counselor/advisor who interacts with the student in an academic environment.

“Field Instructor” shall mean the employee of a community agency who supervises the student in their field placement.

“Field Liaison” shall mean the instructor who conducts the visit between the student and the field agency.

“Student Affairs Committee” shall be comprised of the Associate Director of the School of Social Work as chair and two other faculty members who are appointed on an adhoc basis by the Associate Director. The two faculty members may be chosen based on knowledge of course, program, and/or campus. Grievances involving field based concerns shall include the Director of Field Education or their “designee” as one of the members.

“Director” shall mean the academic head of the School or Department or “Department’s designee” appointed to handle academic grievances.

“Dean” shall mean a College Dean, or the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, or the Dean of the Graduate School, or the equivalent as indicated—or in all cases a “Dean’s designee” appointed to handle academic grievances for the unit.

“Time” shall mean *“academic time,”* that is, periods when University classes are in session. *The person vested with authority at the appropriate level may extend any of the time periods contained herein for good cause.* Any extensions must be communicated in writing to all parties. For the purposes of this policy, each step shall be afforded three (3) weeks as a standard time limit. When a department considers a grievance according to published departmental procedures approved by the College Dean and Provost or College Dean and Regional Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, as pertinent, the time line specified in this academic unit’s procedures will govern the process and no additional notice of time extension is needed.

“Written communication” shall mean communication by hard copy to the recipient’s address of record.

The **“burden of proof”** shall be upon the student such that the student challenging the decision, action or grade assigned has the burden of supplying evidence that proves that the instructor’s decision was incorrect, in all cases except alleged violations of academic integrity. In cases where the issue is academic integrity, the burden of proof shall be upon the instructor. In considering grievances, decisions will be based on the preponderance of the evidence.

Neither party shall be entitled to bring ***“legal representation”*** to any actual grievance proceeding as this is an internal review of an academic decision.