

METROPOLITAN STATE UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS



Student Complaints and Grievances

University Procedure #303

Section 1. Purpose Statement

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance to university students seeking to submit a complaint or grievance. Consistent with Board Policy 3.8 and Procedure and 3.8.1, this procedure establishes the steps to be followed when submitting a student complaint or grievance against university employees, departments or services with the University. It is a goal of this procedure to seek resolution in an organized and timely manner agreeable to all parties involved.

Section 2. Assistance with Complaints/Grievances

The University provides information to students seeking resolution of a student complaint or grievance. This assistance is to help clarify the complaint and grievance procedures, provide referral assistance in filing a complaint or grievance, and provide resolution tips and strategies to all parties involved. Such assistance may be obtained from the Ombudsperson. The Ombudsperson shall provide such assistance in a neutral manner.

Section 3. Scope

These procedures shall not supersede (substitute for) other complaint and grievance procedures specified in Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) Board Policies and Procedures, other Metropolitan State University Policies and Procedures, or bargaining unit negotiated agreements. This procedure shall implement university Policy 3030 Student Complaints and Grievances. This procedure is not a substitute for the Student Code of Conduct, the Non-Discrimination/Harassment Policy (Board Policy 1B.1), or grade appeals procedure.

Section 4. Authority

This University procedure is established in accordance with Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) Board policies and as required by Board Policy 3.8 and Procedure 3.8.1 Student Complaints and Grievances.

Section 5. Effective Date

This procedure shall become effective upon signature by the President and shall remain in effect until modified or expressly revoked.

Section 6. Responsibility

Responsibility for implementation of this procedure is assigned to the Vice President of Student Affairs.

Section 7. Notification and Publication

The University shall inform students of the established complaint and grievance policy and procedure. The policy and procedure shall be available to students on the University web site and will include a time line and information on how students may submit a grievance.

Section 8. Definitions

- A. Student:** An individual student (admitted or special enrollment), a prospective student (an individual that is in the process of completing an admission to the University), a group of students or the student government.
- B. Retaliation:** Retribution of any kind taken against a student for participating in a complaint or grievance.
- C. Complaint:** An informal allegation of improper, unfair, or arbitrary action by a university employee, department, or service. A complaint may be submitted verbally. However, for purposes of appropriate follow-up, it is recommended that the complaint be submitted in writing.
- D. Grievance:** An unresolved complaint may become a grievance. As defined in MnSCU Procedure 3.8.1, a grievance is a written claim raised by a student alleging improper, unfair, or arbitrary action by a university employee involving the application of a specific provision of a university policy or procedure of a board policy or procedure. A grievance must be submitted in writing and must include the date, location (if applicable) and the nature of the grievance, the facts on which it is based, the alleged violation, and requested resolution.
- E. Appeal:** A request for reconsideration of a grievance decision under Policy3030 or Procedure 303.

Section 9. Steps for a Complaint

Step 1: The first step should be to try to resolve concerns directly and informally with the person(s) involved. Often, talking directly with the person(s) involved helps to clarify the issues and reveal the resolution.

Step 2: If there is no resolution at Step 1, a written or verbal complaint may be submitted to the direct supervisor of the person(s) involved. The Ombudsperson may assist students in identifying the person to whom a complaint may be submitted. In the case of complaints of an academic nature, contact the department chair who will work with the appropriate dean. The supervisor/chair/dean will review the facts of the complaint with the complainant, the person(s) involved, and others as deemed appropriate, and communicate a response to all parties.

Section 10. Steps for a Grievance

If there is no resolution of the complaint as outlined in Section 9, and if the complaint qualifies as a grievance as defined in Section 8D, a grievance may be submitted. The grievance and University response are required to be in writing and signed. Documents sent using the official university email are considered “written and signed” as long as the email contains the student’s or university staff’s name.

The written grievance is submitted as follows:

Step 1: To the Gateway Center who will send it to University administrator closest to and in the direct chain of command of the person(s) identified in the grievance.

- a) A grievance must be submitted within 20 business days after the initial event that gave rise to the grievance.
- b) The administrator will review the facts of the grievance with the complainant, the person(s) involved, and others as deemed appropriate, and communicate a response in writing to all parties. If the grievance is denied, the response will include information on filing an appeal.
- c) The University response must be completed within 20 business days after the receipt of the written grievance.
- d) If the University fails to provide a response within 20 business days, the complainant may proceed to the next level.

Step 2: If there is no resolution from Step 1, a student may submit the grievance to one of the four divisional vice presidents (as identified in the response in Step 1 C):

- Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Vice President of Student Affairs
- Vice President of Finance and Administration
- Vice President of University Advancement

Step 3: At the conclusion of the grievance process, the decision of the university shall be in writing and sent to all parties involved.

Except as noted in Section 10, Step 1d, grievances will not be considered at the next progressive level unless and until the grievance has received full consideration at the prior level.

Section 11. Appeals

A student has a right to appeal the grievance decision to the University President. The decision of the President is final and binding. If the grievance involves a MnSCU policy or the actions of the President, the student may further appeal to the Chancellor. The decision of the Chancellor is final and binding.

A request for an appeal must be made in writing to the Office of the President or the Office of the Chancellor, and must be received within five (5) business days of receipt or attempted delivery by certified mail of the notice of grievance decision. Failure to request such an appeal within the five day time period presumes acceptance of the grievance decision.

Section 12. Retaliation

No retaliation of any kind shall be taken against a student for participating, or refusing to participate in a complaint and/or grievance. Retaliation may be subject to action under appropriate MnSCU, student or employee policies or procedures.

Section 13. Reporting and Documentation

The four division offices will document complaints and grievances in accordance with the rules and regulations of The Higher Learning Commission.

Section 14. Review

This procedure will be reviewed and modified as appropriate.

Section 15. Signatures

Issued on this 14th day of March 2012.



Trena Boyum-Breen, Vice President, Student Affairs



Sue K. Hammersmith, President