

STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY & PROCEDURE

Student Complaints and Grievances

Policy

William Penn University is committed to a respectful learning environment for all members of the campus community. Students have the right to seek a remedy for a dispute or disagreement when they believe they have been treated in an improper, unfair or arbitrary manner. Additionally, students have the right to seek a remedy for issues of institutional or program quality such as William Penn University's compliance with the standards of our accrediting body, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). No retaliation of any kind shall be taken against a student for participation in a complaint or grievance.

Definitions

- A. **Grievance and/or Complaint** - A written claim raised by a student alleging improper, unfair, arbitrary, or discriminatory action by an employee involving the application of a specific provision of a university rule/regulation or a William Penn University policy or procedure. A grievance may also be about issues of institutional or program quality such as William Penn University's compliance with HLC standards.
- B. **Appeal** – A request for reconsideration of a grievance application of a policy or procedure.
- C. **Retaliation** – Retribution of any kind taken against a student for participating in a complaint or grievance.
- D. **Student** – An individual student, a group of students, or the student government.

Procedures

For certain types of grievances or complaints, policies, and specific procedures may already be in place and must be followed. These procedures are found in the William Penn University Student Handbook. Issues related to alleged harassment, discrimination, student conduct, grade challenges, parking, etc. must be processed using existing procedures.

The procedures for all other types of complaints or grievances follow.

1. When a student has a complaint or grievance, she or he shall first meet on an informal basis with the faculty member, staff member, or university administrator directly involved in the dispute in an attempt to resolve the complaint or grievance. For full consideration, the complaint or grievance should be filed in the semester in which the concern arises, or within the first two weeks of the subsequent term.

2. When a student has a complaint or grievance which remains unresolved after consultation with the faculty member, staff member, or university administrator directly involved in the dispute, she or he may file a written account of his or her grievance with the appropriate academic dean in cases where the dispute involves teaching faculty, or the appropriate supervisor in cases where the dispute involves other university employees.

A Student Grievance Form is available for this purpose in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

This notification shall contain a statement indicating the intention of the student(s) to proceed with the grievance, and the relief requested. The academic dean, appropriate supervisor, or designee, shall respond in writing to the student(s) within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the written, signed notice of grievance.

If the grievance is not resolved at the meeting with the supervisor, the student(s) may appeal to the area Vice President. The area vice president shall consider the appeal and make a decision. The vice president shall respond in writing to the student within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the written, signed notice of appeal. If the complaint is with the area Vice President, the student may appeal to the President of the University using the same process described above.

If the grievance is not resolved at the meeting with the area vice president, the student(s) may appeal to the University president, who will consider the appeal and make a decision. The University President shall respond in writing to the student within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the written, signed notice of appeal. The decision of the President is final and binding.

Complaints to the Higher Learning Commission

William Penn University is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). A student who wishes to file a complaint about William Penn University with the HLC should contact the Commission.

The Higher Learning Commission

230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500
Chicago, Illinois 60604-1411 Phone: 800.621.7440 / 312.263.0456.
Fax: 312.263.7462

info@hlcommission.org

Record Keeping

The University maintains a record of written student complaints. All written student complaints will be filed with the Vice President for Academic Affairs. Summary information regarding student complaints are presented by the Vice President for Academic Affairs to the President's cabinet annually in June. Trends are reviewed and utilized in developing policies and procedures that mitigate further complaints or issues.

The log of complaints and resulting university actions is provided to the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, upon their request, and in compliance as a part of the University's periodic accreditation review.

Questions regarding student complaint/grievance policy and associated procedures should be directed to the Dr. Noel C. Stahle, Vice President for Academic Affairs at stahlen@wmpenn.edu.

Students also may contact Dr. Stahle by phone at 641-673-1010.

Student Grievance Procedure

A grievance is a complaint initiated by a student who believes he/she has been unfairly treated by an employee of the University or another student of the university. A grievance also maybe initiated if a student believes he/she has experienced a breach of a contractual relationship between him/herself and the University. The process to resolve grievances is noted below:

1. The student must make every reasonable effort to resolve the problem with the William Penn University employee.
2. The student consults first with the instructor/staff to understand the nature of the grievance – i.e. related to admission, program progress, advising, graduation, etc. The objective of the meeting is to allow all parties to reach a mutual understanding of the grievance(s). If no resolution is possible after this meeting with the instructor/staff:
3. The student may in writing (via email) request to meet with the Division Chair. The Chair must receive the written request within fourteen (14) calendar days of the meeting with the instructor/staff, which should include 1) the student's detailed response, 2) documentation supporting the student's grievance. The Chair will reply via email within seven (7) calendar days to set up a meeting. Chair and student will review all factors related to the grievance with the goal of seeking a fair and equitable resolution. If no agreement can be achieved:
4. All documentation concerning the grievance will be forwarded to the relevant Academic Dean (based on the relevant campus). The student may in writing (via email) within seven (7) days request to meet with the Academic Dean. As needed, the Dean may present the grievance to the Academic Council (AC) for review and counsel. The decision of the Academic Dean is final.
5. All parties in this grievance process agree to cooperate openly, respectfully, honestly, and in good faith.