

# Biology & Biochemistry Graduate Student Grievance Policy

(August 21, 2023)

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide graduate students in the Department with a fair and impartial process for resolving grievances related to their academic and professional experiences within the Department.

## Scope

This policy applies to all graduate students in the department, including those enrolled in master's and doctoral programs. It covers grievances related to any aspect of the student's academic or professional experience within the department, including but not limited to:

- Advising and mentoring
- Teaching duties
- Employment and financial support
- Coursework and evaluations
- Research activities
- Intellectual property
- Discrimination, harassment, or retaliation
- Dismissal from the program

Note that this policy is intended to address grievances related to the graduate student's experiences at the University. It is not intended to address grievances related to personal or external matters, such as disputes with landlords or personal relationships.

If a graduate student is unsure whether their issue falls within the scope of this policy, they are encouraged to seek guidance from Student or Faculty Facilitators<sup>1</sup> or from the Associate Chair for Graduate Affairs before filing a formal grievance.

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<sup>1</sup> Student and Faculty Facilitators are appointed by the Associate Chair for Graduate Affairs to provide impartial advice to graduate students on grievance policy.

## Procedures

**1. Informal Resolution:** The graduate student is encouraged to try to resolve the grievance informally, by discussing the issue with the person or persons directly involved. In some cases, this may be sufficient to resolve the issue.

If there is no resolution or if the student feels unable to discuss the issue with the person or persons directly involved, the student should discuss the matter with Student or Faculty Facilitators or with the Associate Chair for Graduate Affairs, who should attempt to mediate a resolution. The Associate Chair may be required to report to another University entity such as the Office of Equal Opportunity Services if the grievance involves discrimination or sexual misconduct or the Research Integrity Officer if it involves research misconduct.

If the issue cannot be resolved informally the student may submit a formal grievance as described in the next step.

**2. Formal Grievance:** The graduate student may submit a formal grievance to the Associate Chair for Graduate Affairs. The grievance should be in writing and should include:

- A clear and detailed description of the issue, including the names of the person or persons involved.
- A description of the steps taken to try to resolve the issue informally.
- Any relevant supporting documentation or evidence.
- The resolution the graduate student is seeking.

**3. Review and Investigation:** The Associate Chair for Graduate Affairs will review the grievance and conduct an investigation as necessary. Within one week of receiving the formal grievance, the Associate Chair will decide whether to appoint an ad hoc Grievance Committee to review the grievance and conduct an investigation as necessary. The Committee will consist of at least two faculty members and two graduate students, chosen by the Associate Chair. Members of the Committee should be independent of the parties involved in the grievance. Should the Associate Chair decide not to assemble a committee, they will review and investigate the grievance themselves. The student will be notified as to whether a committee has been assembled or whether the grievance will be handled by the Associate Chair within one week.

The Grievance Committee or the Associate Chair will review the materials submitted by the graduate student and may gather new evidence and information on the issue. If needed, the Committee may conduct a formal hearing where the issue is presented by the student to the committee and other persons involved are also given a chance to present evidence and information. The Committee will collect a formal record of the hearing. The Grievance Committee will issue a written decision on the complaint, including any recommendations for resolution, to the Associate Chair for Graduate Affairs, within three weeks of being convened. The Associate Chair for Graduate Affairs will make a final decision within one week of receiving

the Committee's recommendations. Typically, the Associate Chair will issue a decision to the graduate student within five weeks (35 calendar days) of the filing of the formal grievance unless this time period includes scheduled or unscheduled UH closures, the case is usually complex, or there are extenuating circumstances for the parties involved (family or health emergencies). In the event of a delayed decision, the student will be notified by the Associate Chair and an adjusted timeline will be provided.

**4. Appeal:** If the graduate student is not satisfied with the decision made by the Associate Chair for Graduate Affairs, he or she may appeal the decision to the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. The student must file written notice of a formal grievance with the Associate Dean for Graduate Students within 10 calendar days from the receipt of the departmental decision.