

Academic Grievance Policy and Procedures of the School of Social Work

In accordance with all applicable University of Wisconsin-Madison policies, the School of Social Work Academic Grievance Policy and Procedures provide a process for students to address concerns that arise when a student believes that they have been treated unfairly academically. Alleged unfair treatment may be related to course grades, field seminar and placement, classroom treatment and other academic concerns. **If a student has experienced sexual harassment, sexual violence, dating violence, domestic violence and/or stalking, they should not follow this procedure; rather, they should contact the School's Sexual Harassment Liaison Tracy Schroepfer (608-263-3837 or tschroepfer@wisc.edu) and/or the Dean of Students Office at 263-5700. For after-hours crisis response, please call [Counseling & Consultation Services](#) at 265-5600.**

If a student has any concerns other than sexual harassment and chooses to take action, they should follow the steps below:

Step 1: Meet with Instructor¹

Prior to meeting with any other administrator, faculty or staff member the student is required to meet with their instructor to discuss the concern. If resolution is not reached, the student may decline to take further action or proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: Meet with Appropriate Director or Field Coordinator

The student meets with the instructor and the appropriate Director: the School's Associate Director meets with any undergraduate or Full-Time MSW Program student for grievances concerning all non-field related courses; the Director of the Part-Time MSW Program (if the concern is non-field related) meets with any Part-Time MSW student; and if the grievance concerns field, the Field Coordinator meets with all Part-Time MSW students and the Director of Field Education meets with BSW and Full-Time MSW students.

The student is to send an e-mail to the appropriate director/field coordinator and their instructor to request a meeting. This meeting would include the student, the instructor, and the appropriate director/field coordinator. Prior to arranging the requested meeting, it is the responsibility of the appropriate director to ensure that the student has met with the instructor (Step 1). If resolution is not reached, the student may decline to take further action or proceed to Step 3.

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Instructor is defined as a tenure-track faculty member, clinical faculty member, short-term lecturer or long-term lecturer hired as the instructor of record for a course. *Instructor* does not include teaching assistants (TAs) or agency supervisors. Grievances regarding TAs should be brought to the attention of the course instructor and grievances regarding agency supervisors should be brought to the attention of the specific field instructor responsible for the field unit.

Step 3: Begin Formal Grievance Process

1. Within 10 business days of meeting with the appropriate director and their instructor (Step 2 above), the student must deliver by email to the Director of the School of Social Work a written statement detailing their grievance and request for a hearing before the Grievance Committee.² The Director of the School of Social Work will notify the student by their University email account of receipt of the written statement.
2. Within 5 business days of receiving the student's statement, the Director will notify the Grievance Committee Chair of the student's request for a grievance hearing (This notification will occur by email with the student's statement attached).
3. Within five business days of receiving the Director's notification, the Chair will e-mail separately the following to the student and instructor:
 - a. Student
 - Notification that the Grievance Committee will hear the grievance
 - List of Grievance Committee members
 - Link to the School's formal grievance process
 - Request that any other documentation relevant to the grievance be e-mailed to only the Chair within 10 business days
 - b. Instructor
 - Notification that the Grievance Committee will hear the grievance
 - List of Grievance Committee members
 - Link to the School's formal grievance process
 - The student's written statement as an attachment
 - Request for a written response to the student's grievance from the instructor within 10 business days. The response should include details of the actions the instructor has taken with the student to settle the matter before it rose to the level of a formal grievance, as well the instructor's defense against the student's allegations
 - Request that any other documentation relevant to the grievance be e-mailed to only the Chair within 10 business days
4. The Committee is required to schedule and convene the hearing within 15 business days of receipt of requested materials. This date may be extended by consent of the instructor, student and Director of the School of Social Work or for other good cause as determined by the Committee. A written decision regarding the grievance will be sent to the student via

² The Grievance Committee is routinely appointed by the Director of the School of Social Work prior to the beginning of each academic year. The Committee is to be composed of eight members: two tenured faculty members (one of whom is the chair and the other co-chair), two long-term field instructors (for field issues), two clinical faculty or long-term instructors (for non-field issues); and two student program peers. A hearing will require a quorum of three members: either the chair or co-chair, one student program peer, and either one long-term field instructor or one clinical faculty or long-term instructors depending on whether the issue is field or non-field related.

their University e-mail account and First Class U.S. or international mail. A copy of the decision will be hand delivered by the Committee Chair to the Director of the School of Social Work. The Committee's decision is made based on preponderance of the evidence.

5. Upon receipt of all documentation, the Committee chair will distribute the materials to the committee members and schedule a hearing date. Committee members will read the documentation thoroughly in preparation for the hearing. Within 30 business days (excluding winter and spring break), the Committee will have completed its work and delivered its decision. A grievance filed with less than 45 business days remaining in the academic year will require extra time but will be completed no later than the start of the first day of the next academic year.

Documentation and Confidentiality

- *Document Distribution.* All documents will be distributed by the Chair to the student, the instructor, and committee members via BOX (formerly "My Web Space"), seven business days before the hearing
- *Document Confidentiality.* All student and instructor documentation must be in electronic format. All electronic documentation will be stored in a safeguarded BOX folder. Confidentiality regarding all documentation and proceedings will be maintained by the Grievance Committee, student, and instructor. Committee members, the student and the instructor will not discuss the documents and/or details of the grievance with each other until the day of the hearing. All student, instructor, and committee members' questions should be directed to the Chair. The hearing will be audio recorded and will be stored in a central location within the School of Social Work in accordance to FERPA guidelines.

Step 4: Appeal to the School of Social Work Director

1. If either the student or instructor is not satisfied with the Committee's decision, they may appeal to the Director of the School, who has the final decision-making authority. In order to do so, the student or instructor must write a letter requesting an appeal and, providing in sufficient detail, the rationale for it. This letter should be emailed to the Director of the School of Social Work within 15 business days of receiving the Committee's decision letter.
2. The Director will provide written notice to the student, instructor and appropriate director of the decision within 15 business days of receiving the student's appeal. The Director's decision regarding the appeal is final within the School.

Note: If the student is not satisfied with the decision and feels discriminated against, they may contact the Office of Equity and Diversity at (608) 263-2378.

Grievance Hearing Process

The Grievance Hearing will proceed as described below.

Pre-Hearing

The Chair and Grievance Committee members will meet in seclusion 15 minutes prior to the start of the hearing to do the following

- a. Ensure that all appropriate members are present
- b. Review case materials, previously distributed to all parties by the Chair via BOX
- c. Review policy or policies related to the grievance
- d. Clarify policy interpretations as necessary
- e. Make sure recording device is working
- f. Select a committee member to document details of the hearing on the “The Recorder’s Hearing Deliberation Form.” This information will be used at the completion of the hearing in making the decision and writing the decision letter.

Hearing

Consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g and the Wisconsin Open Meeting Law, Wis. Stats. Ann. § 19.81 et seq., the hearing will be conducted in closed session.

Persons that may be present:

- a. Grievance Committee members³: Student and, if desired by the student, a support person(s) (maximum 2). Support person(s) cannot speak at any time during the hearing.
- b. If the student chooses to have an attorney present with them in the hearing, they must notify the Committee Chair at the time when the hearing is being scheduled.
- c. Instructor
- d. Witnesses, who will remain outside of the hearing room until called individually for their testimony

Hearing

- a. Chair invites all parties (except witnesses) to enter the room
- b. Chair reads the opening statement (found below):

“This is a meeting of the Grievance Committee of the UW-Madison School of Social Work. This committee has been authorized by the School to make a determination regarding student grievance pursuant to the Academic Grievance Policies and Procedures of the School of Social Work

I am (Chair’s name) serving as the chairperson of this committee. Will each person state your name and your role here today?

³ The Committee is composed of four members: one tenured faculty member (chair), one long-term field instructor, one tenure-track/clinical faculty or long-term instructor, and one student program peer. In instances where a conflict of interest may exist, the Chair will so inform the Director, who will appoint an alternate committee member for the specific grievance at hand

Consistent with the Wisconsin Open Meetings law and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), we are conducting this hearing in closed session. Events, statements, and outcomes of this hearing are not to be discussed outside of this room. The committee, however, will notify all parties of its decision and recommendations.

This hearing is intended to be informal and will proceed as follows: The Student who filed charges of grievance will present documents and witnesses, if any, in support of their position. The Committee and Instructor will have the opportunity to ask questions of the Student and witnesses.

The Instructor will present documents and witnesses, if any, in response to the Student's grievance. The Committee and Student will have the opportunity to ask questions of the Instructor and witnesses.

The Student and Instructor may each make a closing statement after which they will be excused and the Grievance Committee will deliberate in closed session.

Witnesses may not ask questions. After they have provided their information, the Chair will excuse them from the hearing room.

Committee members, Student, Instructor and witnesses are expected to conduct themselves in a cordial manner. As Chair, I reserve the right to take appropriate steps to maintain order. I may also temporarily suspend the hearing to grant rest breaks or to allow the participants the opportunity to consult with their respective advisors. Any advisor for the student [including an attorney] is limited to advising the student and may not directly address this Committee, instructor, or witnesses. The student is expected to respond on his or her own behalf to questions asked in the hearing.

Post Hearing Process

- a. A decision is made; the committee chair contacts the student via telephone or their University e-mail account to announce the decision only and states a formal decision letter will follow within seven business days via First-Class U.S. or international mail, except when the University's legal counsel has been asked by the Committee to provide final approval (up to 20 business days).
- b. The formal decision letter is written by the Chair, reviewed by committee members for input and, at the discretion of the Committee, forwarded to the University's legal counsel for final approval.
- c. After approval by the Committee members, letter is: 1) sent to the student via First-Class U.S. or international mail or the student's University email account, 2) sent to the instructor via his/her University email account, and 3) hand delivered to the Director of the School of Social Work. All documents will be saved in BOX for a time period designated by University policy.
- d. Student or Instructor may choose to accept the Grievance Committee's decision or proceed to Step 4 described above.