

CHAPTER 7

Student Grievance Procedure

7.1 Introduction

This procedure provides an opportunity for a student to resolve his/her grievance within TU Dublin. It should be recognised that the majority of grievances should be resolved as near to their source as possible. It is for this reason that the Student Grievance Procedure provides for a number of stages, both informal and formal in the handling of a grievance. The purpose of the procedure is to ensure that grievances are resolved amicably. It is expected that the majority of grievances will be resolved at the informal stage of the process. The Student Grievance Procedure does not cover

- Allegations of bullying and harassment
- Appeals against a decision in respect of withdrawal, transfer, annual evaluation, confirmation of PhD registration, recommendations of module and progression and examination boards or decisions of Academic Council.
- Disciplinary procedures
- Students' Union procedures
- Allegations of personal misconduct against a member of staff
- Anonymous grievances or grievances raised on behalf of an anonymous party (Action cannot be taken on these grievances).

Separate procedures exist in respect of the above and details of these are available on request from the Graduate Research School Office and the TU Dublin Students' Union. Any difficulties that staff members may have with students should be addressed through the student disciplinary procedures.

Grievances will be treated seriously and constructively at all stages of the Student Grievance Procedure.

Grievances will be dealt with fairly and consistently and with due regard to the University's equal opportunities policy. If a grievance is upheld, appropriate remedial action will be implemented. If a grievance is not upheld, the reason(s) for the decision will be communicated to the grievant. The University will seek to ensure that student grievances are addressed promptly within the specified timescales outlined in this procedure. If a timescale for addressing a grievance is not achievable at any stage in the procedure, then the grievant shall be notified in writing and provided with an explanation for any delay.

Students will have a full opportunity to raise grievances on an individual or collective basis without fear of disadvantage or recrimination.

Privacy and confidentiality will be respected, both for grievants and respondents. However, it may be necessary to disclose information to others in order to deal with the grievance and in these circumstances the parties concerned will be informed of such disclosure. A grievant and respondent are both entitled to be accompanied at all stages of the Student Grievance Procedure by a friend or colleague. Before pursuing to the official grievance process, the student is encouraged to talk to their students' union representative.

7.2 The Student Grievance Process

Step 1: Informal Grievance

It is expected that the majority of grievances can be resolved at this stage through the grievant first raising their grievance with the individual who is the subject of the grievance. This could be done by

- Telephoning the appropriate member of staff to discuss the grievance;
- Making an appointment to see the appropriate member of staff to discuss the grievance;
- Writing to the appropriate member of staff to outline the grievance.

It is recognised that there may be circumstances in which the grievant considers they cannot approach the individual concerned. In this case the grievant may go to a senior member of staff within the Faculty or service concerned to informally discuss the grievance.

The grievance should be raised as soon as possible, normally within five working days of the incident that prompted the grievance.

When the student meets with the individual, who is the subject of the grievance or with a senior member of staff, with a view to resolving the matter, the meeting should be under mutually agreed conditions, with or without friends/colleagues or witnesses present. In outlining their grievance, the grievant should briefly describe the incident that prompted the grievance citing the time and date of incident(s) where applicable. It is also necessary for the grievant to clearly outline/explain the outcome that is expected.

Step 2: Formal Grievance – Initial Investigation

If the grievant is unable to resolve the issue at the informal stage, they should submit a 'Student Grievance Form' [PGR 5D], to the Dean responsible for the area that is the source of the grievance.

On the PGR 5D form [*Student Grievance*], students shall be required to briefly outline their grievance and to include dates, times, the nature of the incident(s) and the individual(s) involved. The student will also need to state the outcome they are hoping to achieve and to describe any attempts at informal resolution of the grievance, if appropriate. The PGR 5D form should normally be submitted within 15 working days of the occurrence of the incident that prompted the grievance. The form shall be signed and dated by the student. The timing of the submission of the PGR 5D form will naturally be affected by the attempts at informal resolution of the grievance at Step 1 of the process, if appropriate.

The Dean shall acknowledge receipt of the PGR 5D form [*Student Grievance*] within 7 working days of receipt of the form and shall investigate the matter including consultation with the individual who is the subject of the grievance. As part of the investigation, the student may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the grievance in greater detail. At such a meeting, the student shall be entitled to be accompanied by a friend or colleague. Following the conclusion of an investigation, a written response shall be sent to the student within 15 working days of receipt of the PGR 5D form.

Where the investigation is unable to be concluded within this timescale, the grievant shall be informed in writing of the revised timescale for receiving a response and the reason(s) for the delay. The Dean should endeavour to complete the process within three months. The action taken by the Dean at this stage of the process shall be recorded on the PGR 5D form. A copy of the form shall be appended to the written response sent to the student, the Faculty retaining the original for information and for the recording of grievances. If the grievance is not upheld, the reasons for this decision must be stated in the written response to the student and recorded on the form.

Step 3: Formal Grievance – Grievance Review Panel

If the grievant is still dissatisfied with the response from the initial investigation they can request that the grievance is considered by the Grievance Review Panel. The grievant should submit to the Head of the Graduate Research School details in writing of the reasons for wishing to take the grievance to the next stage. This should normally be done within ten working days of receipt of the response from stage 2. The

Head of the Graduate Research School will acknowledge receipt of the request and convene a meeting of the Grievance Review Panel normally within 15 working days of receipt of the request.

The Grievance Review Panel is appointed by the Head of the Graduate Research School and includes:

- A Dean from a Faculty not involved with the research programme, student or supervisor
- A Head of School from a School not involved with the research programme, student or supervisor
- The Head of the Graduate Research School or independent nominee

The Faculty Dean will chair the panel and the Head of the Graduate Research School will act as secretary to the panel.

The panel will have access to all prior correspondence and the results of the initial investigation. They will also normally wish to meet with all parties involved in the grievance in reaching their decision. All parties involved in the grievance have the right to be accompanied by another person at the hearing.

The grievant will normally receive written confirmation of the Panel's conclusions and any subsequent action that the University intends to take within 7 working days of the hearing. A written summary of the hearing will be kept with any other relevant paper in the Graduate Research School Office.

The decision of the Grievance Review Panel is the final stage of the grievance procedure.