



Grievance Procedures

The Washington School of Psychiatry is committed to implementing effective grievance procedures that, where possible, are managed quickly at the local level and with a minimum number of people involved. The resolution process focuses on a rapid re-establishment of good working relationships and positive outcomes.

The following principles apply:

- A grievance is owned by a complainant who has the right to withdraw the complaint at any stage and choose to alter the process of resolution (for instance, formal to informal). The police may be contacted in cases of possible criminal behavior.
- Action is commenced within two weeks of a formal complaint being made.
- All parties have a right to confidentiality and privacy, subject to necessary legal requirements.
- All students and staff are informed of the grievance procedures.
- If the grievance fits within equal opportunity legislation, it is managed under the relevant guidelines.
- Impartial mediation by a trained mediator is available if needed.
- Information relevant to the grievance is provided to staff and students involved in a complaint.
- Natural justice principles are applied to ensure procedural fairness.
- Referral to an appropriate independent person to assist the effective and rapid resolution of any grievance is available if required.
- Students and staff are protected from victimization.
- The focus for the resolution is on issues, rather than individuals.
- This policy, which is detailed below is widely disseminated to students and staff at orientation, and on the School's web site.

Approval

This policy was approved by the Board of The Washington School of Psychiatry on xxxxx.

Purpose

To provide a procedure which enables enrolled students, staff and faculty to pursue grievances that are not covered by other, specific policies and procedures.

The policy endeavors to establish procedures through which:

- All parties have access to clearly defined processes designed to facilitate resolution of grievances
- Grievances are addressed in a timely and equitable manner
- The principles of natural justice are observed in the conduct of proceedings to which this policy relates

The policy also endeavors to establish a framework within which members of the Washington School of Psychiatry community are encouraged to:

- Resolve issues as close to source as possible
- Undertake appropriate actions to address systemic or underlying causes with a view to preventing problems from occurring or recurring.

Natural Justice requires that:

- The person affected by a disputed matter be given the right to present his/her case including the opportunity to be heard, be provided with adequate notice of the allegations and the procedures to be used; and
- Members of the decision making body be free of bias and perceived bias or other personal interest in the outcome

The policy ensures that the following is strictly adhered to:

- Victimization: Washington School of Psychiatry will observe that the grievance policy does not victimize against any complainant or respondent.
- Discrimination: Washington School of Psychiatry will strictly observe that the grievance policy does not discriminate against any complainant or respondent.
- Third party assistance: Complainant and or respondent may be accompanied and assisted by a third party (such as a family member, friend, counselor or other professional support person) if desired at any stage of the grievance resolution procedure.
- Communication with the complainant and or respondent: At all stages of the process,

If so requested by the complainant and/or respondent, Washington School of Psychiatry will give reasons and a full explanation in writing for decisions and actions taken as part of the procedures. Washington School of Psychiatry will provide support and advice to students, faculty and staff who require assistance beyond that provided by the School itself.

Scope

This procedure applies to any aspect of a student's, staff and faculty experience at Washington School of Psychiatry.

This procedure covers, but is not limited to, grievances which may arise as a result of:

- Payment of fees;
- Student charges;
- Course transfer;
- Minimum course component;
- Graduation;
- Time limits for completing rationalized/discontinued/modified courses; and,
- Interaction with staff, faculty and students;
- Assessment and examinations;
- Student discipline;
- Recognition of prior learning;
- Class timetables; and
- Other academic related matters
- Personal information

Grievant

For the purposes of this procedure Grievant is a person who is enrolled or is seeking to enroll in any course/subject/training program or conference offered by Washington School of Psychiatry, faculty and staff of the Washington School of Psychiatry.

Grievance

A complaint presented by an individual, or a group, based on the opinion of that individual or group that he/she or they are, or have been, receiving unfair treatment.

Grievance Procedure

A prescribed set of processes to be followed when a grievance is presented.

Publication

A copy of these procedures will be provided to all staff and students as part of staff/student orientation programs and will be made publicly available on the School's website www.wspdc.org and in staff and student information handbooks.

Staff Training

All staff will be informed of and trained in the application of this policy as part of ongoing staff training programs including induction and orientation programs.

Fees/Costs

There are no costs imposed on students by Washington School of Psychiatry for lodging or participating in grievance procedure activities conducted either internally or through Washington School of Psychiatry's nominated external review process.

Grievance Procedures

1. Actions which give rise to a grievance

A grievance arises when a Grievant has no other avenue of redress available to him or her under the procedures of the School for what he/she considers to be unfair treatment.

2. Resolving a Grievance

2.1 Informal Resolution

2.1.1 In the first instance, the Grievant should normally discuss the grievance informally with the relevant staff member who should try to resolve it. Where it appears that the grievance should be dealt with under another Washington School of Psychiatry policy the staff member shall immediately refer the Grievant to the appropriate policy. Where a Grievant is unable to make contact with or is reluctant to approach the relevant staff member, the Grievant may then raise the matter with the FCC Chair or the Executive Director for students and faculty/staff respectively.

2.1.2 Grievants have up to ten (10) working days to initiate the informal review process, from the date of the occurrence which gives rise to the grievance or the date the circumstances giving rise to the grievance are brought to the Grievant's notice/the student becomes aware of the circumstances giving rise to the grievance.

2.1.3 During the informal process, the staff member/Executive Director/FCC Chair (as the case may be) may take such action as deemed appropriate to resolve the matter. This must include discussing the matter with the Grievant, and may also include, but is not limited to:

- Reviewing the student's/staff/faculty records; and/or
- Discussing the matter with other members of staff; and/or

Allowing the Grievant to re-submit documentation where the staff member has reason to believe that the Grievant had valid grounds for misunderstanding relevant requirements.

2.1.4 The informal resolution process must be completed within ten (10) working days from the date on which the Grievant contacted the relevant staff member of the unit. The FCC Chair or Executive Director may grant an extension not exceeding five (5) working days if it seems likely that the matter will be resolved in that time.

2.1.5 The Grievant will be advised in writing within two (2) working days of the conclusion of the informal resolution process.

- The outcome of the informal resolution process;
- The availability of support services at Washington School of Psychiatry; and
- The appeals mechanism.

3. Formal Resolution

3.1 If a Grievant is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal resolution process, he/she may submit a formal grievance in writing to the Executive Director. This request must be submitted within five (5) working days of the date of notification of the outcome of the informal resolution process.

The student's letter shall:

- State the reason/s for the grievance;
- Detail the outcome of the informal resolution process;
- Include any specific issues which the student wishes to present to the Executive Director.
- Where relevant, attach copies of documentary evidence.

3.1.1 The Executive Director will consider the formal grievance by:

- Reviewing the Grievant's letter and the outcomes of the informal resolution process;
- Verifying that all appropriate procedures have been correctly carried out;
- Seeking additional information from appropriate staff concerning the subject of the grievance;
- Discussing the matter directly with the Grievant.
- Undertaking other action as appropriate.

3.1.2 After consideration of all of the available evidence, the Executive Director may decide to:

- Dismiss the grievance; or
- Uphold the grievance and direct that:
 - Reparation as appropriate be made to the Grievant; and/or
 - Where relevant, the student's enrolment status be restored; and/or
 - Where relevant, that administration systems, policies or procedures be reviewed;
 - Appropriate actions to address systemic or underlying causes (if any) be undertaken, with a view to preventing problems from occurring or recurring; and/or
 - Other actions as appropriate.

3.1.3 The Grievant will be informed of the outcome in writing within ten (10) working days of submission of the formal grievance as identified by the date of receipt by the Unit of the Grievant's letter [See 4.1]

3.1.4 If the Executive Director and all suitable nominees have already been involved in the process, or have some other conflict of interest, the Executive Director will appoint another person to investigate the formal grievance.

4. Appeals

4.1 Grievance Appeals

A student has the right of appeal to the Grievance Appeals Committee from a decision of the Executive Director

Appeal on one or more of the following grounds:

- That the case was not heard on its merits;
- That the student is able to provide new evidence which could not reasonably have been provided at the time of the Executive Director investigation;
- That a procedural irregularity has occurred in the hearing of the grievance during the investigation by the Executive Director.

4.1.1 A student who wishes to appeal against a decision of the Executive Director shall:

- File the appeal with the office of the Executive Director;
- File the appeal in the format shown below;
- File the appeal within five (5) working days of receipt of written notification of the decision of the Head of Unit.

4.1.2 The written appeal must:

- State the grounds on which the appeal is made, in accordance with section 4.1 of this policy;
- Detail and, where appropriate, provide evidence relevant to the grounds for appeal. A copy of documentary evidence referred to in the letter of appeal must be attached. (Failure to present evidence referred to in the letter of appeal will be taken into account by the Grievance Appeals Committee.)

4.1.3 Upon filing of the written appeal, the Executive Director will:

- Check that the written appeal substantially complies with the format required in section 4.4;
- Check that, where reference is made to supporting documentation, a copy of the documentation is attached;
- Check that the Grievant has included a description of the relevant evidence in relation to the grounds for appeal to the Grievance Appeals Committee; and
- If applicable, consider the reasons provided for the late filing of an appeal and determine whether or not these are such as to warrant the appeal proceeding.

Where, in the opinion of the Executive Director, the appeal does not comply with one or more of these criteria the Executive Director can return the documentation to the student with a request for compliance.

5. Format of Appeal Letter

Executive Director
Washington School of Psychiatry School
5280 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 400
Washington D.C. 20016-4118

I am hereby filing an appeal pursuant to the decision of the (insert details) advised to me by (insert date of notification).

The grounds of my appeal is/are: (insert ground(s) as appropriate)

In support of this appeal, I submit the following information for consideration by the Grievance Appeals Committee.

(include summary of all relevant information or material here)

Grievant Signature

Date:

Family Name:

Given Name:

Grievant ID: (where relevant) Address for notices:

Contact telephone:

Email address:

6. Grievance Appeals Committee

Once the appeal has been accepted the Request for Appeal must be forwarded to the appropriate Grievance Appeals Committee.

6.1 The composition of the Committee shall be:

- The Executive Director or nominee, who shall be Chair of the Committee;
- One faculty member from the relevant Program or area different from that of the Chair;
- Student Representative;
- Staff Representative;
- Faculty with expertise in Ethics may be recruited in advisory capacity as appropriate.
- Both genders will be represented.

In allocating appeals to the Committee, the Executive Director shall select a Committee Chair and a staff member who are from an area other than that in which the student is concerned.

6.1.1 The School Registrar or nominee shall attend and act as Secretary to the Committee and shall:

- Collate all documents relevant to the appeal hearing (including the "Grievance Form" referred to in section 3) and disseminate to all parties;
- Establish a date, time and place for the appeal hearing and advise all parties in accordance with section 2.5.3;
- Maintain a record of the proceedings of the appeal hearing and the decision(s) taken;
- Advise the Executive Director of the outcome of the appeal immediately after the proceedings have concluded;
- Draft the letter advising the Grievant of the outcome of the appeal for the Chair's approval prior to obtaining the Executive Director's signature; and
- Ensure that a copy of all documentation is maintained on the official file in Record Management Services.

6.1.2 Where an appeal has been forwarded to the Grievance Appeals Committee, a meeting of the Committee shall be convened within 15 working days of filing of the letter of appeal. All participants shall be given at least 5 days notification in writing of the time, date and place at which the appeal is to be heard. Notification will be forwarded to the Grievant via express mail to his/her semester address.

6.1.3 The hearing shall be held in camera. The Committee shall regulate its own proceedings. The Committee may call before it any witnesses to provide additional evidence.

6.1.4 The Grievant shall be given the opportunity to appear in person before the Committee and to call witnesses. An advocate, who is not a member of the Committee and is not a legal practitioner, may represent the Grievant.

6.1.5 The Grievant must be given the opportunity to hear and examine the evidence of all witnesses called before the Committee.

6.1.6 The Committee must hear the matter on its merits, taking account of all of the circumstances of the case.

7. Decision of the Committee

7.1 After consideration of all of the available evidence, the Committee shall reach its decision by consensus or, if a consensus cannot be reached, by a majority vote, of the members. In the event that the Committee consists of four (4) members (see section 4.2.1 (d)), the Chair shall have a casting vote. Otherwise, Committee members shall have equal voting rights. The Secretary does not have voting rights.

7.1.1 The Committee may:

- a) Confirm the decision against which the student has lodged his/her appeal;
- b) Uphold the appeal and/or c) and/or d) and/or e) as applicable
- c) Modify the directions of the Executive Director
- d) Direct that appropriate actions to address systemic or underlying causes (if any) with a view to preventing problems from occurring or recurring be undertaken;
- e) Refer the matter to an external mediator and/or
- f) Take other action as appropriate.

7.1.2 The Secretary will then:

- a) Document the decision and reasons for the decision.
- b) Contact the Executive Director as soon as the decision has been made to brief him/her of the outcome;
- c) After briefing the Executive Director, draft the written communication for the Chair's approval prior to obtaining the signature of the Executive Director;
- d) Send the signed communication (which shall include the reasons for the decision) to the student by express post within five (5) working days of the Committee's decision being made;
- e) Provide copies of the decision to other appropriate parties;
- f) Update the Records management file as required.

7.1.3 There is no further appeal against the decision of the Grievance Appeals Committee to any other officer or body within the Washington School of Psychiatry.

7.1.4 The third stage of the process at which a complaint is addressed is as follows:

If not satisfied with a decision of the Grievance Appeals Committee's decision, the complainant may request Washington School of Psychiatry to have the matter be dealt with by an external Mediator. If Mediator makes recommendations in relation to a grievance they have reviewed, they will forward those recommendations to the Executive Director of Washington School of Psychiatry.

The Executive Director of Washington School of Psychiatry will ensure that the recommendations of the Mediator are implemented within 30 days.

8. Record Keeping

- Records of all grievances and applications for review of decisions must be kept and be accessible to all interested parties for a minimum period of five years. Such records will remain confidential.
- Records of grievances and their outcomes will be kept strictly confidential and filed in a separate file (not kept in the student or staff file) and stored in the office of the School registrar for a minimum period of five years. Parties to the complaint will be allowed supervised access to these records.