

## **GRIEVANCE PROCESS – DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY**

The Department of Psychology is a scholarly community whose aim is to create an environment conducive to learning. This is accomplished through the promotion of responsibility and encouragement of honesty, integrity, and respect among students, faculty, and staff ensuring that all act in accordance with our behavioral standards while supporting individual rights. We are committed to the principles of truth, objectivity, fairness, honesty, and free inquiry which includes the freedom to express careful and reasoned criticism of data and opinion. As a citizen of the academic community, each member of the Department of Psychology community is expected to assume the obligations of responsible citizenship.

It is the policy of the Department of Psychology to administer conduct standards in a fair, respectful, and equitable manner. We are also committed to serving as an advocate for, and resource to, student victims of crimes, harassment, and other traumatic experiences.

### **EXISTING POLICIES**

It is the policy of the University and the Department of Psychology to maintain the campus as a place of work for faculty, staff, and students, free from all forms of harassment. Harassment in the workplace or the educational environment is unacceptable conduct and will not be tolerated. The University has established policies and reporting processes that address Title IX, sexual misconduct and discrimination. These policies can be found:

- [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Non-Discrimination Policy](#)

The University has established policies and grievance processes for students who believe that their academic performance has been unfairly evaluated. For graduate students, the policy/process can be found:

- [Arbitrary and Capricious Grading Policies](#)

In addition, the Graduate Council has established grievance policies and procedures for Graduate Assistants who believe that they have been unfairly treated in respect to their employment and/or duties as a Research, Teaching, or Administrative Graduate Assistant. The policy/procedure can be found:

- [Graduate Assistants Grievance Procedures](#)

## INFORMAL PROCESS

We believe that it is best to facilitate, with dignity, the resolution of disputes and concerns at the lowest level possible. That is, it is best to attempt a resolution with the parties involved. Students are therefore encouraged to start by seeking advice and mentorship from their advisor. If the student does not feel comfortable discussing the issue(s) with their advisor or if that discussion does not lead to a resolution, they are encouraged to discuss the situation with their area head and/or the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Students are also encouraged to document the occurrence of these discussions and any plan(s) to resolve the issue(s) that emerged, for example via a follow-up email sent to the advisor and/or DGS. Involved mentors (advisors, area heads, or the DGS) are encouraged to follow-up as appropriate, for example at their next expectation setting meeting. In some cases, it may be worthwhile to meet regularly to assess progress toward a resolution.

Note that some specialty areas (Clinical and Counseling) have more specific policies in place to assist with informal resolution of grievances; students should therefore consult these area-specific grievance policies when relevant.

To assist with mediation, you may also wish to contact the Graduate Student Ombuds Officer:

**Mark A. Shayman**  
[shayman@umd.edu](mailto:shayman@umd.edu)  
2100A Lee Building  
301.405.3132  
<http://www.gradschool.umd.edu/Ombuds/>

## FORMAL PROCESS

If a graduate student believes that they have experienced treatment that is unethical, grossly unjust, uncivil, or otherwise creates a hostile learning or working environment from a faculty member, a staff member, or another student, the student should attempt to resolve the matters locally, collegially, and informally. If the issue has not been resolved to the graduate student's satisfaction or the treatment cannot be stopped through informal means, the graduate student may elect to file a formal grievance.

The Graduate Council has also established a grievance policy/process for graduate students who have a legitimate dispute or concern not covered by University policies which can be found here:

- [Graduate Student Grievance Policy](#)

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If you are unable to achieve a mutually satisfactory resolution informally, then the next step is to initiate the formal grievance process. This process within the Department, conducted in strict confidentiality, is as follows:

*Phase 1.* The process begins with the filing of a formal grievance with the Director of Graduate Studies:

1. The student shall provide in writing a request to initiate a formal grievance process. This request must contain a clear description of the facts giving rise to the grievance including the following elements: names of the parties involved; date(s), time(s) and location(s) of the actions/incidents; names of witnesses (if any); and the desired resolution of the grievance. The request must be signed.
2. The written grievance must be filed within 60 calendar days from when the incident occurred.
3. The Director of Graduate Studies will conduct an investigation and provide a determination within 30 business days of the filing of the grievance. This investigation can include interviewing the parties involved and consulting with appropriate campus administrators (such as University Counsel). The decision shall be provided in writing to the parties involved.
4. If the decision is accepted by the parties, the matter is deemed settled. If not, then the decision of the Director of Graduate Studies can be appealed in Phase 2 of the process.

*Phase 2.* If the resolution proffered by the Director of Graduate Studies is deemed unacceptable, either party can file an appeal with the Department Chair as follows:

1. The appeal process shall be initiated by sending a written appeal to the Chair of the department within 30 calendar days of the announcement of the decision by the Director of Graduate Studies.
2. The written appeal must be signed and include the original description of the facts, a clear explanation of why the party filing the appeal found the outcome(s) of the Director of Graduate Studies proceedings and decision(s) unsatisfactory, and a statement of the desired resolution/remedy.
3. The Chair will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within ten business days of receipt of the written appeal.
4. The Chair will proceed by selecting one of two options:
  - a. The Chair will meet with the parties involved, individually and/or together, before reaching a decision. The Chair can confidentially consult with the

appropriate persons who may be knowledgeable about the policies, practices and issues involved. The Chair shall endeavor to convey a written decision and, where appropriate, the remedy, to the parties involved within 30 calendar days of receipt of the letter of appeal. The written decision of the Chair will contain a statement of the issues, the Chair's findings of fact, the controlling policy provisions, the Chair's assessment regarding the merits of the grievance, and a disposition of the grievance, including the remedy and/or disciplinary actions.

or

- b. The Chair will convene a panel of two graduate faculty members and one graduate student (or staff person if one of the parties is a member of the staff) to confidentially review the matter and make a recommendation to the Chair. The panel should conduct its review in an impartial and unbiased manner. The Chair will provide a copy of the letter of appeal and other documentation as appropriate. The panel will offer to meet with the parties involved, individually and/or together, before reaching a decision. The panel can confidentially consult with the appropriate persons who may be knowledgeable about the policies, practices and issues involved. The panel shall endeavor to convey a written decision and, where appropriate, the remedy, to the parties involved within 30 calendar days of receipt of the letter of appeal. The written report of the panel will contain a statement of the issues, the panel's findings of fact, the controlling policy provisions, the panel's assessment regarding the merits of the grievance, and a recommended disposition of the grievance, including a suggested remedy and/or disciplinary actions. The Chair shall endeavor to convey a written decision and, where appropriate, the remedy, to the parties involved within 15 calendar days of receipt of the panel's report.
5. If the decision is accepted by the parties, the matter is deemed settled. If not, then the decision of the Chair can be appealed in Phase 3 of the process.

*Phase 3.* If the resolution proffered by the Chair of the department is deemed unacceptable, either party can file an appeal with the Dean of the College as follows:

1. The appeal process shall be initiated by sending a written appeal to the Dean of the College within 30 calendar days of the announcement of the decision by the Chair of the Department.
2. The written appeal must be signed and include the original description of the facts, a clear explanation of why the party filing the appeal found the outcome(s) of both the Director of Graduate Studies and Chair proceedings and decision(s) unsatisfactory, and a statement of the desired resolution/remedy.
3. The Dean of the College will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within ten business days of receipt of the written appeal.
4. The Dean of the College (or designee) will proceed with one of two options:

- c. The Dean or his/her designee will meet with the parties involved, individually and/or together, before reaching a decision. The Dean or his/her designee can confidentially consult with the appropriate persons who may be knowledgeable about the policies, practices and issues involved. The Dean or his/her designee shall endeavor to convey a written decision and, where appropriate, the remedy, to the parties involved within 30 calendar days of receipt of the letter of appeal. The written decision of the Dean or his/her designee will contain a statement of the issues, the Dean's or his/her designee's findings of fact, the controlling policy provisions, the Chair's assessment regarding the merits of the grievance, and a disposition of the grievance, including the remedy and/or disciplinary actions. or
  - d. The Dean or his/her designee will convene a panel of two graduate faculty members and one graduate student (or staff person if one of the parties is a member of the staff) to confidentially review the matter and make a recommendation to the Dean or his/her designee. The panel will conduct its review in an impartial and unbiased manner. The Dean or his/her designee will provide a copy of the letter of appeal and other documentation as appropriate. The panel will offer to meet with the parties involved, individually and/or together, before reaching a decision. The panel can confidentially consult with the appropriate persons who may be knowledgeable about the policies, practices and issues involved. The panel shall endeavor to convey a written decision and, where appropriate, the remedy, to the parties involved within 30 calendar days of receipt of the letter of appeal. The written report of the panel will contain a statement of the issues, the panel's findings of fact, the controlling policy provisions, the panel's assessment regarding the merits of the grievance, and a recommended disposition of the grievance, including a suggested remedy and/or disciplinary actions. The Dean or his/her designee shall endeavor to convey a written decision and, where appropriate, the remedy, to the parties involved within 15 calendar days of receipt of the panel's report.
5. If the decision is accepted by the parties, the matter is deemed settled. If not, then the decision of the Dean can be appealed to the Dean of the Graduate School as set forth in graduate policy (discussed above).

In the instance that one of the parties involved in the grievance is either the Director of Graduate Studies or the Chair of the Department, the student may file the grievance with the Dean of the College. If the Dean is a party to the grievance, the student may file the grievance directly with the Dean of the Graduate School.

Remedies suggested by the filing party must be reasonable and within actions that can be taken in accordance with university policy and appropriate statutes. The Department will endeavor to reach a just and equitable resolution in each case.

Within limitations that govern an ordered intellectual community, the Department of Psychology accords its members freedom of inquiry, expression and action. Along with this

freedom, is the obligation to do so responsibly. When that bond is broken, we are committed to addressing the issues and concerns as outlined above.