



SUS STUDENT GRIEVANCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROTOCOL

Overview

The School of Urban Studies' stated mission is "Teach to engage; research to advance knowledge; act to promote social justice and equitable development." The Dean supports this mission and the development of healthy, productive, and respectful relationships. As we strive to work together harmoniously, we recognize that conflicts may arise. The University and the School of Urban Studies have resources, policies, and processes to help resolve conflicts and handle complaints, particularly those between students and faculty or staff.

This document outlines a general protocol for addressing concerns and provides links to various resolution resources in SUS and the University. The overall protocol is to begin by addressing the issue directly, as explained below, and contacting the dean if further resolution is needed. Additionally, some types of grievances already have officially sanctioned policies and specific procedures for reporting and resolution, such as bias and Title IX issues. Please see links in the final section on University Resources for more information. *Individuals with disabilities requiring accommodations in order to participate in these complaint processes should contact the [Disability Services Office](#).*

Begin by reaching out directly

Many conflicts are best resolved at the local level—either directly with, or closest to, the parties directly involved. In this spirit, we encourage students who have concerns or questions about a course or employee to directly contact the person with whom they have issues. All parties are urged to make a sincere effort to resolve the issue at this level. Thus, student(s) who have concerns with a member of the faculty or staff within the School of Urban Studies are encouraged, *but not required*, to attempt initial resolution by speaking with the faculty or staff member directly.

Contact a third party:

Students should also consider reaching out to the SUS [Academic Advisor](#) and/or another trusted source/faculty advocate if desiring guidance on self-advocacy and thinking through options. For graduate students, you may also contact the Chair of your program's committee

UW Graduate School [Academic Grievance Procedure](#)

If needed, graduate students may also contact the Graduate Program Coordinator for SUS (currently Dr. Anaid Yerena, yerena@uw.edu).

Feedback and questions about assignments, grading, and other course requirements should go directly to the course instructor (see below on grade appeals). Please be as proactive as possible when raising concerns by addressing them in a timely manner. If you

are hoping to take some time to consider your options, aim to circle back within a week or two at the latest.

If not yet resolved, students may schedule a meeting with the Dean of the School of Urban Studies.

If a student does not receive a satisfactory outcome in attempts to communicate with the person in question, they may contact the Dean. Students who do not feel comfortable directly contacting the person in question may also request a direct meeting with the Dean. If the concern is about the Dean, [students may directly contact the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs](#).

Before scheduling a meeting with the Dean, please prepare the following.

- Name and contact information, along with preferred method of contact (e-mail or phone) and the best time to reach you.
- A few preferred dates/times and allow at least 2 business days of notice when trying to schedule a meeting.
- Program of study. If applicable, the course/instructor you are having issues with, along with the instructor's name.
- Provide an overview of the concern and discuss what attempts (if any) were made to resolve the issue with the person in question.
- Provide an explanation of your desired outcome from the meeting.

The Dean will listen, confirm understanding of the grievance, contact the appropriate individuals/offices to help resolve the issues (and/or support the student in doing so), and help identify methods for resolution. The Dean may consult:

- Administrative policy on [resolution of complaints against university employees](#).
- Faculty Code [Chapter 27](#) and/or [Chapter 28](#).
- Executive Order 31 on [nondiscrimination and affirmative action](#).
- Workplace policy on [providing a safe workplace](#).

The Dean will reply to the student (and other parties involved) in a timely manner with a suggested process for resolution as appropriate.

As a State of Washington institution, we are bound both by FERPA and public records requests. This means the following:

1. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects the privacy of student education records. UW Tacoma employees may not provide information about a student to outside parties, including a guardian/parent or spouse, without written permission from the student. ([Information about FERPA](#))
2. Outside of the information protected by FERPA, as a state institution, all communication transmitted to UW Tacoma faculty, staff, and other students is

subject to public-records disclosure (this includes email)¹. Mindful communication is important as we cannot guarantee what, if any, information may be redacted. We recommend:

- Using accurate and descriptive language. Providing specific details or examples regarding your concern, and including any documentation (such as emails).
- Refrain from using biased, exclusionary, opinionated language.

Grade Appeal Process at UW Tacoma

If a student wishes to appeal a grade, there is a clear university policy for this process. Visit the [UW Tacoma Grading Policy](#) website or the [SGP Scholastic Regulations](#) and below for more information.

- A student who believes that the instructor erred in the assignment of a grade, or who believes a grade recording error or omission has occurred, shall first discuss the matter with the instructor before the end of the following academic quarter (not including summer quarter).
- If the student is not satisfied with the instructor's explanation, the student, no later than ten days after their discussion with the instructor, may submit a written appeal to the dean or director of the department that offered the course, with a copy of the appeal also sent to the instructor. Within ten calendar days, the dean or director will consult with the instructor to ensure that the evaluation of student's performance was fair and reasonable or whether the instructor's conduct in assigning the grade was arbitrary or capricious.
- Should the dean or director believe the instructor's conduct to be arbitrary or capricious and the instructor declines to revise the grade, the dean or director, with the approval of the voting members of their faculty, shall appoint an appropriate member, or members, of the faculty of that department to evaluate the performance of the student and assign a grade. The Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Provost will be informed of this action.
- Once a student submits a written appeal, this document and all subsequent actions on this appeal are recorded in written form for deposit in a department, school or college file.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

There are other offices and policies that guide grievance and conflict resolution at the university. This section lists them.

The UW Tacoma [Office of the Ombud](#) may also be of assistance in supporting the resolution of interpersonal conflicts or thinking through strategies that may not involve interacting with the party (or parties) of concern.

¹ Please see <https://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Legal/Open-Government/Public-Records-Act/Public-Records-Act-Basics.aspx> and <https://policy.uw.edu/uw-policy-directory/aps/938-2/aps-57-9-departmental-guidelines-for-the-release-of-university-records/>

UW Tacoma students also may find supportive services at the [Office of Student Advocacy](#).

Reporting Bias, Discrimination, & Retaliation Incidents

If you believe you have experienced bias, discrimination, retaliation, and/or sexual harassment while at UW Tacoma (this also includes by any UW Tacoma employee or student, including individuals in or out of the School of Urban Studies), you may contact the Dean for assistance and support.

Please remember, the Dean is a mandatory reporter for all [Title IX](#) violations and is the main point person to ensure that such incidents are properly documented and reported to the appropriate University officials, which includes notifying. The Dean will ensure the person who experienced harm is connected to resources and support systems.

Anonymous/confidential resources include [UW Safe Campus](#); [UWT Campus Safety](#); and [Psychological and Wellness Services \(PAWS\)](#).

Per UW Presidential policy, students who report concerns in good faith will be protected from retaliation for doing so. Here you may learn more about [UW's anti-retaliation policy in Presidential Order 31](#).

Victims of bias, discrimination, and/or unwanted sexual harassment have additional options as follows, and may proceed with these processes without meeting with the Dean on their own, unless they would like the Dean's support:

1. Students who believe they have experienced bias may submit a report through [UW Tacoma's Bias Incident Reporting \(BIR\) system](#). You may disclose your name or remain anonymous. Note: whether or not you notify them, the Dean will directly intervene with any report that pertains to a School of Urban Studies faculty, staff, or student.
2. The [University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office](#) (UCIRO) investigates complaints that a University employee has violated the University's non-discrimination or non-retaliation policies. Students may contact UCIRO for more information; they may also file a BIR and seek other concurrent resources such as with the UW Ombud Office.