

H3. Student Complaint Procedures

The school enforces a set of policies and procedures that govern formal student complaints/grievances. Such procedures are clearly articulated and communicated to students. Depending on the nature and level of each complaint, students are encouraged to voice their concerns to school officials or other appropriate personnel. Designated administrators are charged with reviewing and resolving formal complaints. All complaints are processed through appropriate channels.

- 1) *Describe the procedures by which students may communicate complaints and/or grievances to school officials, addressing both informal complaint resolution and formal complaints or grievances. Explain how these procedures are publicized.*

Below are the two school-level procedures for complaints and/or grievances. All others are managed at the university level.

Grade Appeal

Before students file a formal grievance, they are asked to approach the instructor for an acceptable resolution on an informal basis within 30 days of the start of the next term. If a satisfactory resolution is not reached with the course instructor, the student may consult the Program Director, the appropriate undergraduate or graduate dean and the Senior Associate Dean for Academic, Student and Faculty Affairs, in sequential order. Should the student feel that their concern was not appropriately addressed at any level, they may file a formal appeal letter with the Senior Associate Dean for Academic, Student and Faculty Affairs. The Senior Associate Dean will convene a group of three impartial faculty members from GWSPH, who will review the appeal and communicate a final decision. The process is explained in greater details in the GWSPH student handbooks (undergraduate, master's, DrPH and PhD; see ERF > Criterion A > Criterion A1 > A1.3: Bylaws-Policy Documents).

Open-Door Policy

The Senior Associate Dean for Academic, Student and Faculty Affairs and the Assistant Dean for Student Services have an open-door policy. This policy is promoted at New Student Orientation and Welcome events and encourages students to provide informal feedback, complaints and/or grievances. Faculty, academic advisors, program directors and department chairs and vice chairs are also available should students wish to informally address concerns.

- 2) *Briefly summarize the steps for how a formal complaint or grievance is filed through official university processes and progresses. Include information on all levels of review/appeal.*

The university process of filing a complaint or grievance varies by type of grievance. [The Office of Advocacy and Support and Counseling and Psychological Services](#) are available to offer emotional, administrative and mental health support to students as needed. The Division of Student Affairs' website for [Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) outlines what types of incidents students may submit and how to do so.

Student Discrimination

Effective January 1, 2022, the [reporting procedure](#) for students changed based on the source of the discrimination (e.g., by faculty, staff or students).

- To report discrimination by a faculty member, the Office of the Provost manages the Student Discrimination Report Procedures. Questions about this process can be directed to gwprovost@gwu.edu.

- To report discrimination by a staff member, please refer to the Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Process. Questions about this process can be directed to eeo@gwu.edu.
- To report discrimination by a student or student organization, please submit a Student Conduct Incident Reporting Form. Questions about this process can be directed to rights@gwu.edu.

Academic Integrity and Student Conduct

Students wishing to [file a violation of academic integrity or concern](#) about a student's conduct may do so through the GW website.

Title IX

Students who would like to [report a Title IX complaint](#) (e.g., sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, stalking) may do so on the Title IX Office website or by calling the Title IX Office during normal business hours. In the case of immediate or emergency need, students are directed to call 911 and the GW Emergency Services hotline.

Ethical Conduct

The [Code of Ethical Conduct](#) guides all individuals acting on behalf of the university. Violations of the code of noncompliance with laws, regulations and university policies may [be reported to the EthicsPoint system](#) 24/7.

Care Referral

Students who feel that another student may need additional nonemergency support may submit a care referral to the [GW CARE Team](#).

GW offers several other mechanisms for filing a complaint or grievance:

- [Crime](#)
- [Research Misconduct](#)
- [Data Privacy and Integrity](#)
- [Privacy](#)
- [Equal Employment Opportunity and Access](#)
- [Bias-Related Act](#)
- [Accessibility](#)

- 3) *List any formal complaints and/or student grievances submitted in the last three years. Briefly describe the general nature or content of each complaint and the current status or progress toward resolution.*

The Title IX Office reviewed all cases in which a formal complaint was filed between August 1, 2020, and June 30, 2023. Two formal complaints involving GWSPH students and employees were identified.

- The first is a formal complaint involving two GWSPH students. The allegations included sexual harassment, stalking and sexual assault (unwanted touching). Per the Complainant's request, with the consent of both parties, and with the Title IX Office's approval, this case was resolved via the Alternative Resolution process, which did not include any disciplinary terms.
- The second formal complaint involved allegations of sexual harassment and sexual assault (unwanted touching) made against a part-time GWSPH faculty member by a GWSPH student. The formal complaint was dismissed by the Title IX Coordinator for Title IX purposes due to a lack of jurisdiction over the Respondent at the time of the formal complaint. In addition, two of the allegations did not occur within the university's programs or activities. However, the matter was referred to Faculty Affairs for further

review of non-Title IX related issues. Please note that the alleged incidents in this case occurred and were reported to the university before August 1, 2020, but the date the formal complaint was filed was after August 1, 2020. Therefore, we included it here.

To the best of our knowledge, no additional formal complaints or student grievances were submitted in the last three years.

- 4) *If applicable, assess strengths and weaknesses related to this criterion and plans for improvement in this area.*

Strengths

- Policies and procedures for student complaints and grievances are easily accessible and understandable. The university personnel monitoring submissions are responsive to questions and concerns.
- GWSPH has very strong relationships with university partners, who readily provide guidance and support to school leadership and faculty when issues arise. These include the GW Office of Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, and the Office of Student Life.

Challenges

- It is difficult to navigate the impact of new technologies on in-person and virtual classroom engagement and etiquette and dynamics both in and outside of the classroom while balancing teaching and learning needs.
- It is a challenge to navigate the prevalent use of social media to communicate everything (good or bad) without resources to address concerns and/or praises shared in this manner in real time.
- Because of their remote status, online students do not have access to on-campus health and wellness facilities.

Future Plans

- On an annual basis, GWSPH reviews and revises the undergraduate, graduate, PhD and DrPH Student Handbooks to ensure information is current, accurate and consistent. For example, GWSPH continues to review and adapt guidance related to appropriate online etiquette and the use of AI in the classroom.
- GWSPH plans to expand its grievances and appeals written policies for matters other than a grade appeal such as probation and/or suspension.
- GWSPH plans to reestablish a student concerns committee.