Student Complaint/Grievances/Appeal Process

Drexel University, the College of Nursing and Health Professions, and particular Academic Programs within CNHP promulgate a large body of policies & procedures, standards, and expectations for students. Efforts are made that these expectations are:

- Developed from a well-thought-out rationale
- Clearly stated
- Accessible to students for their review
- Promulgated, along with developmental support to gain understanding
- Fairly enforced

Such expectations are drawn from a number of authorities including:

- Governmental rules and regulations
- University policies and procedures
- College level policies and procedures
- Standards of a particular health profession (e.g. American Nurses Association Code of Ethics)

A corollary obligation of the University/College is to fulfill its promise to students to provide high quality academic, useful, and ethically-based professional preparation in a specific field of study/practice. Furthermore, the University/College aims to support students in having a “good experience” at Drexel University.

To this end, it is important that the University/College have in place a circumspect Student Complaint/Grievance/Appeal Process. Fundamental and important precepts of “dealing with student issues” include:

- Students have an avenue for communicating a concern.
- Students receive due process for any transgression.
- Students receive fair treatment, without bias, in any review.
- Student issues are reviewed with care and in a timely manner.
- Students receive communication explaining the rationale for decisions made by faculty and administration regarding an issue.
- Faculty and Administration are open to suggestions for quality improvement of any policy, procedure, or practice.

The initial approach and philosophy that the University/College takes toward student complaints/grievances is that before a student seeks recourse from the formal Grievance/Appeal Process, he/she should first exhaust the immediate means of resolution between the parties involved. Stakeholders within our University community deserve an opportunity to resolve a student issue within their respective areas of responsibility and, quite simply, good organizational practice holds that those closest to, most invested in, and most familiar with a problem are in the best position to solve the problem.

The Office of the Dean in the College of Nursing and Health Professions has a well-developed protocol to handle any student complaint/grievance/appeal. This process is facilitated by the Assistant Dean of Student and Technology Operations. These steps are consistent with the University’s overall Complaint Resolution, Student Procedures which are explained in the current University Student Handbook at http://www.drexel.edu/studentlife/community_standards/studentHandbook/
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The organizational steps and timelines of an appeal generally of an academic nature in the College of Nursing and Health Professions are as follows:

Step 1. Student works to resolve issue with faculty member (if the issue involves a faculty member)
   a. Step 1 should take no longer than two weeks.
   b. Every effort should be made to resolve an issue directly with the individual faculty member, especially as it relates to assessment of course work and clinical evaluations. When this is not possible and/or did not resolve the issue, individuals may file a complaint, in writing, to the academic department chair.
   c. If the issue does not involve a faculty member, the student may move to Step 2 of the process.

Step 2. Academic department chair works to resolve issue with student
   a. Step 2 should take no longer than two weeks.
   b. Students are encouraged to first discuss the complain/grievance/appeal with the department chair before filing a formal and written complaint/grievance/appeal.
   c. If the student is not satisfied with a resolution or decision, a formal and written complaint/grievance/appeal may be made. This include three important items:
      i. The exact nature of the complaint/grievance/appeal
      ii. Supporting information that a problem exists
      iii. Suggested remediation or resolution to the issue
   d. If the issue is not resolved, the student may move to Step 3 of the process.
   e. If the issue is related to the department chair, the student should seek counsel from the Associate Dean or Dean of the College.

Step 3. Any appeal to the Department Chair’s actions is presented to the Dean of the College.
   a. The Assistant Dean of Student and Technology Operations reviews the complaint/grievance/appeal from the student. The student will be contacted no later than one week later with directions on next steps.
   b. After a preliminary review, the student may be asked to file a formal and written complaint/grievance/appeal. This must be filed with the Dean’s office within five (5) calendar days (seven [7] calendar days in the case of a dismissal) of the department chair’s communication about the ruling of the issue. This formal communication from the student should include:
      a. The exact nature of the complaint/grievance/appeal
      b. Supporting information that a problem exists or wrong decision has been made
      c. Suggested remediation or resolution to the issue
   c. The Dean of the College will review the formal complaint/grievance/appeal. In most cases, the Dean will formally respond to the student in writing within two weeks of the appeal.
   d. Once the Dean’s decision or advice has been rendered, the student has five (5) calendar days to make a formal appeal of the Dean’s decision to the Provost of the University. (Grade grievances stop at the Dean’s level; they do not proceed to the Office of the Provost.)
   e. The formal appeal to the Provost must be made in writing and include:
      a. The exact nature of the appeal
      b. Supporting information that a wrong decision has been made by the Dean
      c. Suggested remediation or resolution to the issue
   f. The Assistant Dean of Student and Technology Operations in the College will send the student a formal letter outlining how to prepare and send an appeal to the Provost’s Office once officially notified by the student that an appeal will take place.

Step 4. Review of Appeal by the Provost
   a. The Provost of the University or designee will receive the formal appeal sent by the student.
   b. Depending on the nature of the issue, the student will hear back from a representative of the Office of the Provost within a week.
   c. Decision timeline from the Office of the Provost is available
   d. Decision made by the Provost is final
Student Complaint/Grievances/Appeal Process

A system is in place at the College to maintain records of such complaints/grievances/appeals and their resolutions. Furthermore, the information becomes a valuable resource to work to develop educational and student/faculty development programs that foster best teaching/learning practices.

Complaints/Grievances of generally non-academic issues, except for reports of academic dishonesty, are adjudicated by the Office of Student Conduct and Community Affairs. The University has a detailed process in place to handle complaints/grievances related to student conduct and student life. For a review of the process go to http://www.drexel.edu/studentlife/judicial/

Types of student issues/concerns are generally defined as

- **Information/Clarification** (Student simply needs information, clarification, better understanding, explanation, and direction about an expectation.)
- **Complaint** (Student is displeased and feels that “the promise” has not been kept in providing an educational service. Student is not looking for personal remediation but hopes that improvements will be made on a particular policy, procedure, or practice; student looks for future gain for self or others.)
- **Grievance** (Formal action taken by student asking for some type of remediation.)
- **Appeal** (Decision has already been handed to a student by a University/College official, and he/she chooses to appeal the ruling.)

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