



POLICY STATEMENT 48

GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT GRIEVANCES, COMPLAINTS, AND APPEALS

POLICY DIGEST

Monitoring Unit: Office of Academic Affairs
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I. PURPOSE

To establish procedures that an individual student may use to question formally the application of any university regulation, rule, policy, requirement or procedure, unless the appeal is otherwise covered by another established procedure.

II. DEFINITIONS

Academic-related Grievance. matters concerned with instructional activities, grading procedures, or other incidents related to academic affairs.

Advisor. an individual who accompanies the student or employee directly involved in the appeal to offer advice; shall not represent or speak for the advisee. In all cases the concerned parties are required to speak for themselves, in oral or written aspects of the appeal.

Appeal. A request to determine if the grievance or complaint has merit and if so to arrive at an appropriate action by the University to address the situation.

Complaint / Grievance. a request by a student for reconsideration of an action by a University employee, office, panel, or committee within this appeal process.

Hearing. a formal procedure in which a duly appointed individual or panel will consider evidence, facts, and arguments of both sides of an appeal in an effort to determine the facts of the case and make recommendations for appropriate action, if warranted. (See: Sec. V.B: *Use of Hearing Panels.*)

Non-academic Appeals. administrative grievances that are not related to academic matters, such as but not limited to conduct-related admissions appeals, campus parking citations, residential life, or student employment

Ombudsperson. a neutral and impartial resource for resolving issues and voicing concerns; represents the side of fairness and equity; not aligned with any person or department and is not an advocate for any person, group, or organization; does not offer legal advice or mental health counseling.

Written Student Complaint. any complaint submitted by a prospective, current, or former student through the University's official web-based system available at the LSU CARES web site: www.lsu.edu/lsucares, or by letter, email or other electronic submissions, to the responsible unit. Written student complaints are not meant to circumvent or replace existing LSU policies and procedures designed to address issues brought forward by students (e.g. financial aid appeals, sexual misconduct, campus housing, etc.).

III. GENERAL POLICY

It is University policy to provide students with an appeal procedure for questioning the application of any regulation, rule, policy, requirement, or procedure as it applies to the individual student in his/her capacity as a student. It is the University's basic philosophy that student appeals should be settled as quickly as practicable at the lowest possible administrative level having the authority to act definitively. Recognizing that no single appeals process can serve the wide range of possible complaints, different units within the University have developed specific appeals processes, subject to review by the Office of Academic Affairs. This policy mandates that individuals follow specific appeals procedures whenever available. (See Appendix A.) Appeals not otherwise covered by an established procedure are to follow procedures outlined in this policy.

A. Provisions of the General Appeal Process

1. All students have the right to make good faith appeals without fear of coercion, harassment, intimidation, or reprisal from the University or its employees; complaints or grievances made in bad faith may be subject to review under the Code of Student Conduct.
2. Students and employees involved in the appeal shall each have the right to have an advisor.
3. Privacy shall be maintained, where applicable, in all appeal proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 and of PS 30: *Student Privacy Rights*.

IV. PROCEDURES

The University provides specific guidelines for several different types of grievances, complaints, and appeals. If a specific policy exists, the student must contact the office of

primary responsibility involved with the situation in question for specific procedural guidelines which govern that appeal process. However, if the area or function under question does not have specific procedures, the student should then follow the procedures outlined in this policy. In appeals related to a student's role as an employee, the decision maker shall consult the Student Employment Coordinator in the Olinde Career Center before a decision is reached or a meeting is held (See. PS 33: *Student Employment*).

A. General Appeals Procedures

There may be up to three steps in the general appeal process. In all cases, if the final decision requires changes in an official record of the University, the University employee must comply with all University regulations and procedures necessary to accomplish the change.

1. *Step One*

The student shall meet with the University employee concerned to discuss the problem and attempt to arrive at a solution. For purposes of this policy, a "discussion" can be accomplished via face-to-face meeting or through other forms of communication, such as letters, emails, conference calls, video/web conferences, etc. The student and/or the employee may each have an observer present, if either party wishes. Appeals are to be initiated no later than 30 calendar days after the occurrence of the action which resulted in the appeal.

2. *Step Two*

If the student wishes to appeal the findings of Step One, that student must, within 14 calendar days of the meeting in Step One, make a written request of appeal to the next level in the university's administrative structure, which will be at least at the level of unit head or designee in the administrative unit within which the appeal was initiated. The student should use the online grievance form at lsu.edu/lsucares. Other acceptable submissions may be in writing, email, or other appropriate forms or links to identify the action or decision being appealed, the date of that action or decision, and the regulation, rule, policy, requirement, or procedures at issue. The written appeal and any addendum must be signed and dated by the student. Electronic signatures will be accepted in the case of online submissions. The name and title of the person to whom the request should be addressed can be obtained from the employee in Step One.

For a Step Two appeal, the student requests a meeting with the administrator and the employee who heard the appeal at Step One. The written request must include:

- a. student identification (name, student ID number, college, current address, telephone number, and email address);
- b. the purpose of the meeting (to consider an appeal);
- c. a brief statement of the nature of the appeal; however, with an appropriate level of detail as to justification for the appeal; and
- d. the name of the employee involved in Step One.

Upon receipt of a written request, the Step Two Administrator shall make a reasonable effort to arrange for such a meeting within 14 calendar days from the date that the request is received. Meetings may be held in person or through other forms of communication, such as conference calls or video/web conference. If the stated deadline cannot be met, then all parties are to be notified in writing and a mutually agreeable time identified. The meeting is formal, with a thorough and candid discussion of the problem in an attempt to arrive at a solution. Both the student and the employee may be accompanied by an advisor; however, in all cases, the concerned parties are required to speak for themselves in oral or written aspects of the appeal.

The Step Two Administrator may render an oral decision at the close of the meeting, or s/he may take the matter under consideration. All parties shall be informed of the decision in writing within 14 calendar days.

3. *Step Three*

If the student or employee wishes to appeal the outcome of Step Two, either may appeal to the administrator at the next level in the administrative structure of the University within 14 calendar days from the date of the written decision made after Step Two. The name and title of the person to whom the request should be addressed can be obtained from the employee in Step One or Step Two. If applicable, an academic appeal may be heard by a hearing panel if requested by the student or employee.

The student's appeal must be in writing and should be on the LSU Cares grievance form or other documentation approved for submission. Upon receipt of this appeal, the Step Three administrator shall forward a copy of the written appeal to the employee and administrator involved in Step Two. They in turn shall reply with individual written statements supporting the action(s) taken in Step Two. Copies of their replies must be forwarded to all

parties.

Upon receipt of replies from the Step Two parties, unless a hearing panel has been requested, the Step Three administrator may take one of the following actions:

- a. reach a decision on the basis of the written appeal and the replies;
- b. hold a meeting in person, by conference call, or via video/web conference with all parties present and, after discussions, reach a decision; or
- c. refer the appeal to a hearing panel for its recommendation. If the student or University employee requested a hearing panel, the administrator must refer the appeal to a hearing panel for a recommendation. If either party requests a hearing panel, the Step Three administrator shall name a hearing panel as prescribed in Section IV.B.

In all cases, the student and employee may be accompanied by an advisor. Regardless of the method used, the Step Three administrator will make every reasonable effort to make a decision within 30 calendar days from the date of receipt of the student's written appeal. The decision will be in writing, with reasons supporting the decision, and copies must be given to all parties.

The decision of the administrator in Step Three concludes the appellate process. However, any party to the appeal believing that a serious *procedural* error or an abuse of discretionary authority occurred in the course of the review process may file a written petition for review of the process with the Executive Vice President & Provost.

B. Use of Academic Hearing Panels

Step Three of the appeal procedure provides for the use of hearing panels upon request by any of the parties or at the discretion of the administrator hearing Step Three, except in cases alleging a violation of federal law.

Hearing panels will be appointed by the Step Three administrator. There will be not less than three nor more than seven members on the panel. The person appointing the panel will designate one member to serve as chairperson. Copies of the panel's recommendations and the administrator's final decision must be given to all of the parties.

C. Petition for Review

A student who wishes a review of the process or alleges serious abuse of discretionary

authority must file a petition for review with the office of Academic Affairs within seven calendar days after receiving the decision made at Step Three. The petition for review must contain a complete statement of the alleged serious procedural error, or examples of abuses of discretionary authority being appealed, and also must contain reasons for the relief sought. The petition must be accompanied by all documents produced at Step Three.

The Office of Academic Affairs shall make every reasonable effort to decide within 14 calendar days whether further action should be taken, and in reaching this decision the reviewer may ask the other parties to make a written reply to the request for a review--or these parties, on their own, may make a written reply. If the decision is that a review is not justified, the student and all other parties will be so notified. If the decision is favorable to the petition for review, the Office of Academic Affairs will hold a formal meeting with the parties and reach a decision on the basis of this meeting and on all written materials furnished. All parties will be notified of the final decision. The decision by the Office of Academic Affairs shall conclude the matter.

Appendix A

The following are examples of established student appeal procedures accompanied by sources of information on appeals procedures:

Academic related appeals

Grade Appeals. Office of Academic Affairs; *LSU General Catalog*.

Academic Appeals for Undergraduate Students: *LSU General Catalog*.

Graduate Student Issues. LSU Graduate School. *LSU General Catalog*

Undergraduate Admissions Decisions (based on academic credentials; not including conduct-related issues). Office of Enrollment Management; *LSU General Catalog*.

Non-academic related appeals

Continuing Student Residency Appeals. University Registrar. *PM 31 Residence Regulations*.

Entering Undergraduate Residency Appeals. Office of Enrollment Management; *PM 31 Residence Regulations*.

Entering Graduate Student Residency Appeals; Graduate School. *PM 31 Residence Regulations*.

Financial Aid. Office of Enrollment Management; *LSU General Catalog*.

First Year Housing Expectations. *Department of Residential Life Handbook*.

Housing Contracts/Lease Terminations. *Department of Residential Life Handbook*.

Library Appeals. *LSU Libraries*.

Scholarship Appeals. Office of Enrollment Management. *LSU General Catalog*

Sexual Misconduct. Title IX Coordinator, *PM 73, Title IX and Sexual Misconduct Policy*

Sexual Harassment. Title IX Coordinator; *PS 95, Sexual Harassment of Students*

Student Employment. Olinde Career Center; *PS 33, Student Employment.*

Traffic Citations. Office of Parking and Transportation.

Violations of the Code of Student Conduct. Office of Student Advocacy & Accountability. *LSU Code of Student Conduct,*

Violations of Residential Life Policies. *Department of Residential Life Handbook.*