

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING A STUDENT GRIEVANCE FOR FORMAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Should I file a Grievance?

- First determine that your grievance is not a grade appeal, a case of sexual harassment, discrimination on the basis of race, sex, creed, color, religion, sexual preference, national origin, age, marital status, pregnancy, Vietnam era veteran's status or disabling condition, or a financial aid matter. Please carefully read the Preamble to the Student Grievance Procedures (<http://policies.sonoma.edu/policies/student-grievance>) for information concerning where to seek help for the above issues.
- Determine if your grievance is an action that was in violation of written campus policies or procedures or constituted arbitrary, capricious or unequal application of written campus policies or procedures.
- You should not file a grievance just because you are angry at someone or the university. You must be able to provide evidence for your grievance.
- You should file a student grievance if you can demonstrate that campus policy or procedures were violated or applied wrongfully.

How does the process work?

- You, as well as any faculty, staff, or administrators involved in a student grievance, have an obligation to make every effort to resolve the differences fairly and informally and to negotiate in good faith towards a mutually agreeable resolution of the problem.
- If you cannot resolve your grievance informally with a faculty member, then you should first informally appeal to the Department Chair and School Dean. If your instructor is a department chair, go directly to the Dean. If you cannot resolve your grievance informally with support staff or administrative personnel, you should first informally appeal to the employee's supervisor. If resolution still cannot be attained, you should appeal to the Head of the Administrative Unit. Contact the Academic Senate office at 664.2801, holmstrl@sonoma.edu for assistance in determining supervisors and Heads of Administrative Units.
- At this point, if the dispute has not been resolved to your satisfaction, you may file a formal dispute resolution request. A formal dispute resolution request will be adjudicated by the Dispute Resolution Board. Make note of the meeting dates and deadlines at <http://senate.sonoma.edu/meeting-dates-dispute-resolution-board-consider-disputes>. If your grievance is informally resolved after you have filed a formal grievance, please contact the Dispute Resolution Board immediately.
- Note that adjudication of a formal dispute might take six to eight weeks.
- The Chair of the Dispute Resolution Board will forward your grievance to the person you are grieving. This person will be required to respond in writing. The entire committee will then review your statement and response. The committee will make a recommendation, and you will be notified in writing.

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What are the formal dispute resolution procedures?

A request for a formal dispute resolution is a file submitted to the Dispute Resolution Board through the Academic Senate office, ST1027 or emailed to holmstrl@sonoma.edu. The file should include:

- Your name, address, phone, and Sonoma State email address.
- The name and contact information for the person or group representative you are grieving.
- A detailed statement that explains your reason for filing a grievance, what policy or procedures are involved and exactly how they were violated or wrongly applied.
- Documentation that supports your explanation including ALL documentation from the informal process.

Any advice on preparing a formal dispute resolution file?

- Keep your statement simple. State what happened without adding your opinions. Be as specific as possible. For example, “The campus policy on smoking states. . . Avoid inflammatory remarks, such as, “Smoking is disgusting!”
- Don’t include arguments that are not grounds for a grievance. They will distract the committee from the more significant arguments.
- Your statement should explain how to interpret the documentation that you include. It is helpful to the committee for you to include explanations such as, “The emails I present demonstrate the unwillingness of Mr. X to meet with me informally.”

Where can I get more information?

The Student Grievance Procedures are online at
<http://policies.sonoma.edu/policies/student-grievance>

The Formal Dispute Resolution Procedures are online at:
<http://policies.sonoma.edu/policies/formal-dispute-resolution-procedures>

You may also discuss your grievance with the Chair of the Dispute Resolution Board (<http://senate.sonoma.edu/memberships-and-meeting-dates/sac#DRB>) or the Academic Senate Analyst, 664-2801, holmstrl@sonoma.edu.