

Student Grievance Process – PSOM Master’s and Certificate Programs

Effective 7/1/2024

The University of Pennsylvania strives to promote an optimal training and educational experience for its student community through a professional and respectful environment. Open and routine communication between program leadership, teachers, mentors, and students throughout the duration of a student’s academic career is encouraged to clarify expectations and provide an ongoing and timely mechanism for constructive feedback from both parties, as well as offer the opportunity to identify, address, and resolve any potential matters as they may arise. It is the expectation that communication occurs openly and regularly.

This grievance process has been developed to provide a mechanism for resolution of student grievances which may include matters that have resulted in a perceived or actual negative impact upon the training/educational experience of a student. A matter is grievable only if it is not currently addressable through any other avenue, such as University policy or division procedure (thus, for example, complaints of sexual misconduct must be addressed through the University’s Sexual Misconduct Policy). If at any point the student feels as if the matter has been resolved, they may discontinue the grievance process.

Steps to address a grievance:

1. Efforts should be taken to address a matter informally:

- If possible and appropriate, a discussion should occur between the parties who are directly involved with the issue of the grievance.
- The student may consult any individuals with whom they feel comfortable discussing the matter, such as trusted faculty members, advisors, or departmental/programmatic resources.
- Additional [resources](#) that may assist in resolving matters or providing confidential counseling include, but are not limited to:
 - Ombuds Office, [Home | OMBUDS \(upenn.edu\)](#)
 - Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs, [Penn: Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Programs \(upenn.edu\)](#)
 - African American Resource Center, [Home | Penn AARC \(upenn.edu\)](#)
 - Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Center, [LGBT Center at the University of Pennsylvania – LGBTC \(upenn.edu\)](#)
 - Office of the Chaplain and SPARC, the Spiritual and Religious Life Center, [The Office of the Chaplain | SPARC \(upenn.edu\)](#)
 - Penn Women’s Center, [Penn Women's Center \(upenn.edu\)](#)

2. Consultation by the student with the Program Director or Department Chair/Institute Director to discuss the matter is encouraged.

3. If informal steps as suggested above have not resulted in a resolution to the matter, a written grievance may be submitted to the Associate Dean, PSOM Master's and Certificate Programs. The grievance should describe the matter and include specific facts supporting the grievance, including any available supporting documentation, the names of any parties to the matter, any witnesses known to the grievant, as well as the desired outcome. The grievance should be submitted in a timely manner and no later than 90 days after the occurrence of any event giving rise to the grievance.

- The Associate Dean will notify all involved parties of the grievance.
- The Associate Dean will review the grievance.
- The Associate Dean may obtain any information felt necessary to evaluate and make a determination regarding the grievance.
- The Associate Dean may elect to meet with the involved parties.
- Any or all functions to be performed by the Associate Dean under this section (3) may, at their discretion, be referred to a committee of one or more persons convened for the purpose, in which case the committee shall report its findings and conclusions to the Associate Dean.
- The Associate Dean will provide the involved parties with a response regarding the matter in writing. This response will occur within a timely manner, but generally within 60 days (unless circumstances require a longer period for review) and will include a determination as well as a summary of the basis for such determination.

4. If the student believes the decision of the Associate Dean to be inappropriate, the student may submit a written appeal to the Dean, Perelman School of Medicine, specifying the basis for their disagreement with the decision. Appeals are limited to complaints regarding policy or procedure.

- The written appeal must be submitted no later than 30 days after receipt of the Associate Dean's determination.
- General dissatisfaction with the decision is not sufficient reasoning for an appeal.
- New issues may not be raised for the first time on appeal.
- The Dean will review the Associate Dean's determination.
- Any or all functions to be performed by the Dean under this section (4) may, at their discretion, be referred to a committee of one or more persons convened for the purpose, in which case the committee shall report its findings and conclusions to the Dean.
- The Dean will notify the parties to the grievance in writing of the decision and the grounds for the decision, generally within 45 days after the receipt of the appeal (unless circumstances require a longer period for review).
- The decision of the Dean is final within the institution.

5. In the event a grievance is resolved without recourse to the Dean, the Dean should be notified of the grievance and resolution. Please see bullet iv. under Additional Considerations below.

Additional Considerations:

- i. University policy prohibits retaliation against any member of the community who participates in good faith in a University compliance, investigative, or review process. For more information, see [Policy Against Retaliation \(upenn.edu\)](#).
- ii. At any point in the grievance process, formal proceedings can be put aside in favor of voluntary mediation agreed to by all parties directly involved in the matter. The University Ombuds Office may be of assistance in pursuing mediation, [Home | OMBUDS \(upenn.edu\)](#).
- iii. The time frames set forth in this process may be extended for good cause by the relevant administrative officer, at their discretion.
- iv. The Office of the Dean may periodically review past grievances to address recurring issues or consider modifications to this policy.

6. Questions concerning the grievance process should be directed to the Associate Dean for Master's & Certificate Programs.

* This process is adapted from the *Policy for Postdoctoral Trainees at the University of Pennsylvania*, as published in [The Almanac](#) – current as of June 20, 2023.