

STUDENT COMMUNICATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING POLICY

The Pacific School of Religion is committed to nurturing a professional and fulfilling working and campus environment as well as open communication for all its employees and students. However, if communication issues or problems arise among community members, students with the complaint should refer to existing relevant and applicable policies and then discuss the issue with his/her instructor/advisor. PSR values each student as a member of our community, and encourages comments about how our campus environment can be improved.

INFORMAL PROBLEM RESOLUTION

It is the goal of PSR to maintain a collegial campus environment, which minimizes conflict and encourages the resolution of problems.

It is most beneficial if problems are resolved informally and at the lowest level where such resolution proves possible. When a student is troubled by an incident that occurs with another community member, he/she should speak with the other community member to try to resolve the issue. ** An exception to this process is in the case of sexual harassment or any other conflict in which there is a risk of harm to oneself or others, whether real or perceived. In such cases it is advised that the grievant cease any contact or communication with the presumed respondent and report to the Title IX coordinator, deputies, other appropriate PSR employee, or local authorities.

If the issue is not resolved between the two community members, the grievant (the student) should consult the Assistant Dean, and/or Director of Community Life in order to review existing student and institutional policies that may address the complaint more specifically. In the case of a student who is troubled by an incident that occurs with his/her own instructor or advisor, he/she should speak directly with the instructor/advisor to resolve the issue. If the issue is not resolved in this fashion, the student should consult the Assistant Dean, Dean, and/or Director of Community Life.

USE OF OTHER POLICIES AVAILABLE

It is recommended that all existing policies that are more specific to the nature of the complaint be consulted before invoking a grievance. These policies may include:

- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Academic Disputes Policy
- Student Conduct & Special Needs Policy
- Drug Free Policy
- Housing Policy

However, in an organization of this size and with such diversity, problems may arise that do not necessarily fall into the categories above. It is for such cases that the following grievance procedure has been adopted.

STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY & PROCEDURES

INDIVIDUALS COVERED BY THIS POLICY

This grievance policy applies to currently registered and active students of the Pacific School of Religion.

TYPES OF MATTERS AND DISPUTES COVERED

Matters which may be grieved through this process include those related to the application of the PSR student program manual, and any disputes or complaints arising between two or more community members when the grievant is covered by this grievance procedure. Grievances against persons or by persons not covered by this procedure do not follow these procedures.

In order to provide for prompt and efficient evaluation of and response to grievances, PSR has established the practice of an initial informal procedure as described above. There will be no discrimination against or toward anyone for his/her part in presenting grievances or against or toward the person against whom the grievance is brought, regardless of the outcome of the matter.

FORMAL GRIEVANCE PANEL GUIDELINES

The Grievance Panel (appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean) as described in the Appendix: Composition of Formal Grievance Panels) is charged with investigating the grievance and making a written recommendation for its resolution. The Panel shall establish its own procedures for the conduct of its investigation. The Panel shall have full authority to obtain any necessary documents and discuss the grievance with any related party(s). All information received and reviewed by the Panel shall be kept in strict confidentiality.

The investigation can include, but is not restricted to, discussions with any parties directly involved, review of any applicable institutional policies or state/federal laws, and examination of any written documentation as presented by the parties directly involved (i.e.: memos, letters, etc). If a grievance is denied due to missed deadlines and the grievant believes there are extenuating circumstances, he/she may request an exception. The Grievance Panel in consultation with the Dean shall determine if an exception can be made to this guideline.

PSR will ensure that a training session is conducted for the co-conveners, as well as provide the full panel an orientation to the grievance process.

FORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

If a satisfactory resolution is not reached through the informal grievance process, the grievant may begin the formal procedure by advising the Dean in writing, using the forms provided in the addendum.

The Dean (or designee) will promptly inform all parties named in the grievance and will then appoint a Formal Grievance Panel consisting of members as described in the Grievance Panel matrix.

The Grievance Panel will normally conclude the investigation of the grievance no later than twenty-two (22) business days after the Dean formally received the complaint. The Panel shall have full authority to obtain any necessary documents and discuss the grievance with any related party(ies). The grievant and the person against whom the grievance was made each have the right to meet directly with the Grievance Panel.

If the Grievance Panel wishes to meet with the grievant or requests more information from the grievant, it must do so in writing. The grievant must provide a documented response to the request within five (5) business days of the request or the grievance will be denied. A response may be documented via email, fax, documented meeting, hardcopy memo, or documented conversation with a panel member. The grievant is not allowed to have his/her legal counsel present during the formal grievance procedure. However, should he/she desire, a written statement may be given to the Panel from the grievant's attorney. In addition, the grievant and respondent when called to participate in a hearing may bring a PSR employee as a note taker; this person cannot address the committee or respond to questions posed to the claimant or respondent.

All information related to this grievance obtained by the Panel members is strictly confidential and may be used only for the purpose of resolving the grievance both during and after the grievance process.

The Panel may recommend any remedies including any disciplinary consequences up to and including dismissal. In any case in which dismissal is recommended by the Panel, the Panel's recommendation shall be made by written report to a Review Group. The Review Group shall be made up of:

- a. In the case the dismissed party is an employee: The Chief Business Officer (or designee), direct supervisor of the employee whose dismissal is being recommended, and an Administrative Staff member.
- b. In the case the dismissed party is a student: The VP for Academic Affairs/Dean (or designee), Assistant Dean/Registrar, dismissed student's advisor, and Director of Community Life (or designee)

The membership of the Review Group is designed to provide a balanced decision. If any of these people are implicated in the grievance, he/she shall be recused from this review group.

One or both of the co-conveners of the Grievance Panel will present the dismissal recommendation to a meeting of the Review Group to explain the reasons for the recommendation and to answer questions that may arise. After reviewing the recommendation from the Panel, the Review Group will make the final decision regarding the recommended dismissal and document the reasons for its decision. The Review Group may make additional recommendations to the Grievance Panel (e.g. disciplinary actions rather than dismissal, changes to policies, etc.) but the final decision on all recommendations OTHER THAN DISMISSAL are made by the Grievance Panel.

At the end of the investigation (including decisions by the Review Board) the Grievance Panel shall submit a written report outlining its recommendations to the grievant and any other parties involved and affected in the grievance and the Dean.

In cases of discipline short of dismissal, the Panel's written decision shall be delivered to the grievant and other involved and affected parties by a member of the Grievance Panel and shall be considered a final decision.

If dismissal is recommended, the Dean (or designee), (and the direct supervisor if the dismissed person is an employee) will deliver the written decision to the person being dismissed in person. A member of the Grievance Panel and the Dean (or designee) will deliver in person the written decision to the others affected by this action.

Whether or not dismissal is recommended, a final decision from the Grievance Panel will normally be delivered to the grievant within twenty-two (22) business days of the Dean's receipt of the formal grievance. If this time-frame is impossible to achieve, the grievant will be provided the reasons for the delay.

APPEAL PROCEDURE

The decision of the Panel (including the decision of the Review Group) shall become final within five business days, unless the grievant, the person against whom the complaint was lodged, or a person whose dismissal resulted from this process appeals the decision to the President. Appeals must be made in writing within five (5) days of receipt of the Grievance Panel or Review Board's decision.

- a. The President will only accept an appeal if it is based on at least one of the following criteria: An allegation that the grievance panel process was not in conformity with prescribed procedures.
- b. An allegation that there is new information or other relevant facts not brought out in the original hearing, sufficient to alter a decision, because such information and/or facts were not known to the person appealing at the time of the original investigation by the Grievance Panel.

The president will make a decision on whether or not to accept the appeal and will notify the grievant about the next steps. The President's decision is final.

CONCLUSION OF THE PROCESS

All documentation developed during the formal grievance process shall be turned over to the Dean who will keep copies for official files.

PROHIBITION OF RETALIATION

This policy prohibits retaliation against persons who report a grievance, assists someone with reporting a grievance, or participates in any manner in an investigation or resolution of a grievance case. Retaliation includes but is not limited to threats, intimidation, reprisals, and/or adverse actions related to employment or ability to participate in the educational program, including on-campus housing, on-campus dining, or other non-academic programs that are part of the educational program PSR provides.

STUDENT GRIEVANCE FORM: FORMAL PROCESS

The following is a statement of my grievance, which I hereby request be reviewed in accordance with PSR's Student communication and problem solving policy and procedure. (Please use additional paper if needed to complete this form).

Name:

IF COMPLAINT IS RELATED TO A STUDENT WORK SITUATION:

Position:

_____ Dept. _____

Immediate

supervisor/advisor _____

IF COMPLAINT IS RELATED TO AN ACADEMIC SITUATION:

Class involved:

PSR policies or handbook provisions involved:

The reason for my grievance is as follows:

The desired outcomes I wish to seek are as follows:

I discussed this issue with _____

on (date): _____

Their response was as follows:

I believe this response was unacceptable for the following reasons:

IF APPLICABLE:

IN ADDITION, I discussed this issue with _____ on

(date): _____

Their response was as follows:

I believe this response was unacceptable for the following reasons:

Witness(es) who can confirm my statements are:

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

Composition of Formal Grievance Panels

Staff Respondent:

Co-Chair of Grievance Panel: 1 Administrative Staff, appointed by the Chief Business Officer
Co-Chair of Grievance Panel: 1 Support staff member, appointed by the Chief Business Officer
1 Seminary employee selected by Grievant
1 Seminary employee selected by Respondent

If the grievant is a student: 1 student representative
If the grievant is a faculty member: 1 faculty representative

Faculty Respondent:

Co-Chair: Chair of the Faculty Association, or a faculty member appointed by the Dean
Co-Chair: 1 Administrative staff member, appointed by the Dean
1 Seminary employee selected by Grievant
1 Seminary employee selected by Respondent

If the grievant is a student: 1 student representative
If the grievant is a staff member: 1 support staff representative

Student Respondent:

Co-Chair: Dean or designee
Co-Chair: Assistant Dean or Director of Community Life
1 Seminary employee selected by Grievant
1 Seminary employee selected by Respondent

If the grievant is a staff member: 1 support staff representative
If the grievant is a faculty member: 1 faculty representative

Notes:

- The VP for Academic Affairs and Dean (referred to as “dean” in this policy) or the Chief Business Officer (referred to as “CBO” in this policy) will appoint members of the Panel specified as “representatives” after consultation with appropriate Seminary staff and faculty.
- Adjunct faculty will be treated as faculty for the purposes of this policy.

- Employees who hold both faculty and staff responsibilities will be treated as faculty or staff depending on the situation being grieved. The President will make this determination.