

# University of Baltimore

## ***Suggest re-naming Policy Guide, I, subsection 8 as “Grievances” and making this I-8.4*** **University Student Complaint Policy and Procedures**

Approved by Student Government Association

Vice President for Student Life

Approved by Provost

Approved by Office of the Attorney General

Approved by President

Periodic Review: At least once every three years (next: fall 2019)

Responsible Administrator: Directors, divisional vice presidents and the provost

Policy Contact: Dean of Students

Federal regulations and accreditation agencies require grievance policies to address a variety of concerns; this policy provides a process for concerns not addressed by other policies. The policy is effective upon the date of the president’s approval. This policy’s provision for executive review at least once per year impacts the university’s other grievance policies.

### **1. Purpose**

The University of Baltimore strives to provide a positive experience for our community members. In order to promote the development of quality programs and services, the University has established a process to review and address complaints that do not fall within the purview of other established university processes. This will allow the opportunity to promote quality standards and make more effective decisions about improvements to programs and services.

### **2. Definitions**

- a. Student: Any individual who has been actively enrolled in at least one credit bearing course at the University of Baltimore within the past 90 days. This includes undergraduate, graduate, professional and visiting students as well as all those individuals who are not officially enrolled for a particular term, but who have been a registered student with the university within the past 90 days.
- b. Student Service: A program or functional area that provides resources, support and/or supplemental educational experiences (e.g., library functions, student activities, academic advising, etc.)
- c. Business Process: Established procedure for conducting university business (e.g., student financial aid disbursement, billing, course registration etc.)
- d. University Facilities: Land, buildings, facilities, and other properties in the possession of, owned, used, managed, contracted or controlled by the University.
- e. Complaint: a grievance for which a student seeks resolution and that prompts a documented formal procedure. A complaint may be related to, among other possibilities, a university student service, business process, and/or university facility for which a student is seeking resolution.
- f. Calendar Day: Includes all days of the week, including weekends.

### **3. Policy Statement**

The university will respond to student complaints that fall outside the purview of other established university complaint policies regarding university operations and that fall into one of the following service categories:

- student services,

- business processes,
- and/or
- university facilities

In order for a complaint to be reviewed it must meet the following criteria:

1. Articulate a failure to provide adequate service that substantially impacted the student's experience; OR
2. Identify a failure to meet articulated standards outlined in a written university policy, regulation contained in any official publication or administrative announcement; OR
3. Address an issue that has a significant negative impact on the educational or campus environment

AND

4. Provide a desired resolution that can reasonably be provided by the university that includes an explanation as to how the resolution sought would effectively remedy the situation.
5. Meets the criteria in the description of filing a complaint (below, #5)

Complaints that fall out of purview of this policy include:

1. Complaints that fall under the purview of another university policy (e.g., sexual misconduct, academic integrity, grade grievance, other academic grievance, student behavior)
2. Complaints made by a third party on behalf of individual who experienced the concern
3. Complaints made by someone other than a student as defined in this policy
4. Complaints about experiences involving regulations established by an external agency (Maryland Higher Education Commissions, University System of Maryland, state legislation, federal legislation etc.)
5. Complaints that are currently in litigation, have been litigated or a determination has been made through another adjudication process external to the university
6. Complaints submitted later than 30 days from the date of the incident or when the student gained knowledge of the issue.

#### **4. Complaint Review**

The direct supervisor of the area that is responsible for the service, process, program or facility is responsible for reviewing a complaint. The direct supervisor may designate an alternate university official to review complaints for their area.

#### **5. Complaint Filing**

A complaint must be filed with the appropriate area supervisor within 30 calendar days from when the incident occurred or when the student gained knowledge of the issue. All complaints must be submitted in writing and include the following:

1. Full name of the complainant;
2. Contact email for the complainant (active students must use their university email);
3. Contact phone number;
4. Identification of the service category relevant to the complaint (student service, business process, and/or university facility);

5. A detailed description of the complaint and a copy of relevant documentation. The complaint should also include the names of individuals associated with the complaint, if known, and their roles in the complaint; and
6. The resolution requested and explanation of how the resolution would effectively remedy the situation/concern.

## 6. Resolution Process

Upon receiving the written complaint, the direct supervisor or their designee will review the submission to determine if it meets the complaint requirements.

- If it is determined that the complaint falls within the purview of this policy and meets the requirements, the reviewer will review the information submitted and investigate the allegation.
- If it is determined that the complaint is missing information, the reviewer will notify the complainant and they will be given 7 calendar days to submit the additional information.
- If it is determined that the complaint falls outside of the purview of this policy and/or does not meet the requirements, the reviewer will notify the complainant in writing and no further action will be taken.

Complaints accepted for consideration are reviewed and decided from the information provided in writing unless the reviewer determines an in person meeting with the complainant is necessary and/or beneficial to the review. The review may also include discussions/requests for response from individuals named in the complaint and the consideration of other documentation relevant to the matter. The reviewer may choose to resolve the matter through cooperative resolution or can make an administrative decision.

- *Cooperative Resolution*  
As part of the resolution process, the reviewer may choose to negotiate a resolution of the complaint or encourage the parties to participate in a discussion with the purpose of reaching a collaborative resolution. The decision to offer a cooperative resolution is the sole discretion of the reviewer.
- *Administrative Decision*  
If the university official decides not to resolve the matter through cooperative resolution, the university official will make a decision using a preponderance of evidence (50.01%) to determine if the complaint is valid and if valid, identify a remedy. This decision will be provided in writing and include a justification for the decision and the final resolution of the complaint.

Once a final determination is made either through cooperative resolution or an administrative decision, the decision is final. There is no further opportunity for review or appeal.

## 7. Notice of Experience

Any student who wishes to share information about one or more of the service criteria but is unable to identify a remedy, chooses not to seek a remedy, and/or a direct remedy is not possible may submit a *notice of experience*. These notices will not receive a formal response to the issues addressed nor final decision, but will be reviewed by the appropriate supervisor and considered as appropriate. Complaints submitted without a reasonable remedy will also be considered as a *notice of experience*.

A notice of experience must be submitted in writing and include the following:

1. Full name of the complainant
2. Contact email (active students must use their University of Baltimore email)
3. Contact phone number
4. Identify the service category relevant to the concern (student service, business process, academic program, and/or university facility)
5. Detailed description of the concern and a copy of relevant documentation.

#### **8. Complaint Record-Keeping**

Each supervisor will keep records of complaints made of their area for at least five years after the final decision. At minimum, records will include a copy of the written complaint, whether the complaint was founded or unfounded, and the final outcome. Supervisors will share with the divisional vice president at least on an annual basis any process improvements that were made (if any) based on student complaint data.

#### **9. Other Complaints**

The UB Policy Guide and web pages include policies and procedures for grade challenges, other academic grievances, sexual misconduct, nondiscrimination, and matters handled through the student conduct process. Records on those complaints are held by the appropriate office (e.g., the Office of the Dean, the Office of Community Life). Concerns pertaining to matters handled in these other policies that do not fit the definition of “complaint” may be shared through a notice of experience with the appropriate supervisory office.

#### **10. University review of Complaints for Continuous Improvement**

Where applicable, student complaint data should be used for administrative unit review purposes. At least once per year, the executive team will review complaint data to discuss how complaint trends and/or individual complaint data points may be used to improve the institution’s effectiveness. The Provost will introduce the topic for the agenda.