

## SLHS Department Policy on Student Concerns, Appeals, and Grievances

(Updated August 24, 2023)

The purpose of this document is to outline avenues by which students may make appeals or lodge complaints or grievances in the Department of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences (SLHS). This document provides some general overview information and addresses the most common categories of student appeals, complaints, and grievances raised in SLHS. The outlined policies apply to both academic courses and clinical practicums. These guidelines are governed by relevant policies of CU Boulder, the College of Arts & Sciences, and The Graduate School which, in case of conflict, will supersede them.

You can find a brief guide to CU Boulder policies at [www.colorado.edu/policies/student-appeals-complaints-grievances-brief-guide](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-appeals-complaints-grievances-brief-guide)

***It is an express Boulder campus policy that all students at all times have the right to lodge a complaint or grievance which they deem important without fear of retaliation of any sort or any other adverse consequence as a result of doing so.***

CU Boulder grievance processes, policies, and procedures indicate that the first approach to dispute resolution is direct personal discussion among the parties involved (PRR IV.A.6.a) If students have issues with classroom teaching, they are encouraged first to approach their instructors through direct personal discussion, e.g., through a face-to-face (in-person or remote) conversation.

***Issues wherein the student wishes to remain anonymous with respect to an instructor or staff member or where the student otherwise chooses to avoid directly discussing the problem with that individual.***

If, for whatever reason, a student does not want to personally or directly contact an instructor or staff member to discuss a complaint or grievance, the student should begin with the next highest level of responsibility, which would commonly be the department chair. The student can use the Department Feedback forms available on the SLHS website to request an appointment to meet with the SLHS chair and/or can send a written description of the issue or problem and request that their identity be kept confidential. That request will be honored unless there are over-riding reasons to do otherwise. For example, expectations of confidentiality are over-ridden if a student alleges sexual or protected-class harassment or discrimination by a faculty member to a department chair. As a mandatory reporter, the chair *must* forward that information, including the identity of the complainant, to the campus Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance. ([www.colorado.edu/oiec](http://www.colorado.edu/oiec).)

If, for whatever reason, a student does not want personally or directly to contact the department chair, the student should reach out to the associate chair. The associate chair can be contacted through the Department Feedback forms on the SLHS website.

A student may also utilize the 'Don't Ignore It' website at [www.colorado.edu/dontignoreit](http://www.colorado.edu/dontignoreit) to learn more about options for reporting concerns or seeking support.

Alternatively, or in addition, students also have the option of getting counsel and advice from the campus Ombuds office (303-492-5077), Center for Community, Rm. N440. The Ombuds office can often suggest strategies and mechanisms for addressing whatever the problem or issue at hand. They do not have authority or responsibility for

mandating changes or corrections. The website at [www.colorado.edu/ombuds](http://www.colorado.edu/ombuds) constitutes a rich source of helpful suggestions.

### **Concerns about grades, exam procedures, excused absences, etc.**

Individual faculty members have primary authority and responsibility in establishing course requirements, course policies, exam procedures, and grading standards. They are charged with carrying out those responsibilities in a professional manner. Dean's offices have the authority and responsibility to deal with changes of grades in special cases such as those which might involve faculty who have left the university or unprofessional faculty conduct in assigning the grade. Students should be aware that neither Chairs nor Deans can require an instructor to change a properly assigned course grade. Issues of disagreement about whether, for example, a given essay was worth, say, a B or an A is decided solely by the individual instructor in charge.

When a student believes that a grade has been improperly assigned, and discussions between the instructor and the student have not resolved the problem:

1. The student shall have the option of making a formal written appeal to the SLHS Department Chair. The appeal must specify the remedy desired by the student, and it must be submitted within 45 days of the end of the academic term in which the course was taken.
2. The Chair or designee will meet (together or separately) with the student and with the faculty member who taught the course. If the Chair/designee is unable to broker a solution mutually acceptable to both student and instructor, then the appeal moves forward to step 3.
3. The Chair shall appoint an ad hoc Grade Appeals Committee, which will review the dispute. This Committee shall consist of at least three impartial faculty members competent in the subject matter of the course in question. The Chair will provide the Committee with the student's appeal and a written response from the faculty member.
4. Within 45 days, the Committee will submit a report and recommendation to the Chair, and the Chair will recommend to the instructor either (1) that the originally assigned grade stand; or (2) that a new grade be assigned.
- 5a. For undergraduate students: In cases where a change of grade is recommended and the instructor does not wish to accept the recommendation of their colleagues, an undergraduate student may appeal to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.
- 5b. For graduate students: in cases where a change of grade is recommended and the instructor does not wish to accept the recommendation of their colleagues, graduate students may submit a Graduate School grievance form available on the [Graduate School Policies and Procedures website](#).

The campus has standing policies on faculty accommodation for religious and disability reasons. If a student has a concern in these areas, they first should contact the course instructor and, if the concern is not resolved, should contact the department chair to ask for a resolution. The department chair may ask for relevant information—e.g., email correspondence—from the student and faculty member, and may convene an ad hoc faculty committee to examine the concern and recommend a resolution.

The Dean's office is the final arbiter of academic grievances of these types within our campus structure.

### **Concerns about unacceptable faculty conduct**

If the faculty conduct in question involves allegations of sexual harassment or discrimination, students should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance at [www.colorado.edu/oiec](http://www.colorado.edu/oiec) or via telephone at 303-492-2127. If the allegations involve discrimination or other civil rights issues, students may also contact the Office of Equal

Opportunity at 303-492- 6706; if the allegations relate to disabilities, students should contact the Office of Disability Services at 303-492-5614.

Concerns about unacceptable faculty conduct are addressed through the CU Boulder policy on the [Professional Rights and Responsibilities of Faculty Members \(PRR\)](#). Under the PRR policy, any SLHS student, staff or faculty member can report such concerns to the department chair by email, through a feedback form on the SLHS department website, or in a face-to-face meeting with the chair. Upon receiving report of a concern about unacceptable faculty conduct, the department chair will:

1. Follow the procedures detailed in PRR, especially IV.C.
2. Copy the associate chair on the reported concern to ensure chair accountability.
3. Within 48 hours of receiving the report, initiate a direct personal discussion with the person who made the report.
4. Determine if the concerning behavior falls within an area in which a special procedure applies and, if so, refer the concerns to the appropriate body or person under that special procedure (IV.C.2.a).
5. Initiate a direct personal discussion with the person(s) who experienced the faculty member's concerning behavior and direct the person who experienced the concerning behavior to appropriate department and campus resources for support.
6. If the reported unprofessional conduct does not require a special procedure, initiate a direct personal discussion with the faculty member about whom concern was expressed in effort to reach an informal resolution (PRR IV.A.6).
7. Assign specific actions for the faculty member to take to resolve the concern through agreement and a timeline for completion of those actions (PRR IV.A.6).
8. Provide the faculty member written notice of the specific actions to be taken and the timeline for taking them.
9. Notify the reporter and the person who experienced the concerning behavior that the chair has met with the faculty member and taken steps to resolve the concern.
10. Follow-up with the faculty member and the person who experienced the concerning behavior to ensure that the assigned actions have been completed in a timely fashion and that they suffice to resolve the concern.
11. If the assigned actions have not been completed, then initiate a formal PRR inquiry which includes the associate chair and the details of which are in PRR IV.C.3 and following.
12. Notify the Divisional Dean and Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs if PRR inquiry reaches a finding of unacceptable conduct.
13. Notify the persons who experienced or reported the concerning faculty behavior of the results of the PRR inquiry, excluding mention of sanctions if sanctions are imposed (PRR IV.C.5.d).
14. Make notes of meetings, share them and official reports/findings with the associate chair, and retain all materials in a confidential department folder on the SLHS shared drive.
15. Notify the next department chair about the PRR inquiry and findings, and ensure that next chair has access to the confidential department folder on the SLHS shared drive.

## **Concerns about course content, teaching methodology, program requirements, etc.**

Faculty members have primary authority and responsibility in these areas so students should first attempt to resolve the issue through direct personal discussion with the individual faculty member. If direct personal discussion is not possible or does not resolve the issue, students should contact the department chair. If unable to resolve the issue at the department level, the student may proceed to contact the appropriate Dean's office where a written process of complaint or grievance will be employed. A student may also continue the process to write the Offices of the Provost or Chancellor or President but those offices will typically refer the issue back to the Dean's office.

MA SLP or AuD students concerned about adherence to ASHA accreditation standards should first raise concerns with the CAA Program Director that oversees their program. If the concern is not resolved at this level, the CAA Program Director will convene a committee including the Chair and Associate Chair / Coordinator of Graduate Studies to consider the matter. Students also are able to go to the [Complaints page](#) on the Council of Academic Accreditation in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology website for information about next steps.

PhD, AuD, or MA SLP students with concerns about their academic programs may address them to their Graduate Student Advisory Board (GSAB) representative who will bring them to the attention of the SLHS chair.

## **Graduate student concerns about academic issues, other than grade appeals or related academic issues,**

such as allegations of arbitrary, inconsistent, or capricious actions taken against a graduate student; deviations from the stated grading/exam policies; failure to provide reasons for termination or dismissal; unfair treatment related to Graduate School appointments; unfairness in application of requirements or regulations; or actions to hinder student's ability to make progress in their academic program, are first addressed at the departmental level. The process used to address these concerns is determined by the Graduate School as detailed in the [Graduate Student Grievance Process and Policies](#) document and summarized below.

1. Graduate Student Grievance form submitted to the SLHS Coordinator of Graduate Studies with a copy sent to the Graduate School.
2. DGS notifies Associate Dean of Social Sciences, the Dean of the Graduate School, and the SLHS chair.
3. In consultation with SLHS Chair, the Coordinator of Graduate Studies considers jurisdiction and status of other university investigatory or review. Processes and either officially accepts the grievance or provides the student with information about the appropriate office/committee to which the grievance should be brought.
4. A Graduate Program Grievance Committee is formed composed of 2-4 members (not named in the grievance), who hold regular Graduate Faculty appointment. The Coordinator of Graduate Studies serves as the non-deciding advisory chair of the committee.
5. The committee distributes the Graduate Student Grievance form and materials to faculty named in the grievance.
6. Faculty named in the grievance have an opportunity to respond within 10 days.
7. A copy of the faculty response is shared with the student.
8. All materials are shared with the committee and a hearing is scheduled as soon as possible.
9. Student and faculty members named in the complaint have separate opportunities to be heard by the committee.
10. Students may be accompanied to the hearing by one individual (attorney, advisor, friend, etc.) At the hearing, committee members will ask for summarization, additional information, request clarification, etc.

11. Committee should discuss, understand concerns, and suggest recommendations.
12. In consultation with the SLHS chair, the Coordinator of Graduate Studies will refer personnel recommendations to appropriate appointing authorities.
13. The Coordinator of Graduate Studies prepares a draft report (consulting with University Counsel is encouraged).
14. The Coordinator of Graduate Studies distributes the report to student and faculty members named, generally within 10 days of the Hearing.

If this Departmental level grievance process does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the student may appeal to the Graduate School within 20 days in accordance with [Graduate Student Grievance Process and Policies](#).