



VANDERBILT Divinity School

Initiated 1/30/2024

Student Complaint Procedure

Vanderbilt Divinity School (VDS) is “committed to a practice of radical hospitality. That means opening our doors to a diverse community of scholars, faith leaders, lifelong learners, and changemakers” (Pierce). Our ultimate goal is to provide a safe and equitable learning environment for all students.

On occasion, students may have a concern or a complaint about the actions or inaction of a faculty or staff member while they are enrolled. VDS is committed to working with these students.

Students should refer to the University Student Handbook (<https://studenthandbook.vanderbilt.edu/student-behavioral-procedures#812>) for a list of student concerns not addressed by this policy because those concerns are adjudicated through other processes at the University.

When a complaint does not fall within the other University processes, students should follow the procedure outlined below. Initial complaints may be conveyed verbally or in writing. Written complaints should not exceed five (5) double-spaced pages.

If a possible concern related to safety or retaliation arises, the student may submit an oral or written complaint directly to the Director of Administration.

Complaints are classified as grade-related or non-grade related.

Grade-Related Complaints

- Grade-related complaints must be introduced within ten (10) calendar days of grade submission.
- In most cases, students should try to resolve the concern directly with the instructor of record.
- The instructor should make every effort to resolve the problem fairly and promptly (usually within 30 calendar days) and will issue a written decision via the student’s school email account.
- If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, they may request to appeal the complaint through the associate dean for academic affairs (ADAA). The appeal should be submitted by email within ten (10) calendar days of the original decision. The appeal should not exceed five (5) double-spaced pages. The ADAA will confirm that the student exhausted the previous process steps before reviewing the complaint and will request any relevant documentation from the previous process. The ADAA should make every effort to resolve the problem fairly and promptly (usually within 30 calendar days) and will issue a written decision via the student’s school email account.
- If the student seeks further review, the student may repeat the same ADAA process with the same timeline for the VDS dean.
- If the student seeks further review and the written complaint is ultimately moved forward to the Provost, the decision of the Provost is final except for complaints that are subject to the

University Grievance Procedure (<https://studenthandbook.vanderbilt.edu/student-behavioral-procedures#814>).

Non-Grade Related Complaints

- Non-grade related complaints must be introduced within ninety (90) days of the event occurrence.
- In most cases, students should try to resolve the concern directly with the person involved.
- The faculty/staff member should make every effort to resolve the problem fairly and promptly (usually within 30 calendar days) and will issue a written decision via the student's school email account.
- If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, they may request to appeal the complaint through the Director of Administration (DA). The appeal should be submitted by email within ten (10) calendar days of the original decision. The appeal should not exceed five (5) double-spaced pages. The DA will confirm that the student exhausted the previous process steps before reviewing the complaint and will request any relevant documentation from the previous process. The DA should make every effort to resolve the problem fairly and promptly (usually within 30 calendar days) and will issue a written decision via the student's school email account.
- If the student seeks further review, the student may repeat the same DA process with the same timeline for the VDS dean.
- If the student seeks further review and the written complaint is ultimately moved forward to the Provost, the decision of the Provost is final except for complaints that are subject to the University Grievance Procedure (<https://studenthandbook.vanderbilt.edu/student-behavioral-procedures#814>).

Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the VDS Dean or designee.