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Complaint Procedure

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[This version of the Student Complaint Procedure is explicitly for complaints involving VDS faculty or staff members. Complaints about other university employees, discrimination, or harassment should be directed elsewhere under the applicable terms of the Student Handbook.]

A student or former student who has a complaint about the performance, action, or inaction of a member of the staff or faculty affecting the student during the period of their enrollment may utilize this process unless the complaint is addressed through another process at the University, such as the examples above.

Students uncertain about whether the complaint process should be utilized and/or the steps in the process outlined below are encouraged to seek advice from the Vice Provost and Dean of Students/Student Affairs Administration by contacting deanofstudents@vanderbilt.edu. A student who wishes to have a complaint addressed by the University should:

- Direct a complaint as soon as possible, but not later than ninety (90) days after the event, to the person or persons whose actions or inactions have given rise to the complaint. If the complaint is in writing, it must be no more than ten (10) doublespaced pages with one (1) inch margins and twelve (12) point font and may include attachments.
 - The person or persons notified of the complaint should make every effort to resolve the problem fairly and promptly (usually within thirty (30) days) at this level and must issue a written decision to the student.

- If this interaction would give rise to a possible concern related to safety or retaliation, the student may submit a written complaint directly to the chair or department head of the appropriate academic or administrative unit within the ninety-day period that meets the requirements outlined above. ***[In the Divinity School, all matters involving faculty are directed first to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs; all matters involving staff are directed first to the Chief Business Officer.]***
- If the complaint involves allegations of discrimination, harassment, and/or related retaliation based on a protected status, as defined in other sections of the Student Handbook, this step is not appropriate and the complaint should be directed to the Title IX and Student Discrimination Office.
- Should the student and the person or persons notified of the complaint be unable to resolve the complaint satisfactorily, the student may appeal the decision in writing within thirty (30) days to the chair or department head, or other designated individual of the appropriate academic or administrative unit. ***[In the Divinity School, all matters involving faculty are directed first to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs; all matters involving staff are directed first to the Chief Business Officer.]*** The appeal must be no more than five (5) double-spaced pages with one (1) inch margins and twelve (12) point font and may include attachments, including the original complaint and associated documentation. The person to whom the appeal is directed may grant exceptions to these length and formatting requirements or give the student additional time to conform the complaint to the requirements. The chair or department head will request any relevant documentation from the process below. The chair or department head ***[the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or the Chief Business Officer]*** should make every effort to resolve the appeal promptly and fairly (usually within thirty (30) days) at this level and must issue a written decision to the student.
- Should the appeal not be resolved satisfactorily with the chair or department head, the student may further appeal the decision in writing within thirty (30) days to the next level ***[in Divinity, the Dean of the Divinity School]*** within the academic or administrative unit all the way up to and including the Vice Chancellor (a graduate student should seek review by the dean of the relevant school before proceeding to the Provost). The appeal at each level must be no more than five (5) double-spaced pages with one (1) inch margins and twelve (12) point font and may include attachments, including the original complaint and documentation from each prior step in the process. The person to whom the appeal is directed may grant exceptions to these length and formatting requirements or give the student additional time to conform the complaint to the requirements. ◦ At each level, the relevant administrator will confirm that the student has exhausted the options below before reviewing the appeal, except where the initial complaint is

submitted directly to a chair or department head due to a concern related to safety or retaliation. The administrator will also request any relevant documentation from the process below.

- At each level, the relevant administrator should make every effort to resolve the appeal promptly and fairly (usually within thirty (30) days) and must issue a written decision to the student.
- The decision of the Vice Chancellor is final with the exception of complaints that are subject to the Grievance Procedure below. If the initial complaint is against a Vice Chancellor, the student may appeal to the Chancellor within the same timeframes and using formatting requirements outlined above. The Chancellor's decision will be final.

