

Dear Student:

Attached you will find the procedures for filing a complaint or a more formal grievance at Western Oregon University. You will find that they are very explicit about the steps that are to be followed. The reason for this is that the Student Grievance Committee and the WOU community are concerned with the protection of the rights of students, staff and professors. This necessitates the very careful process for filing complaints and/or grievances.

We suggest that you consider having a member of the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs advise you as you comply with the early steps of the procedure. This person can act as a personal support, even though they cannot act in support of your complaint.

Notice that in the complaint stage of this procedure, you may ask for a mediator to help you with the dispute. The mediator will be chosen from a list of certified mediators on campus and must be satisfactory to both you and the staff or faculty member involved. Once this person is chosen, he or she will arrange the mediation session.

Although the procedure for resolving a complaint does not require a written narrative account of the situation, we suggest that you write it out and take it with you as you begin the process of talking with the various individuals. It will help you be clear in your concerns and the people you must talk to will appreciate the organized quality of your approach.

An academic grievance always involves differential and harmful treatment. It does not involve perceived rude treatment, classroom style or general grading policies. For example, you may not like a particular professor's classroom style or grading practices as a whole, but this does not constitute grounds for a grievance. However, you may use the complaint process to talk with an administrator about your perception of inappropriate behavior.

Please do not demand apologies or sanctions for those involved. The WOU/AFT contract for faculty and the administrative rules for the State of Oregon have procedures that must be followed if the Student Grievance Committee and the Administration find in your favor. Usually the resolution of your complaint or grievance involves resolution of your problem; not further punishment of those involved.

Sincerely,

The Student Grievance Committee

Western Oregon University

STUDENT GRIEVANCE PETITION

NOTE: The Student Grievance Procedure requires that the student must first discuss and attempt to resolve any complaint with the faculty or staff member, the division chair, other appropriate administrator or with the assistance of a mediator provided by the university. **If the complaint is about a grade, the student must see the faculty member first.**

FULL LEGAL NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

PARTIES INVOLVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

NATURE OF THE GRIEVANCE: Please explain in detail all circumstances relating to the grievance, using the back of this page and additional sheets of paper if necessary. Please type if possible. All information pertaining to your petition will be kept confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

## STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

### PREAMBLE

It is hoped that minor differences can be resolved without recourse to the procedure listed below. However, there may be situations where a more formal procedure of this type may be necessary. This procedure is intended to settle disputes through mediation and reasoned discussion. This procedure is not intended to be judicial or quasi-judicial in nature. It is not intended to supplant the administrative rules of the college or any provisions of the collective bargaining agreement between the faculty and the college. For other types of grievances, including sexual harassment and discrimination, other grievance procedures and administrative rules may apply.\* **Students who intend to file a complaint or an academic or nonacademic grievance must follow the steps below in the order they are listed. A complaint or grievance must be filed not later than 90 days after the alleged incident.**

### DEFINITIONS:

**COMPLAINT:** A complaint is defined as a spoken informal dissatisfaction over an alleged unjust or inequitable act or omission on the part of the institution or a representative of the institution.

**ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE:** An academic grievance is defined as a written formal assertion that a student believes he/she has been harmed by being treated arbitrarily or differently from other students in the same classroom setting.

**NON-ACADEMIC GRIEVANCE:** A non-academic grievance is defined as a written formal assertion that a student believes that he/she has been dealt with arbitrarily, differently or in ways which violate established laws, rules, procedures, or past practices by the university as a whole or any unit or agency or function thereof and in a manner that has caused harm to the student.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** It is understood that committee members, faculty, and administrators involved in the discussion of complaints or grievances will maintain professional standards of confidentiality.

### RESOLVING A COMPLAINT:

**STEP ONE:** The student must first discuss and attempt to resolve any complaint with the faculty or staff member, the division chair, other appropriate administrator or with the assistance of a mediator provided by the university. **If the complaint is about a grade, the student must see the faculty member first.** If the complaint is not about grades and the student does wish to meet with the faculty or staff member, division chair or appropriate administrator, the student may request mediation services. The student may be aided by the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs in following procedures correctly or in requesting the services of a mediator.

## INITIATING A GRIEVANCE:

**STEP TWO:** If a complaint is not resolved at Step One and the student wishes to continue the process, the student must present a written grievance petition to the faculty member involved and to the appropriate Dean (in the case of an academic grievance) or the staff member involved and the appropriate administrator of the college unit, agency or function (in the case of a non-academic grievance). The faculty member or staff member may respond in writing to the appropriate Dean or administrator. The Dean or administrator will respond in writing to the students within ten school days of receiving the grievance petition. The Dean or administrator will send copies of the response to the faculty member or staff member.

**STEP THREE:** If after step two the grievance remains unresolved and the student wishes to pursue the matter, the student must forward to the student grievance committee the grievance petition and the Dean's or administrator's written response within ten school days of receiving that response.

**STEP FOUR:** The Student Grievance Committee will review the petition and the Dean's or administrator's response within ten school days of their receipt and determine if there is a basis for a grievance. Should the committee determine there is no basis for a grievance, the faculty or staff member, and the Dean or appropriate administrator will be notified in writing of its decision.

**STEP FIVE:** If the committee determines that a basis for a grievance may exist, the committee will schedule a meeting with the student, faculty or staff member and/or appropriate Dean, administrator and/or division chair involved within ten school days and will hear the explanations of the case at that time. The committee will attempt to resolve the grievance. If the grievance cannot be resolved, the committee will forward its written recommendation of whether a basis for a grievance exists to the Provost and request that the Provost make an appropriate response to resolve the grievance. The committee will also forward copies of its recommendation to the student, the faculty or staff member, and Dean or appropriate administrator.

\* Alternative procedures exist for situations in which a student is charged with a violation under the Code of Student Responsibility, is alleging discrimination on the basis of race, national origin, religion, sex, age, disabling condition or marital status, or is alleging sexual harassment. For more formal procedures relating to such situations, see OAR 574-010-0075 through 574-010-0085 for discrimination complaints, see WOU's Code of Student Responsibility for conduct complaints, and contact the Human Resources director/Affirmative Action officer for sexual harassment concerns or complaints. Assistance with these procedures may be obtained in the Vice President for Student Affairs office.