

Grievance and Complaint Procedure for the Houston Christian University Educator Preparation Program (EPP)

Grievances may be expressed without fear of retaliation. Students who have a grievance while participating in the Educator Preparation Program (EPP) should follow the Informal Complaint Procedures in the Grievances and General Student Complaint Procedures with the individuals involved (for example: mentor teacher, university supervisor, EPP Director). If the concern is not resolved, then the EPP Director will arrange to meet with the student and the individuals involved. If necessary, then the EPP Director will arrange to meet with the student, the academic advisor, the department chair, and the COEBS Dean. In the event that the concern remains unresolved, then the student has the option to follow the formal complaint procedure as described in the *Houston Christian University Student Handbook*

Grievances and General Student Complaint Procedures

Informal Complaint Procedures

It is the wish of Houston Christian University to provide an education and services of high quality to its students and to provide equity and harmony in the application of policies and procedures. When a student has a complaint, HCU encourages resolution be sought through informal communication with the appropriate instructor, college dean, staff member, or administrative officer who may be able to help rectify or clarify the situation before a written complaint is initiated.

Formal Complaint Procedure

Lodging a Formal Student Complaint: A student who wishes to lodge a formal complaint with Houston Christian University must complete and submit the attached Student Grievance Form [Advocate](#) Upon completion, the form will be submitted to the appropriate office, where it will be reviewed by a Director, Dean, Vice President, or Provost.

Administrative Complaint Acknowledgment: Formal student complaints will be directed to the administrator most immediately responsible for the area to which the complaint pertains. The administrator will send an electronic acknowledgment of receipt to the student within five working days of receiving the complaint indicating that: (1) the formal complaint form has been received, (2) the nature of the complaint, and (3) that the student will receive a written response after deliberation within fifteen working days; acknowledgment of receipt will be sent via email to the student's HBU account. Copies of the completed student complaint form and the acknowledgment letter of receipt will then be electronically sent to the Director, Dean, Vice President, or Provost over that specific office, division, or functional area. After completion of a review process, the grievance will be properly stored by the applicable office within a share point file designated by the specific division.

Administrative Deliberation and Response: If the administrator to whom the complaint is forwarded determines that the nature of the complaint is beyond his/her area of supervision or expertise, the next level administrator in the area should be consulted and may be requested to respond to the student. Administrative disposition of the complaint will generally consist of investigation into the source of the complaint, previous efforts to resolve the issue, and any contingencies that will aid in the deliberation and disposition of the problem. The responding administrator will send the student a written statement of attempted resolution to the problem. A copy of the deliberation response will be sent to

the appropriate Director, Dean, Vice President, or Provost. All formal student complaints will be forwarded upon resolution to the Vice President for Student Life's office where an electronic log will be kept.

Student Appeal Process: Upon receiving a deliberation response to the written complaint, the student has the right of appeal to successive levels of administrators within the area. This appeal must be made in writing within five working days of receiving the administrative response. In each case, the student will receive an acknowledgement from the office in which the complaint is filed regarding the appeal within five working days upon receipt of the complaint and a deliberation response within fifteen working days from the date of the acknowledgment letter.

Administrative Levels for Student Complaints: The appropriate office for student complaints will be as follows:

- *Provost (academic, accreditation, institutional research, library, academic departments and programs, registrar, and student services – student services related to the academic department include the Academic Success Center, tutoring, and academic advising)*
- *Vice President of Financial Operations (administrative services, bookstore, facilities, operations, finance, human resources, financial aid, student accounts, information technology)*
- *Vice President of University Relations (event services)*
- *Vice President of Enrollment Management (admissions)*
- *Vice President of Advancement (alumni, parent relations, fundraising)*
- *Vice President of Communication and Innovation (marketing and communications, publications)*
- *Vice President for Student Life (residence life, housing, spiritual life, commuter life, student involvement, student organizations, student success, food services, fitness center, and campus recreation)*
- *Athletic Director (athletics)*

The only appeal beyond the offices listed above is to the President of the University. The appeal timeline stated above applies. The decision of the President will be final.

Students who have a grievance while participating in the Educator Preparation Program (EPP) of an academic nature, especially concerning a final course grade, should follow the guidelines presented by the Academic Grievance Policy presented in the *Houston Christian University Catalog*:

A student may file an academic grievance if he or she believes a grade was awarded improperly or for any academic grievance matter. The formal process is described below and must be followed by all parties in order to resolve a dispute. No one—student or faculty member—is permitted to ignore the process, follow it out of order, or appeal to authorities such as the President or Provost.

1. *The student should make an appointment with the faculty member in question to discuss the matter in person. The student is advised to keep his or her advisor apprised of the*

matter but this is not a requirement at this point. It is appropriate to try to resolve differences amicably and in person if at all possible before seeking to raise the matter to a higher level of authority than the classroom instructor. This is especially true at a Christian institution. If the student is concerned that a private meeting with the instructor will create antagonism, the student may skip to Step 2, but the student must make this concern known to the chair who controls Step 2 and explain in detail why he or she believes this to be the case.

- 2. If the student continues to dispute the grade after the face-to-face meeting, the student may bring the matter to the chair of the department in which the course is located. This step requires the student to make a written appeal to the chair. At this step, the student must provide his or her advisor with a copy of the appeal (and the instructor if Step 1 was omitted). The chair will review the student's concern and consult with the classroom instructor, either individually or with both present. The chair will respond formally to the student and the instructor in writing of the chair's recommendation and notify the Dean of the action.*
- 3. If the student is unsatisfied with the chair's recommendation, the student may bring the matter to the Dean of the College in which the department resides—again, in writing. The Dean will review the written appeal and consult with the chair, the classroom instructor, the advisor and the student, either individually or in a group as the Dean deems appropriate. If the student requests, and the Dean agrees, a Standards Committee will be formed by the Dean who will serve as chair of the committee. The membership of the committee is composed of all parties heretofore mentioned, as well as any other faculty members the Dean deems appropriate; no students other than the student making the complaint should be involved in any way. The Standards Committee hears the presentation of both parties. No legal representation or any other parties are allowed. After hearing both sides and after deliberation, at which time some parties may be excused from the room, the Committee, through the Dean serving as chair, will render a judgment as to what it advises should be done. The Committee has no coercive authority to force the change of a grade; the purpose of the process is to bring clarity to all sides and allow a thoughtful and informed response from the disputants. The hearing aspect of the Committee process serves to assure integrity in the assigning of grades to students by faculty. The hearing and the rendering of a judgment to advise is the end of the process and no appeals to change a grade should be made to the Provost or the President. If a student wishes to take the step of contacting the Provost (the President is not to be contacted in these matters), the Provost will make a judgment as to whether to accept the appeal. If the Provost does agree to hear the matter, he or she will only consider two allegations: 1) that the process itself is unfair; 2) that the student was not treated fairly in the process. The burden will be on the student to demonstrate with facts and evidence that the process or the treatment was unfair. To repeat, the Provost will not hear an appeal to change a grade. Depending on the Provost's findings, the matter may be returned to the Standards Committee for further review.*
- 4. Throughout this process, if a student wishes to ask an HCU faculty member or an HCU administrator to serve as an advisor, that is permissible, but both the student and the advisor must make this fact known to all parties involved in the academic grievance process. At no time should any HCU employee advise a student anonymously or write an appeal document.*
- 5. If a student questions any grade as recorded in the Registrar's Office, the student has a period of one (1) year beginning with the end of the term in which the grade was awarded, or six (6) months after the degree is conferred (whichever comes sooner), to challenge the accuracy of the grade.*

If any stakeholder has a complaint regarding the EPP that they wish to report to the Texas Education Agency (TEA), they must first provide a written copy of the complaint to the faculty involved (when applicable) using the HCU EPP Complaint Form. If the entire process outlined in the *Houston Christian University Student Handbook* for Grievances and General Student Complaint Procedures and the *Houston Christian University Catalog* for Academic Grievance Policy does not result in resolution of the issue, the stakeholder may then forward the written complaint to TEA.

Complainants may contact TEA staff directly using this form: [TEA Complaint Form](#)

Cross-Reference: Texas Administrative Code §228.70

TEA Complaints Management:

[http://tea.texas.gov/Texas Educators/Preparation and Continuing Education/Complaints Against Educator Preparation Programs/](http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Preparation_and_Continuing_Education/Complaints_Against_Educator_Preparation_Programs/)

**Houston Christian University
Educator Preparation Program (EPP)
Complaint Form**

Submit completed form to faculty involved

Name:

Phone:

Email:

Mailing address:

Additional contact information (optional):

Complainant's Role in EPP (check as applicable):

- ☐ Student
- ☐ Independent School District (ISD)
- ☐ Parent/Guardian
- ☐ Teacher
- ☐ Vendor
- ☐ Other (please provide description)

School Information

University/District/Charter School Name:

City/County of University/District/Charter School:

Campus (if the allegation involves specific campus):

Complaint Description:

Describe the nature of the issue:

Describe the facts on which the complaint is based. Please be specific.

What are the significant dates and events related to the issue? Please be specific.

Describe the documents that support the described facts. Please attach any relevant documentation.

Describe your efforts to resolve the issue in other ways, such as addressing with the individual(s) involved: