I. Purpose

The policy provides guidance for any student in a School of Medicine and Public Health graduate program who feels that they have been treated unfairly by a faculty member, staff member, postdoc, or student. The policy provides the right to complain about the treatment and to receive a prompt hearing of the grievance. The policy applies to students in all SMPH graduate programs.

II. Definitions for The Purpose of This Policy

- **SMPH graduate program**: SMPH graduate programs are those PhD or MS programs for which the degree is conferred by the Graduate School and the program is managed by a unit of the SMPH, such as a department or the dean’s office. The SMPH maintains a list of its graduate programs online at [https://www.med.wisc.edu/education/graduate-programs/](https://www.med.wisc.edu/education/graduate-programs/). This policy does not apply to the SMPH health professions programs (MD, DPT, MGCS, MPAS, MPH).

- **Guide**: The Graduate Guide provides an overview of UW–Madison programs that offer graduate degrees, doctoral minors, graduate/professional certificates, and capstone certificates. The Guide references program-specific policies, rules and regulations as well as Graduate School-level policies regarding admission, coursework, the awarding of degrees and certificates, and the general criteria governing satisfactory progress in a
degree program. The Guide is an official document of record and is reviewed and updated every year. The Graduate Guide is online at [https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/](https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/)

- **Program Director**: The program director is appointed by the SMPH dean’s office in conjunction with the program’s home unit to oversee the graduate program. The program director is listed on each program’s Guide page.

**III. Policy**

**Grievance Policy for Graduate Programs in the School of Medicine and Public Health**

Any student in a School of Medicine and Public Health graduate program who feels that they have been treated unfairly in regards to educational decisions and/or outcomes or issues specific to the graduate program, including academic standing, progress to degree, professional activities, appropriate advising, and a program’s community standards by a faculty member, staff member, postdoc, or student has the right to complain about the treatment and to receive a prompt hearing of the grievance following these grievance procedures. Any student who discusses, inquires about, or participates in the grievance procedure may do so openly and shall not be subject to intimidation, discipline, or retaliation because of such activity.

**Exclusions**

This policy does not apply to employment-related issues for Graduate Assistants in TA, PA and/or RA appointments. Graduate Assistants will utilize the [Graduate Assistantship Policies and Procedures](https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/) (GAPP) grievance process to resolve employment-related issues.

This policy does not apply to instances when a graduate student wishes to report research misconduct. For such reports refer to the [UW-Madison Policy for Reporting Research Misconduct for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Research Associates](https://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/).

**Requirements for Programs**

The School of Medicine and Public Health Office of Basic Research, Biotechnology and Graduate Studies requires that each graduate program designate a grievance advisor, who should be a tenured faculty member, and will request the name of the grievance advisor annually. The program director will serve as the alternate grievance advisor in the event that the grievance advisor is named in the grievance. The program must notify students of the grievance advisor, including posting the grievance advisor’s name on the program’s Guide page and handbook.

The grievance advisor or program director may be approached for possible grievances of all types. They will spearhead the grievance response process described below for issues specific to the graduate program, including but not limited to academic standing, progress to degree, professional activities, appropriate advising, and a program’s community standards. They will ensure students are advised on reporting procedures for other types of possible grievances and are supported throughout the reporting process. Resources on identifying and reporting other issues have been compiled by the Graduate School.
Procedures

1. The student is advised to initiate a written record containing dates, times, persons, and description of activities, and to update this record while completing the procedures described below.

2. If the student is comfortable doing so, efforts should be made to resolve complaints informally between individuals before pursuing a formal grievance.

3. Should a satisfactory resolution not be achieved, the student should contact the program’s grievance advisor or program director to discuss the complaint. The student may approach the grievance advisor or program director alone or with a UW-Madison faculty or staff member. The grievance advisor or program director should keep a record of contacts with regards to possible grievances. The first attempt is to help the student informally address the complaint prior to pursuing a formal grievance. The student is also encouraged to talk with their faculty advisor regarding concerns or difficulties.

4. If the issue is not resolved to the student’s satisfaction, the student may submit a formal grievance to the grievance advisor or program director in writing, within 60 calendar days from the date the grievant first became aware of, or should have become aware of with the exercise of reasonable diligence, the cause of the grievance. To the fullest extent possible, a grievance shall contain a clear and concise statement of the grievance and indicate the issue(s) involved, the relief sought, the date(s) the incident or violation took place, and any specific policy involved.

5. On receipt of a written grievance, the following steps will occur. The final step must be completed within 30 business days from the date the grievance was received. The program must store documentation of the grievance for seven years. Significant grievances that set a precedent may be stored indefinitely.

   a. The grievance advisor or program director will convene a faculty committee composed of at least three members to manage the grievance. Any faculty member involved in the grievance or who feels that they cannot be impartial may not participate in the committee. Committee composition should reflect diverse viewpoints within the program.

   b. The faculty committee, through the grievance advisor or program director, will obtain a written response from the person or persons toward whom the grievance is directed. The grievance advisor or program director will inform this person that their response will be shared with the student filing the grievance.

   c. The grievance advisor or program director will share the response with the student filing the grievance.

   d. The faculty committee will make a decision regarding the grievance. The committee’s review shall be fair, impartial, and timely. The grievance advisor or
program director will report on the action taken by the committee in writing to both the student and the person toward whom the grievance was directed.

6. If either party (the student or the person or persons toward whom the grievance is directed) is unsatisfied with the decision of the program’s faculty committee, the party may file a written appeal to the SMPH senior associate dean for basic research, biotechnology and graduate studies within 10 business days from the date of notification of the program’s faculty committee. The following steps will occur:

   a. The grievant will be notified in writing, within 5 business days of the written appeal, acknowledging receipt of the formal appeal and establishing a timeline for the review to be completed.
   b. The senior associate dean or their designee may request additional materials and/or arrange meetings with the grievant and/or others. If meetings occur, the senior associate dean or their designee will meet with both the grievant and the person or persons toward whom the grievance is directed.
   c. The senior associate dean or their designee will assemble an ad hoc committee of faculty from outside of the student’s graduate program and ask them to prepare a written recommendation on whether to uphold or reverse the decision of the program on the student’s initial grievance. The committee may request additional materials and/or arrange meetings with the grievant and/or others. If meetings occur, the committee will meet with both the grievant and the person or persons toward whom the grievance is directed.
   d. The senior associate dean or their designee will make a final decision within 20 business days of receipt of the committee’s recommendation.
   e. The SMPH Office of Basic Research, Biotechnology, and Graduate Studies must store documentation of the grievance for seven years. Grievances that set a precedent may be stored indefinitely.

7. The student may file an appeal of the School of Medicine and Public Health decision with the Graduate School. See the Grievances and Appeals section of the Graduate School’s Academic Policies and Procedures.

Time Limits

Steps in the grievance procedures must be initiated and completed within the designated time periods except when modified by mutual consent. If the student fails to initiate the next step in the grievance procedure within the designated time period, the grievance will be considered resolved by the decision at the last completed step.

Links to Related Procedures

Each program’s Guide page will list this policy and any related policies, procedures and guidelines posted by the program and/or the Graduate School.
Links to Related Guidelines

Each program’s Guide page will list this policy and any related policies, procedures and guidelines posted by the program and/or the Graduate School.

References

None

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<td>Revision History/Prior replaced or revised policies</td>
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**KB Keywords:** grievance, graduate student, graduate program