

**Policy on Complaints by Students and Others  
Alleging Discrimination Other Than Sexual  
Discrimination and Sexual Harassment/Violence**



**Policy Number: 301.1012.103**

**Policy Revision Date: 5-24-2022**

**Policy Category: General Administrative**

**Policy Owner: Associate Dean for Student Affairs**

**Policy Audience: Students, Faculty, Staff**

**1. Definition :**

The Policy on complaints by students and others alleging discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of disability, race, color, national origin, or other protected classes by employees, other students, or third parties implements and is consistent with Title VI of the Civil Right Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and other laws applicable to institutions receiving federal funding which provide protections to students and others from discriminatory practices.

*Incidents of discrimination on the basis of sex including sexual harassment/violence shall be handled under the school's Title IX policy and students should report to Title IX resource advisors or directly to the Title IX coordinator as outlined in the Title IX Policy (<https://www.geisinger.edu/-/media/OneGeisinger/pdfs/ghs/Education-GCSOM/student-life/policies/title-ix.pdf>).*

*If a student or other individual with a grievance is also employed by GCSOM, and the grievance arises out of the student's or other individual's employment, the grievance must be filed under the GCSOM's employee complaint procedures. If the Associate Dean of Student Affairs for the MD program or the Interim Associate Dean for the Graduate Programs receives a grievance which appears to arise out of a student's or other individual's employment, the grievance will be referred to the appropriate office to be handled under the policy applicable to employees.*

*For complaints related to student mistreatment that have been allegedly perpetrated by individual or groups of faculty, staff or peers that are not covered by the policies related to nondiscrimination, please see the Policy on Student Mistreatment that can be found in the Policy section of the Student Bulletin.*

**2. MCC Review: May 24, 2022**

**3. Introduction / Purpose:**

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine seeks to provide a supportive educational, training, and professional environment. GCSOM provides several avenues of redress for students and others who believe that an action taken by employees, other students or third parties is discriminatory or otherwise in violation of the law, that such action affects a student's education or affects others privileges and opportunities or that a practice or policy has been

identified as having a purpose or effect that is discriminatory.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a procedure to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Right Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and other laws applicable to institutions receiving federal funding that provide protections to students and others from discriminatory practices. This policy is meant to be used to resolve serious matters which cannot be resolved through informal discussions or processes after reasonable efforts have been made to settle the dispute informally.

GCSOM assures that it will take steps to prevent recurrence of any harassment and to correct discriminatory effects on the complainant and other, if appropriate.

#### **4. Governance and Enforcement:**

Vice Dean, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Chief Diversity Officer

#### **5. Policy:**

##### **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE:**

The purpose of these procedures is to ensure that all grievances are promptly, thoroughly and fairly investigated by designated school officials of GCSOM. GCSOM will conduct a fair and impartial investigation of all allegations related to the grievance, with due regard for the rights of all parties.

Retaliation against any individual who has filed a grievance, or who has cooperated in the investigation of such a complaint, is unlawful and in violation of GCSOM policy.

##### **Process to File a Grievance:**

When a student or other person (e.g., a student's family member) believes that they have been subjected to discrimination on the basis of disability, race, color, national origin or other protected class in a violation and/or inequitable application or misinterpretation of GCSOM's legal obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act or other laws applicable to institutions receiving federal funding, a grievance may be filed by the individual or through a representative with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs for the MD program or the Interim Associate Dean for Graduate Programs. The business address, email, and telephone numbers are as follows:

- Dr. Tanja Adonizio, Associate Dean of Student Affairs for the MD Program, MBS Room 3069, [tadonii@som.geisinger.edu](mailto:tadonii@som.geisinger.edu), 570-570-504-9612
- Dr. Jennifer Boardman, Associate Dean for Graduate Programs (Interim), MBS Room 2116, [jboardman@som.geisinger.edu](mailto:jboardman@som.geisinger.edu), 570-570-504-9638

An individual who believes that any specific class of individuals has been subjected to discrimination and who is a member of that class or the authorized representative of a member of that class may also file a complaint.

Written grievances are preferred. However, if a student or other individual is only able to provide an oral grievance, the grievance will be converted to writing by staff and then reviewed by the

student for accuracy. The statement should be as specific as possible regarding the actions(s) or inaction(s) that precipitated the grievance: date; place; persons involved; policy or procedure involved; efforts made to resolve the matter informally (if applicable); and the remedy sought.

***Informal Grievance Procedure:***

A complaint must be filed within 10 business days of the alleged violation (or longer if extenuating circumstances exist) to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs for the MD program or the Interim Associate Dean for Graduate Programs. The Associate Dean of Student Affairs for the MD program or their designee or the Interim Associate Dean for Graduate Programs or their designee shall listen, analyze and explain applicable policy, investigate the facts and take other actions necessary in an attempt to promptly resolve the grievance.

If this process does not resolve the grievance within ten working days of the meeting, or if the Associate Dean of Student Affairs for the MD program or their designee or the Interim Associate Dean for the Graduate Programs or their designee fails to timely schedule a meeting, the student or other individual may initiate the formal grievance procedure. The Office of Student Affairs for the MD program or the Office of Academic Affairs for the Graduate Program will advise the student or other individual on the formal grievance procedure and will identify the person serving as nondiscrimination officer.

***Formal Grievance Procedure:***

The formal procedure begins when the student or other individual presents a request for formal review in writing to GCSOM's non-discrimination officer. Anonymous complaints will not result in any action or referral to an ad hoc grievance committee. If a student or other individual is only able to provide an oral grievance, the grievance will be converted to writing by staff and then reviewed by the student or other individual for accuracy. The statement should be as specific as possible regarding the actions(s) or inaction(s) that precipitated the grievance: date; place; persons involved; policy or procedure involved; efforts made to resolve the matter informally (if applicable); and the remedy sought.

The request for formal review shall be submitted within ten working days after the student has received a proposed resolution from the Associate Dean of Student Affairs for the MD program or their designee or the Interim Associate Dean for Graduate Programs or their designee or when they have failed to schedule a meeting, as described above. The non-discrimination officer shall convene an ad hoc grievance committee, appoint a chairperson, and submit the complaint for formal review to the chairperson of the ad hoc grievance committee within ten working days of receipt of such request.

If a student or other individual with a grievance is also employed by GCSOM, and the grievance arises out of the student's or other's employment, the grievance will be filed under the GCSOM's employee complaint procedures. If the Associate Dean of Student Affairs for the MD program or the Interim Associate Dean for the Graduate Programs receives a grievance which appears to arise out of a student's or other's employment, the grievance will be referred to the appropriate office to be handled under the policy applicable to employees.

In conducting any investigation, the ad hoc grievance committee will forward a copy of the grievance statement to the persons whose actions (or inactions) are the subject of the grievance and may request a written response from appropriate individuals in the Institution.

The investigation will include an interview with the complainant and respondent and the opportunity for the complainant and respondent to present witnesses and other evidence. The ad hoc grievance committee may also choose to interview witnesses, to meet with concerned parties, to receive oral or written statements, and to make other appropriate inquiries.

Students may request that an administrator or faculty advisor attend the ad hoc grievance committee meeting with them during the investigation of the incident.

At the close of the investigation, the chairperson of the ad hoc grievance committee will forward a copy of the committee's report and recommendation to the non-discrimination officer.

Within thirty (30) days of the filing of the grievance, the non-discrimination officer will render a decision on the merits of the complaint. If, due to extenuating circumstances, resolution is not possible within thirty (30) days, the non-discrimination officer shall inform the student or other individual of the status and amended timeline of the investigation.

Copies of the decision by the non-discrimination officer will be sent to the complainant and respondent and will be retained by the Office of Student Affairs for the MD program or the Office of Academic Affairs for the Graduate Program, as applicable. A copy may also be sent to the department from which the actions (or inactions) are the subject of the grievance, as appropriate.

In the event that the student or other individual is not satisfied with the decision by the non-discrimination officer, an appeal may be made. The appeal should be filed within 10 business days to the Vice Dean of the appropriate program. The Vice Dean will review, investigate, and provide disposition within thirty (30) working days of receiving notice of the appeal.

Copies of the decision will be maintained in the Office of Student Affairs for the MD program or Office of Academic Affairs for the Graduate Program.

## **6. Key Stakeholders:**

Students, Faculty, Staff

