

Student Grievance Policy for Evangel University

#SD0102

Abstract

This policy covers protocols for resolving grievances at Evangel University

Student Grievance Policy

Evangel University strives to resolve all disputes, conflicts, misconduct, and grievances in a manner that honors God, reflects an integral Christian witness, implements the commands of Jesus Christ in the Gospels, and cultivates a community of peace, all while respecting rightful authority. The University has developed a number of policies to accomplish this goal, including the Community Accountability Program, the Sexual Misconduct Policy (Title IX Policy), the Nondiscrimination Policy, the Academic Integrity Policy, and the Dispute Resolution Procedures. These policies largely address the myriad conflicts and issues that might arise in a large and complex Christian community, including student discipline and interpersonal conflicts between students.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Issues, questions, and student grievances may arise that fall outside the scope of other applicable policies. This Student Grievance Policy is intended to provide a biblically-grounded and -guided process for addressing any alleged actions by Evangel University faculty or staff, including the alleged improper implementation of Evangel University policies and procedures, that adversely affect a student and are not otherwise covered by a separate policy.

This policy specifically excludes the following non-exhaustive list:

- Concerns related to alleged discrimination; (<https://www.evangel.edu/handbook/student-handbook/#8.23>.)
- Alleged sexual misconduct that triggers the Title IX Policy (the Sexual Misconduct Policy); (<https://www.evangel.edu/handbook/student-handbook/#8.26>.)
- Student misconduct falling under the disciplinary process outlined in the Community Accountability Program; (<https://www.evangel.edu/handbook/student-handbook/#7>.)

If at any time during this grievance process it becomes apparent that a separate policy addresses a particular question or dispute, the issue may be transferred to the relevant authority charged with the implementation of that policy.

APPROVAL

This policy is approved by Evangel University's Presidential Cabinet and maintained by Student Development.

Grievance Procedures

Evangel University holds to the teachings contained within Scripture. As such, the teachings of Jesus serve as a foundation for resolving grievances.

Biblical Foundation:

1 Corinthians 6:1-3 6 When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ²Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!

Paul admonishes believers to attempt to settle disputes among themselves whenever possible. We believe the teachings of Jesus as outlined in Matthew 18 (below) provide a proper framework for resolving all disputes and grievances among our campus family.

Matthew 18:15-17 outlines the steps for addressing disputes: ¹⁵“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

In the context of the University family, these steps cannot be fully implemented in the same format as a local congregation or assembly. Evangel University has discerned the following steps best mirror and implement Christ's vision for handling grievances in this unique context.

1. **Step 1 – Private Resolution:** Students should first seek to address any grievances with the relevant and responsible faculty or staff member, or other applicable representative of Evangel University. The Student must initiate this process within 30 days of the occurrence of the alleged grievance, and the faculty or staff member must respond to the student's grievance within 15 days from when the complaint is made. If a Student raised the grievance within the appropriate time frame, and the appropriate faculty or staff member did not timely respond, the Student may proceed to Step 2. It should document the same as part of its request in Step 2.
2. **Step 2 – Involving Another:** If a student's grievance remains unresolved after discussing the issue directly with the relevant faculty or staff, the student may bring the issue to the VP for Student Development. The VP for Student Development will confer with the student and the appropriate department head to devise a plan to address the grievance. For example, if the grievance involves a meal-plan, the VP for Student Development may confer with the Food Services Director. If it involves motor vehicle violations, the VP for Student Development may confer with a Director of Public Safety. After receiving input, the VP for Student Development will determine the appropriate response and solution to the grievance and document the findings and outcome.

To initiate Step 2, the Student must send an email with all relevant attachments and

documentation to the VP for Student Development at the following location:
studentdevelopment@evangel.edu

The request must include the following:

1. Statement of grievance and all relevant facts, including the date of the alleged issue;
2. Documentation of all efforts to resolve the grievance privately, consistent with Step 1. The documentation should include copies of communication, dates of conversations, and outcomes of those conversations. In the absence of meaningful documentation, a statement of all efforts to do so may suffice;
3. The Student's preferred remedy.

The request must be sent within 15 days of all failed efforts to resolve the grievance in Step 1. The VP for Student Development may require the student to return to Step 1 if, in his/her sole discretion, the Student failed to satisfy and exhaust its requirements and expectations.

The VP for Student Development will acknowledge receipt of all grievances within one week, and will strive to resolve the grievance within 15 days of receipt. Depending on the circumstances, some grievances may require more time.

3. **Step 3 – Final Authority:** The Student may appeal the decision of the VP for Student Development to the Chief Academic Officer (also known as the Provost). The Student must state a basis for the appeal. The following may constitute a basis for an appeal:
 1. New evidence not available at the time of the decision; or,
 2. Evidence of bias on the part of the decision-maker; or
 3. Procedural irregularity in the decision-making process.

The Student's appeal should be submitted at this email address: OfficeoftheCAO@evangel.edu

The Student's appeal should include:

1. The documentation and information submitted to initiate Step 2;
2. The resolution provided by the VP for Student Development;
3. A statement describing the (a) new evidence not available at the time of the decision; or (b) evidence of bias; or (c) the procedural irregularity.

Should the Chief Academic Officer concur with the appeal, the decision with the appropriate documentation will be remanded back to the VP for Student Development unless sufficient evidence has been provided regarding bias. In this case the Chief Academic Officer will render a decision based on the facts received from the student, and official university documentation.

Procedural Rules for Grievance Resolution

To protect the integrity of the decision-making process, ensure fairness, preserve a genuine Christian peace in the community, and promote a more effective Christian witness, the following rules govern this grievance process:

1. Students, faculty, and staff must avoid gossip, slander, threats, or hostility at all times. A student will not be penalized or discouraged from utilizing this process; and faculty and staff should respond with empathy, understanding, and kindness. A humble and gentle demeanor by all parties makes this more possible, and the process more fruitful.
2. Students may not be represented by an attorney in this process.
3. Students are responsible for initiating this process.
4. The University will maintain records of all grievances and the resolutions.
5. The University will keep the content of grievances, any records generated during an investigation, and the outcomes confidential and only make them available on a need-to-know basis. The Student, by virtue of filing the grievance, is not entitled to the records generated as part of any investigation or resolution.
6. The VP for Student Development or Chief Academic Officer, as applicable, will provide the Student a written statement of the resolution.
7. A Student may withdraw a grievance at any point in time by notifying the relevant department. Any documentation received by the university prior to the withdrawal of the grievance will be maintained by the university.
8. Documentation for issues resolved in Step 1 are not required to be forwarded to the VP for Student Development.

For distance education students, information related to filing complaints with the applicable state board may be found on the corresponding state webpage. For ease of access, here are the applicable webpages:

Oklahoma: <https://okhighered.org/current-college-students/complaints/>