

**Policy and Procedures on Grievances by Graduate Students
in the Journalism Department, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

**Approved by Unanimous Departmental Vote April 21, 2000
and Revised and Approved February 2001**

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this policy is to protect the interests of graduate students in the Department of Journalism by providing informal and formal means of addressing an inappropriate application of a department policy or an inappropriate action of a member of the faculty or administrative staff in Journalism, including issues that might arise in the performance of graduate assistantship duties and in any other areas of graduate work not specifically covered by the capricious grading committee or by any other university policies. Any graduate student may pursue informally or formally a grievance if he/she believes that a faculty decision or behavior adversely affects his/her status as a graduate student. The university, the college, and the department strongly support the concept of academic freedom and state firmly that these protections for graduate students will in no way compromise that concept. Any of the parties responsible for the implementation of this policy may consult University Legal Counsel at any time during the informal or formal processing of a grievance.

Breaches of academic integrity are not covered by this policy, but will be handled under the campus's *Policy and Procedures on Academic Integrity in Research and Publication*, and this grievance policy statement does not apply to capricious grading problems. The department will form a new committee, the Graduate Grievance Committee, which will hear formal complaints by graduate students. The committee shall consist of three faculty members elected each year by the faculty in August and one graduate student elected by the graduate students as a whole at an appropriate time annually during the autumn term. The aggrieved graduate student, at his/her discretion, may choose to have a committee comprised solely of faculty, but the faculty member may not exercise this option.

II. GRIEVANCE CATEGORIES

Examples of grievance categories include but are not limited to:

1. Inappropriate application of a departmental or university policy.
2. Being required to engage in extraordinarily excessive effort to fulfill assistantships.
3. Being improperly dismissed from an assistantship.
4. Being improperly terminated from the graduate program.
5. Being required to perform personal services unrelated to academic or assistantship duties, such as being asked to pick up dry cleaning for a faculty member or wash his/her automobile.

6. Being required to meet unreasonable requirements for a graduate degree that extend the normal requirements established by the campus or by the department and that are inconsistent with the scholarly standards in the discipline.
7. Being the subject of retaliation for exercising rights granted under this policy.
8. Being the subject of professional misconduct by a student's graduate supervisor or other faculty or staff member.

III. INFORMAL PROCEDURES

University policy strongly encourages all students who believe they have a grievance to use all appropriate avenues for informal resolution before initiating a formal grievance. Students in Journalism are encouraged to discuss the issue with the faculty or staff member with whom the problem has arisen. If a satisfactory solution is not forthcoming, the student should discuss the issue with the director of graduate studies or the head of the department, who shall attempt to find a resolution acceptable to both parties.

IV. FORMAL PROCEDURES

- A. A student in the department may file a grievance with the director of graduate studies or directly with the Graduate College, as the student elects. The written grievance should indicate the parties involved, the action or decision being contested, any applicable university, campus, or department policy, an explanation of why the action or decision is inappropriate, and the remedy sought. A complaint must be filed within 180 days of the alleged inappropriate action, regardless of whether the department or Graduate College policy is used. A report of the nature of the grievance and the primary involved parties shall be forwarded to the Graduate College.
- B. The graduate director will review the grievance for technical detail, but must refer the complaint to the committee within five working days. The committee has twenty working days from the time of receipt of the complaint from the graduate director to issue a recommendation. The department head will make a decision within ten working days on the issue in consultation with the director of graduate studies. That decision may be appealed by either party to the Graduate College within the next twenty working days. The head has responsibility, under the policies and procedures of the Graduate College, for the management of Department of Journalism graduate programs and related policies and procedures. The head shall have the primary responsibility for administering campus procedures detailed herein. All information and items furnished will be made available to the grievance committee. During the course of the investigation, the head will provide information about the status of the proceedings to the primary involved individuals. Subsequent to the grievance committee's reporting, the head will maintain a file of all documents and evidence, and is responsible for the confidentiality and the security of the file. The head shall make the complete file available to the associate dean of the Graduate College on the appeal of a grievance outcome to the Graduate College.

- C. The grievance committee shall be charged with the responsibility of hearing both parties in the dispute and reviewing all materials relevant to the dispute. At its first meeting to hear a grievance the committee shall elect a chair from among its four members.
- D. The grievance committee shall debate in private and before filing a written report.
- E. The department head, in cases of an affirmed grievance complaint, shall take appropriate action within ten working days to redress the grievance, unless the decision is appealed.
- F. The grievant may withdraw a complaint at any time. The department head shall decide whether to approve the request, and if it is approved, the relevant complaint files will be destroyed.
- G. The termination of employment of one of the principal parties, by resignation or otherwise, will not necessarily end these proceedings.
- H. All grievance hearings and discussions will be held in strictest confidence. If a faculty member has been maligned in the process of the investigation, and is exonerated, the head, at his/her discretion, may decide to reveal publicly the resulting exoneration.
- I. This procedure is not meant to displace other extra-university procedures or be conducted in parallel with other extra-university procedures.
- J. Both the graduate student and the faculty member shall be entitled to be present throughout the closed committee hearing to present any evidence; including testimony by other persons, relevant to the matter or dispute. Both the graduate student and the faculty member shall have the opportunity to question or refute any evidence presented. The faculty member and the graduate student may each be accompanied by a person to assist them in presenting evidence. The committee will weigh the evidence presented and offer a recommendation based upon its best judgment.
- K. A malicious and unfounded complaint by a graduate student may result in discipline against said student, after the department head has consulted with the dean and the Provost.
- L. Any participant who has a conflict of interest in a dispute under this procedure, or a concern about a conflict on the part of another, shall report it to the head, who has the discretion to take appropriate action.

- M. The rights of the primary involved individuals shall be specified in the form of a written notice or letter from the head. The primary involved individuals have the following rights:
- a. To receive notice of the identity of the members of the grievance committee.
 - b. To receive a written statement of the charge including the subject matter being considered by the grievance committee. If additional information emerges during the committee's evaluation that substantially changes the subject matter, the parties shall be informed promptly in writing.
 - c. To submit statements in writing and to meet with the committee to present information.
 - d. To consult private legal counsel, or another person who may provide providing advice at the meeting with the committee. Prior notice of the presence of an advisor must be given and any other primary involved party may request a delay of up to five calendar days to arrange for the presence of an advisor.
 - e. To review and respond to the grievance committee's final report.