

## **GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

### **Policy**

Rudolf Steiner College recognizes that in the normal course of human interactions, conflicts and disputes may arise. Though most conflicts and problems that arise in the College environment can be resolved informally, when such attempts do not result in a resolution, a formal grievance process may be initiated. The College believes that all students and employees have the right and the obligation to seek resolution through a grievance process.

### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy we also use the following definitions:

**CONFLICT** – Intense interpersonal or intrapersonal dissonance between two or more parties (individual or groups) based on incompatible goals, needs, desires, values, beliefs, attitudes or perceptions of entitlement.

**DISPUTE** – Conflicts that have become particularized around a specific issue or issues.

**GRIEVANCE** – Grievance is defined as any real or perceived injustice, unfair treatment or wrong that is personal or professional in nature. A grievance takes the form of a formal expression of a dispute in the form of a complaint by one or more of the parties.

### **Levels of Grievance**

**LEVEL ONE GRIEVANCE:** There is a perceived injustice or unfair treatment occasioned by another person or persons, process or aspect of College life.

**LEVEL TWO GRIEVANCE:** There is concern that voicing the complaint to a person or persons responsible for the situation could possibly result in a threat to one's own security or well-being or that of another person, then assistance is sought.

**LEVEL THREE GRIEVANCE:** The conditions of Level two may exist and/or the enforcement of a College Policy or Procedure is possibly needed. The matter may also have legal ramifications and/or involve discrimination or harassment.

## **Grievance Procedure Personnel**

- College President
- Any or all members of the Executive Committee
- Grievance Committee Co-conveners/Chairs as appointed by the Executive Committee. The co-conveners represent different constituency groups of the College Faculty and Staff.
  - This group is often configured:
    - Dean of Students
    - Associate Academic Dean
    - Ombudsman
- Grievance Committee members as selected, by the Grievance Committee Co-conveners/chairs, to serve in any unique situation. Committee members represent all constituency groups of the campus, inclusive of students.
  - Members of the Grievance committee display specific dispositions to this task: fairness, empathy, ability to hold confidentiality & discernment regarding the unique ramifications of a grievance.

## **Grievance Procedure**

### **CONFLICTS, DISPUTES AND LEVEL ONE GRIEVANCES:**

When a student or employee has a difficulty with a person, persons or aspect of College life and that individual feels that an effort to resolve this face-to-face is the best place to begin... The College supports this action and encourages all members of the College Community to begin at this step if at all possible. A good source for guidance can be found in the book *Crucial Conversations* (2006), authored by Patterson, Grenny, McMillian, and Switzler.

### **LEVEL ONE GRIEVANCES**

At this level the individual meets with the student or employee directly involved, in an attempt to resolve the matter. If necessary, after consultation with the College Ombuds, a third party or mediator may be used. The purpose of mediation is to build consensus toward a resolution of the dispute between the parties in an informal setting. Mediation is based on the principles of neutrality and confidentiality and the mediator acts as a disinterested third party, not as an advocate for the College or any other party. All parties

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Location: proposed, Employee handbook, student handbook

will be asked to consent to confidentiality as well. Grievance forms and a report on the resolution of the situation are filed in the office of the Ombudsman and sent to the Executive Committee.

#### LEVEL TWO GRIEVANCES:

An individual may feel a need for a third party, mediator or other intervention because of extreme discomfort or a possible threat to his/her well-being. In this circumstance, a grievance form must be filed as a first step. The form may be obtained from the Admissions and Records office or the College Document Library on the website in a folder entitled "forms".

The Grievance Form should be sent to a convener of the Grievance Committee or directly to the President or a member of the Executive Committee. The Grievance Committee and the Executive Committee inform each other of the situation. In the case of employees, the grievance form is forwarded to their supervisors (only if appropriate).

#### LEVEL THREE GRIEVANCES:

Grievances at this level should be submitted through a Grievance Form (see above) to either a convener of the Grievance Committee or directly to the President or other member of the Executive Committee. This level of Grievance usually warrants formal intervention and definitive actions on the part of leadership in the College.

#### **Additional Procedures for Level Two and Three Grievances:**

1. Grievances are recorded in a grievance log located in the President's office.
2. Executive Committee members may involve themselves in the process if there is a concern for potential liability to the College.
3. If the President or Executive Committee does not join the process at this juncture, the co-chair of the grievance committee notifies another co-chair and together they select the committee members most appropriate for the situation.
4. The student or employee who has filed the Grievance Form is given the names of those who have been selected from the grievance committee pool. If no concern of bias is raised the procedure continues; if a concern arises other members may be selected from the pool.
5. The Grievance Committee may at their discretion:

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- a. Interview all persons involved.
  - b. Bring the parties together to facilitate a resolution.
  - c. Recommend a resolution.
6. The Grievance Committee produces a written document of the disposition of the grievance and sends it along with the grievance form to the President and other Executive Committee members.
7. All documents involving students are kept for the duration of the student's matriculation. These documents are kept in the secure file of the Dean of Students. Upon graduation or leaving the College, a decision will be made as to the handling of these documents (see Guidelines for Access to and Disclosure of Educational Records).
8. All grievances involving College personnel are kept for a period of at least six years in a grievance file secured in the office of the College President
9. In a case where a resolution has not been found, notes of the process and a description of attempts to resolve the situation are sent to the executive committee. The Executive Committee may, or may not, repeat previous steps in determining the final and non-negotiable solution to the grievance.