

Trinity University
Department of Education
Statement Regarding Grievances/Complaints

Grievances Regarding Education Programs at Trinity University

While the Education Department at Trinity University strives to maintain the highest integrity possible in all decisions it makes regarding its programs, its students and its faculty, there may be an instance in which a disagreement with policy or action will necessitate a procedure to ensure effective communication and problem solving. The university maintains written policies for employee complaints, as referenced in the Faculty / Staff Handbook. It also maintains specific grade appeals policies listed for both undergraduate and graduate students in the Course of Study Bulletin. This grievance process is designed for issues arising from application of policy or disciplinary actions that fall outside of the two aforementioned complaint/appeal processes.

It is the goal at Trinity University to resolve grievances early on and at the lowest level possible to facilitate prompt resolution, and for those most directly involved to engage in shared problem solving to reach the resolution.

When a candidate, former candidate, applicant, mentor teacher or other school district or community partner believes that he or she has been unable to resolve the grievance through informal discussions or meetings, then he or she may utilize the following procedures:

Level One Complaint

A written complaint (via email, delivered in person or via postmarked U.S. mail) should be provided to the university supervisor within 15 working days of the date that the person first knew, or with reasonable diligence should have known, of the decision or action that gives rise to the complaint or grievance. The Chair of the Department of Education can clarify which university supervisor to submit the written complaint to, if needed. All complaints will be logged and tracked by the Department of Education and records will be maintained for 10 years. The direct supervisor will hold a formal conference with the person within 10 working days after the receipt of the written complaint. The direct supervisor will then have 10 working days following the conference to provide the person a written response, and the documentation for this conference will be maintained by the Department of Education for a period of 10 years.

Level Two Complaint

If acceptable resolution is not reached at Level One, a written expression of the concern will be sent within 10 working days to the Chair of the Department of Education, including all previous documentation and written decisions. At this time, the Chair will have 10 working days to investigate the issue, meet with the parties, and work to seek an acceptable resolution. The Chair will have 10 working days following the conference to provide all parties a written response, and the documentation for this conference will be maintained by the Department of Education for a period of 10 years.

Level Three Complaint

If acceptable resolution is not reached at Level Two, a written expression of the concern, including a copy of the resolution from Level Two, shall be sent within 10 working days to the Vice President for Academic Affairs (if related to an undergraduate course or student) or to the Chairman of the Commission on Graduate Studies (if related to a graduate course or student). The respective VPAA or the Commission on Graduate Studies will have 10 working days to investigate the issue and meet with the parties. The respective VPAA or the Chairman of the Commission on Graduate Studies will provide a written decision regarding the issue to all parties, which will be final and binding, and the documentation will be maintained for a period of 10 years.

Level Four Complaint

If a student, mentor teacher or other school district or community partner wishes to register a complaint beyond the university process outlined above, he or she may initiate a complaint with the Texas Education Agency.

The official TEA complaint process can be found at www.tea.texas.gov in the banner located at the bottom of the page and then select "Educator Preparation Programs."

The complaint process allows for an applicant or a candidate in an educator preparation program to seek redress in areas where he or she feels that the program did not fulfill requirements for certification or for actions that the candidate feel are wrong. Educator preparation programs may also file a complaint about the actions of other programs when it involves a candidate transferring into a program.

Not all complaints fall under the authority of TEA. TEA has jurisdiction to investigate allegations of noncompliance regarding specific laws and rules, generally related to state and federal requirements. Complaints may address educator preparation program requirements listed in Texas Administrative Code (TAC) in Chapters 227, 228, 229, ethics (TAC 247), fingerprinting (TAC §§227,232) and certification (TAC §§230, 231, 232, 239, 241, 242).

All complaints filed with the TEA must be in writing. TEA does not accept complaints by phone or complaints that are submitted anonymously. A person or entity may file a written complaint with TEA by filling out the complaint form online or by mailing or

faxing a hard copy to the address on the form. You may fax your submission to (512) 463-9008 or email it to generalinquiry@tea.texas.gov.

To adequately review and address a complaint, TEA needs specific details. The agency must be able to identify a clear violation of TAC and determine whether the agency has authority to act upon the allegation.

Complaints submissions should include the following:

The reasons you believe the issues raised in your complaint are valid. You should also indicate how you believe that TEA can assist you with this matter. Remember that TEA cannot assist you in understanding your contractual arrangement with the educator preparation program, arranging for a refund, obtaining a higher grade or credit for training, or seeking reinstatement to an educator preparation program.

Documentation to support your claim when possible. For example, if you refer in your complaint to an educator preparation program policy, include a copy of the policy with your complaint. Helpful documentation might include letters or e-mails exchanged between the parties.

Texas Education Agency staff will send confirmation of a complaint within 30 days of receiving the submission. Remember, information the public sends to TEA by email may not be secure. Do not email sensitive information to TEA. The agency will remove confidential or sensitive information when replying by email. TEA will maintain confidentiality of information to the extent the law allows.

TEXAS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE §228. 70

December 14, 2015

This statement regarding grievances will be included in the mentor-intern handbooks for the Master of Arts in Teaching program and Educational Leadership and is provided via the Department of Education website and in written form on the Education bulletin board for all members of the university community and its partners.