



---

## COMPLAINT/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

---

A continuing goal of Brenau University is that work, study, teaching, and service proceed unencumbered by any form of disagreement that is capable of resolution. Every individual within the Brenau community will seek to resolve problems at the point of origin. If such resolution is not feasible, first the mediation and then the formal grievance processes outlined below should be used. Individuals at every level of leadership will be expected to assist with this process when requested to do.

1. **Objective:** The primary objective of a grievance procedure is to insure that concerns are dealt with promptly and resolution reached in a fair manner for all parties concerned. It is essential that each complainant be given adequate opportunity to bring complaints and problems to the attention of the University administration with the assurance that each will be given fair treatment. The grievance procedures of Brenau University are designed to provide effective means for resolving legitimate issues that are subject to the grievance process.
2. **Grievance Definition:** A grievance is defined as dissatisfaction occurring when a complainant feels or thinks that any condition affecting him/her is unfair, inappropriate, or creates unnecessary hardship.
3. **Types of Grievances:** Brenau University affords two grievance procedures, depending on the nature of the grievance. The Formal Grievance procedure is for non-academic concerns, and the Academic Grievance procedure is for concerns related to classroom issues other than grade appeals. These procedures should be enacted once the Informal Grievance Resolution options have failed to bring about a solution.
4. **Informal Grievance Resolution:** The initial phase of the grievance procedure is oral discussion between the complainant and the University instructor, administrator, or staff member alleged to have caused the grievance in order to communicate and resolve the problem. The meeting should be held as soon as the complainant first becomes aware of the problem. If the complainant has good cause not to meet with the person(s) alleged to have caused the grievance, or considers the response to the grievance to be unsatisfactory causing the grievance to still exist, then the complainant should consult with the person's supervisor to attempt to resolve the problem. Should the matter remain unresolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, then the complainant may file a formal grievance or academic grievance. Problems between students should be brought to the attention of the Vice President of Student Services, or designee, for discussion and resolution.
5. **Formal Grievance Procedures:**
  - a. To file a formal grievance, the complainant should detail the grievance in writing outlining the events of the incident limiting information to factual details and persons directly involved. The Grievance Complaint Form must be signed by the complainant and dated then filed with the Vice President for Student Services within thirty (30) days of the initial incident. The Vice President for Student Services will serve a copy of the Grievance Complaint to any and all parties which the complainant has included in the grievance and the Hearing Officer. The Hearing Officer will be the designee of the Vice President of Student Services for non-academic, formal grievances.
  - b. Within seven (7) working days of the Grievance Complaint the parties will submit in writing their explanation, if any, to the Hearing Officer. Upon request, the parties will submit for inspection and/or review any evidence relevant to the grievance which the parties have knowledge of to any other party to the action. Within fourteen (14) working days of the filing of the Grievance Complaint the Hearing Officer will have a preliminary hearing to determine if there is probable cause to proceed with the grievance and attempt to resolve the matter.
  - c. The hearings may not be tape recorded. Hearings may not be attended by outside agencies or attorneys, as these are informal and internal proceedings. All grievances written are confidential and no outside third party shall be provided a transcript of the proceedings without the consent of all parties involved. Violation of confidentiality may result in dismissal from the University or termination of employment.
  - d. If the Hearing Officer determines that there is not probable cause to support the Grievance Complaint, then the Hearing Officer will dismiss the grievance in writing stating the reasons for that finding. Such decisions may be appealed to the President who will have final authority on that issue. The appeal must be filed within seven (7) working days of the Hearing Officer's decision and state with specificity and clarity the reasons for the appeal.
  - e. If the Hearing Officer finds there is probable cause to support the grievance, the Hearing Officer may resolve the grievance or pass the resolution to a Grievance Committee, which is *ad hoc*. The Vice President of Student

Services will appoint appropriate members to the Grievance Committee. The Committee will consist of two Administrators (one of which must be a Student Services staff member), two Students, and two Faculty Members. The Hearing Officer will serve as the Chair and will not have a vote. Within fourteen (14) working days the Grievance Committee will convene a hearing to determine the resolution of the grievance.

- f. **Formal Grievance Committee Procedure:** The Formal Grievance Committee will hear the matter and resolve the dispute subject to the following:
- The Complainant will present all relevant evidence to the Committee, subject to examination by the other parties and/or the Committee.
  - The other parties will present all relevant evidence to the Committee, subject to examination by the complainant and/or the Committee.
  - Other persons may be allowed to present evidence at the sole discretion of the Committee Chair.
  - Transcripts of the hearings will be taken by a Committee member designated by the Chair.
  - The Committee will make a written finding within seven (7) working days of the hearing which will contain the decision of the Committee and findings of fact that support the decision. This written finding will be filed with the Vice President of Student Services. The Vice President of Student Services will serve a copy on all appropriate parties, and the President.
  - All documents, transcripts, and decisions related to the Grievance Complaint will be held in a secure location within the Vice President of Student Services' office.
6. **Academic Grievance Procedure:** To file an Academic Grievance, the complainant must follow all procedures as outlined in the Formal Grievance Procedures above, with the following exceptions:
- a. The Academic Grievance Complaint would be submitted to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs who will in turn designate a Hearing Officer.
  - b. The Committee will consist of two Faculty Members, one Department Chair, one Academic Dean and two Student Services staff members. The Hearing Officer will serve as the Chair and will not have a vote. Within fourteen (14) working days the Academic Grievance Committee will convene a hearing to determine the resolution of the grievance
  - c. Grade appeals are not covered by this procedure. Students dissatisfied with their grades must follow the procedures outlined in the Student Catalog.
  - d. The Academic Grievance Committee will hear the matter and resolve the dispute in accordance with the procedure outlined in the Formal Grievance Procedures with regard to changes in personnel involved as stated above.
7. **Appeals:** The appeal process is available to complainants addressing decisions of the Hearing Officers or a Grievance Committee. Either party may appeal the decision, within seven (7) working days, to the President who will have the final authority over the matter. The President normally will only consider the written record of the evidence, including the Grievance Complaint, complainant file, responses, transcripts of the meetings, and written reason for the appeal, in order to render a decision in the matter.
8. **Student Complaints Regarding Accreditation:** For complaints regarding a violation of accreditation policies, students may use the Complaint Procedures against SACSCOC or its Accredited Institutions Policy Statement to find information about how to make a complaint to the University's accrediting body, the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC). The Policy Statement is available from the SACSCOC Website at <http://www.sacscoc.org/> The student must send two copies of the Complaint against Institutions Information Sheet and Form, contained in the Policy Statement, to the President of the accrediting body at the following address: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges 1866 Southern Lane Decatur, GA 30033-4097.
9. **Student Complaints to the State of Georgia:** Federal regulations require that each state designate a department or agency to be responsible for receiving and responding to complaints made by students against a postsecondary institution operating within that state. In the state of Georgia, the designated agency is the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (GNPEC). Students and other constituents who wish make a complaint against Brenau University or any other private postsecondary institutions operating in Georgia may do so by following the complaint procedures on GNPEC's Web site. Contact information is as follows:

State of Georgia  
Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission  
2082 East Exchange Place, Suite 220  
Tucker, GA 30084-5305

Web site: <http://gnpec.org/>  
Phone: 770-414-3300  
Fax: 770-414-3309



**For Office Use Only:**

Received by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date filed: \_\_\_\_\_