

# THE READING HOSPITAL SCHOOL OF HEALTH SCIENCES POLICY NO. 365

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## SUBJECT: ACADEMIC Grievance Policy

Responsibility of: TRHSHS Program Directors  
Revised: June, 2009 Reviewed: 2011

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### **Purpose**

The purpose of these procedures is to provide students the opportunity for objective review of facts and events pertinent to the cause of the academic grievance. Such review will be accomplished in a collegial, non-judicial atmosphere. All parties will be expected to act in a professional and civil manner.

The procedures that follow are designed to ensure objective and fair treatment of both students and instructors.

In the case of grade appeals, the School reserves the right to change a student's grade if it is determined at the conclusion of the grievance process that the grade given was incorrect. In such circumstances the Director of TRHSHS may file an administrative grade change. The term "incorrect" means the assigned grade was based on something other than performance in the course, or that the assignment of the grade was not consistent with the criteria for awarding grades as described in the course syllabus or other materials distributed to the student. In the case of all other academic grievances, the School reserves the right to determine the final outcome based on the procedures detailed herein.

### **Terms**

An "*academic grievance*" is a claim that a specific academic decision or action that affects the student's academic record or status has violated published policies and procedures, or has been applied to the grievant in a manner different from that used for other students. Academic grievance includes didactic, laboratory, and clinical experiences/grades. Grievances may relate to such decisions as the assignment of a grade as seen by the student as incorrect or the dismissal or failure of a student for his or her action(s). Academic grievances will not deal with general student complaints.

The "*burden of proof*" shall be upon the student such that the student challenging the decision, action or assigned grade has the burden of supplying evidence that proves the instructor's decision was incorrect. In considering grievances, decisions will be based on the preponderance of the evidence.

The student shall not be entitled to bring "*legal representation*" to any grievance proceeding as this is an internal review of an academic decision.

### **Resolution at the Department Level**

- A. The student shall first make a reasonable effort to resolve his or her grievance with the instructor concerned, with the date of the incident triggering the process (i.e., the issuance of a grade; the receipt of an assignment), and the instructor shall accommodate a reasonable request to discuss and attempt to resolve the issue.
- B. If the situation cannot be resolved, the student shall file a notification letter within two weeks of the triggering incident to the program Director. This shall be a concise written statement of particulars and must include information pertaining to how, in the student's opinion, School policies or procedures were violated. The program Director shall provide a copy of this statement to the instructor.
- C. The program Director shall discuss the statement jointly or individually with the student and instructor to determine if the grievance can be resolved. If the grievance can be resolved, the Program Director shall provide a statement to that effect to the student and the instructor with a copy to the Director of TRSHS.
- D. If the grievance cannot be resolved, the program Director shall notify the student and instructor, informing the student of his/her right to file a written request within two weeks to advance the grievance to a Grievance Committee. The instructor may file a written response to the grievance petition. Upon receipt of the student's request to move the process to a Grievance Committee and the instructor's response to the grievance (if provided), the program Director shall immediately notify TRSHS Director of the grievance, providing copies of the student's initiating grievance, any instructor's written response to the grievance, and the written request from the student to have the process advanced to a Grievance Committee. Should the student not file a written request to move the grievance to a Grievance Committee within the prescribed time, the grievance will end. If the grievance concerns the program Director, the student has the right to bypass the program process and proceed directly to a Grievance Committee through TRSHS Director.

#### **Resolution at the Grievance Committee Level**

- A. Upon receipt of the grievance, TRSHS Director shall either determine that the matter is not an academic grievance and dismiss it or, within two weeks, shall establish an Academic Grievance Committee. The membership of the Committee shall be constituted as follows:
  - 1. Three (3) faculty members and two (2) students shall be selected from the School by TRSHS Director.
  - 2. Wherever practical, the Committee shall include neither members of the faculty nor students of the program directly involved with the grievance. However, if requested by the program, committee, or participants, faculty and students from the program involved with the grievance may provide expert or other relevant information in the proceedings.
- B. The Committee will operate in the following manner:
  - 1. The Committee Chairperson will be appointed by TRSHS Director from among the three faculty members appointed to the committee.
  - 2. The Committee Chairperson shall be responsible for scheduling meetings, overseeing the deliberations of the committee and ensuring that full and fair consideration is provided to all parties. The Committee Chairperson shall vote on committee decisions only when required to break a tie.

3. All deliberations shall be in private and held confidential by all members of the Committee and those involved in the proceedings. Committee proceedings are not open to the public.
4. The student presenting the grievance will be permitted a maximum 10 minutes to state his/ her view point. Additional time may be granted at the discretion of the Committee Chairperson.
5. Audio and/or video recording of Committee proceedings is prohibited.
6. Within three weeks of the Committee appointment, the Committee Chairperson shall deliver in writing to the student, instructor, program Director, and TRSHS Director a report of the findings and a recommended resolution.
7. Within three weeks of receipt of the Committee recommendation, TRSHS Director shall provide a decision in writing to all parties.

### **General Information**

- TRSHS Director's decision is final in the grievance process.
- TRSHS Director has the authority to terminate the grievance process at any point in the process for failure of the student to comply with the grievance policy.
- The student shall be allowed to continue in their Program until the Committee has reached a decision, provided there are no concerns related to patient outcomes, students, faculty, or staff of the School. These concerns may be, but are not limited to, threatening, intimidating, or disruptive behaviors, or breach of confidentiality related to the grievance such as discussion of the grievance outside of the above stated format.
- If the student's clinical competency or patient safety is in question (as determined by the program Director), the student shall be removed from clinical practice areas until resolution of the grievance.

### **Process for Conducting an Academic Grievance Committee Meeting**

The Academic Committee Meeting will be conducted in an orderly manner allowing opportunity for all parties to be heard. Each party has the right to present written or oral statements. The involved parties will be interviewed separately and will not be present when the other party is being interviewed.

The following process is a guideline for the Academic Grievance Committee Chairperson to utilize when conducting a meeting:

- Introduction
- Confirmation of no conflict of interest
- Statement of confidentiality
- Presentation of the grievance by the student
- Questioning of the student by Academic Grievance Committee
- Presentation of statement by involved party (parties)
- Questioning of involved party by Academic grievance Committee
- Review of information presented during meeting (involved parties are not present)
- Decision rendered by Committee