

9. Student Grievance Procedure

If a student has a concern about a policy or general procedure of the university, they may either direct their concern to the office responsible for the oversight of the policy/procedure or they may address their concern through the resolution process of the SGA Student Senate as outlined in the SGA Constitution. In compliance with the regulations of Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended in 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Converse University has established the following procedure for students to pursue grievances against faculty or staff members:

Step One—The student should request a conference with the employee (professor or staff member) against whom the student has a complaint in order to discuss the problem. The conference must occur within ten working days of the incident. The employee will make an effort to resolve the issue equitably and informally and will send a written response to the student within three working days of the conference.

Step Two—If the employee's response is not satisfactory, the student may send a formal written complaint with supporting evidence and documentation to the department chair or other immediate supervisor of the employee against whom the student has the grievance within three days. The department chair or supervisor will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within three working days and will respond to the student in writing within ten working days of receipt of the complaint.

Step Three—If the response of the department chair or supervisor is not satisfactory, the student may notify the dean of the school (UG) or Dean of the Graduate School (Graduate) in which the student is enrolled within three days. The dean of the school or the Dean of the Graduate School will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing within three working days, will consider the accumulated evidence, interview any of the parties concerned at his/her discretion, and reply to the student in writing within ten working days of receipt of the complaint.

Step Four—A student who is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter may request a formal grievance hearing by notifying the appropriate dean stated above or the Dean of the School of Education and Graduate Studies in writing within three days of receipt of the dean or senior administrator's response. The request should explain the complaint and should include copies of all letters written and received, as well as supporting evidence and proper documentation. Either the Dean of the School or the Dean of the Graduate School will serve as Chair of a Committee made up of a faculty or staff member appointed by the SGA Executive Committee, a faculty member or administrator chosen by the President, and a faculty member or administrator chosen by the student. The Dean of School or the Dean of the Graduate School will set a date for the hearing within five to ten working days of receipt of the request and will send copies of the appeal to committee members. All members of the committee must be present in order for the hearing to take place. The student will appear before the grievance committee to present the grievance. The committee will also interview the employee against whom the student has the grievance and the employee's supervisor, as well as any additional witnesses that it considers necessary in order to render a fair decision. The student has the right to present witnesses, either character or circumstantial, if their testimony is deemed relevant by the chairperson. The student must present a list of these witnesses to the chairperson at least twenty-four hours in advance and state the reasons for calling each one to testify. Participants in the hearing may include the following: students, faculty or other agents of the university who may be affected by the case. The appropriate Dean of the School or the Dean of the Graduate School, as chairperson of the committee, will forward copies of the committee's decision to all involved within three working days.

Step Five—A student who wishes to appeal the decision of the committee must notify the President in writing within three days of receipt of the committee's ruling. The President may interview any of the parties concerned before deciding to approve, modify, or overturn the committee's decision. The President will inform the student of his/her decision in writing within ten working days of receipt of the appeal.

Step Six—A student who is not satisfied with the decision of the Grievance Committee may file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights in Atlanta, Georgia. All information regarding students is confidential and will be communicated only to faculty and administrative personnel who have a justifiable reason to have the information. Because Converse prefers to resolve complaints at the lowest level, a student whose complaint involves accommodations for a disability should contact the Director of Academic Support and either the Vice President for Finance & Administration for ADA issues or the Director of Human Resources for Section 504 issues prior to beginning step one (see also “Academic Policies on Disabilities”). Note: If the case involves a complaint filed against an advisor of a student organization, the procedure will begin with a meeting with the employee as stated in Step One. If necessary, it will then proceed to Step Four, which involves the Committee hearing.