

STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Seminary policy grants to the administration and faculty of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary the authority to develop and administer the processes for study and other issues related to student life. Students are expected to conform to expectations and standards of performance and conduct. The same polity that establishes the governance of academic and administrative affairs, however, allows the student the opportunity to seek recourse from what he or she considers to be unfair or unjust evaluations or processes.

In the case of doctoral students, grievance procedures and decisions are established and administered by the doctoral programs committee.

Before completing the application for grievance for redress, the student should

1. Review documents that address the situation: syllabi, policies and procedures, etc.
2. Prayerfully consider the validity of the grievance.
3. In keeping with Matthew 18, discuss the issue with the professor, administrator, or student involved.
4. If the issue cannot be resolved at this level, then the student should follow the Student Grievance Process as described below.

It is the policy of the Seminary to evaluate seriously student grievances and either resolve the problems brought by the student or make appropriate recommendations to the appropriate office for such resolution. Procedures are established below for addressing student issues in five sections:

- student issues,
- academic issues,
- administrative issues,
- harassment issues, and
- honor code violations.

The grievance process described below begins with the completion of a student-initiated application for review, the Student Grievance Form. This form may be obtained from the Student Life office or from www.mabts.edu (<http://www.mabts.edu>) and should be returned to the Student Life Office, as it is the responsibility of the director of Student Life to coordinate the resolution process.

Section I - Student Grievances

For Grievances of Student Issues Related to Interpersonal Issues

1. The student completes, signs, and delivers the Student Grievance Form to the director of Student Life, who will then contact the appropriate person(s) to attempt to establish a resolution to the grievance.
2. If the situation remains unresolved, the matter will be addressed by the executive vice president, who will attempt to establish a resolution to the grievance. The student may request that a student council representative or another faculty member attend the meeting as well.
3. The executive vice president will make a final decision concerning the grievance.

Section II - Academic Grievances

For Grievances of Academic Issues Related to Grades, Course Information, Course Content, Faculty Conduct, Performance, or Attitude

The Seminary specifically assigns to the individual faculty member responsibility for establishing grade criteria and the subsequent assignment of grades upon evaluation of student work.

(Matters related to dropping and adding courses are dealt with by petition through the registrar's office. Matters related to excessive absences are dealt with by petition through the graduate programs committee.)

In the case that a discussion of the issue with the professor or administrator involved does not resolve the issue, the following procedure should be followed:

1. The student completes, signs, and delivers the Student Grievance Form to the director of Student Life, who will then contact the appropriate person(s) to attempt to establish a resolution to the grievance.
2. If the situation remains unresolved, the matter will be addressed by the executive vice president, who will attempt to establish a resolution to the grievance. The student may request that a student council representative or another faculty member attend the meeting as well.
3. The executive vice president will make a final decision concerning the grievance.

Section III – Administrative Grievances

For Grievances of Administrative Issues Related to Support Services

1. The student completes, signs, and delivers the Student Grievance Form to the director of Student Life, who will then contact the appropriate persons(s) to attempt to establish a resolution to the grievance.
2. If the situation remains unresolved, the matter will be addressed by the executive vice president, who will attempt to establish a resolution to the grievance. The student may request that a student council representative or another faculty member attend the meeting as well.
3. The executive vice president will make a final decision concerning the grievance.

Section IV – Harassment Grievances

Grievances of Academic or Administrative Issues Related to Harassment

Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary respects the personhood of all individuals, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, or religion. The Seminary, therefore, will not tolerate the abuse of individuals regarding these matters. It is the Seminary's policy to maintain an atmosphere free from all forms of harassment, which includes sexual harassment, whether verbal or physical.

This policy is directed at verbal and physical conduct that constitutes discrimination/harassment under state and federal law and is not directed at the content of speech. In cases in which verbal statements and other forms of expression are involved, MABTS will give due consideration to an individual's constitutionally protected right to free speech and academic freedom.

Sexual harassment is prohibited by Seminary policy as well as by federal and state law. Sexual harassment includes all unwelcomed sexual overtures or advances including, but not limited to, offensive jokes, comments, innuendos, or other sexually oriented statements; requests for sexual favors; and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly as terms or conditions of a student's academic achievement, or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions regarding the student's academic status, or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a student's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive learning environment.

If a student feels that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment, normally the offense is to be initially reported to the president's office within 48 hours. A written complaint should include the name of the person(s) involved, the specific nature of the offense, and the date that it occurred. The president's office will conduct a thorough investigation of the complaint, and appropriate remedial action will be taken. Any information as is gathered will be treated as confidentially as practical. Where investigation confirms the offensive behavior, prompt corrective action will be taken with appropriate redress to the complaining party. Students reporting incidents of sexual harassment or cooperating with an investigation thereof will be protected from reprisals in any form. The confidentiality of the parties involved will be protected throughout the investigation, and only those parties whom the president deems necessary to have knowledge of the case will be informed. If the offense involves the president, the student should submit their report to the executive vice president's office.

Any employee found to be guilty of violating this policy will be disciplined, up to and including termination. Likewise, disciplinary measures will be applied in any instance determined fabricated for malicious reasons.

If the student feels that he or she has been subjected to any type of harassment (other than sexual), the offense may be reported to the president's office, or the student may follow the steps below:

1. The student completes, signs, and delivers the Student Grievance Form to the director of Student Life, who will forward the grievance to the president's office within 48 hours to establish a resolution to the grievance with appropriate personnel.
2. If the situation remains unresolved, the matter will be addressed by the president, who will attempt to establish a resolution to the grievance.
3. After a thorough investigation, the president will make a final decision concerning the grievance.

Section V – Honor Code Violations

Each Student Agrees:

- I understand and will support and follow the Honor Code.
- I will not personally use unauthorized materials, and I will not participate with others in cheating.
- I will not facilitate cheating, and if I become aware of violations of academic or moral integrity, I understand that I have a responsibility to the Seminary community and will at least say something to the student involved or discuss the situation with a professor or the appropriate dean.

Academic work is evaluated on the assumption and the expectation that the work presented is the student's own unless designated otherwise. Anything less is unacceptable and is considered academically dishonest. Collaboration, plagiarism, and cheating—all defined below—are considered forms of academic dishonesty, and students guilty of such are subject to disciplinary action.

- **Collaboration:** Submission of a paper that is paraphrased from, or identical to, another student's paper. A "paper" is defined as "any materials submitted by a student for credit in a course."
- **Plagiarism:** Submission of a paper in which substantial portions are paraphrased without documentation or are identical to published or unpublished material.
- **Cheating:** The improper use of books, notes, another student's tests, or other aids during an examination. It is the responsibility of the student to get approval for the use of such aids prior to the time of the examination, and without such approval, they will be considered improper. An "examination" is defined as "any testing situation in which the score will be used for credit in a course."

Failure on a student's part to live up to this Honor Code becomes the concern of the appropriate dean and faculty advisor. (It is assumed, however, that any matter of concern in this area between members of the Seminary community will first be dealt with according to the principles of Matthew 18:15–22.) All disciplinary matters are subject to review before a Student Disciplinary Committee. This committee is composed of the dean of women or the dean of men, as chairperson, the faculty advisor of the student in question, the president of the Student Council, and one other faculty member.

Due process in dealing with disciplinary problems is primarily for protecting the reputation of a student against false or unsupported accusations. The purpose of disciplinary action is always redemptive, with every effort made to help the student involved to gain insight into his or her own needs and motivations as a potential minister in Christian service. Where there is evidence of personality and character weaknesses that would make it unwise for a student to continue in preparation for the ministry, the student is given counsel to help him or her see that fact.

A student disciplinary committee will handle all cases referred to it by the appropriate dean and will be the appellate body for decisions made by the dean that are appealed by the student. The committee will handle any case involving the possible dismissal of a student; dismissal may only take place by action of the faculty. The student will receive a written statement of charges against him or her. He or she may be accompanied by a personal representative, may bring witnesses on his or her own behalf, and may choose not to answer any of the questions directed to him or her. If either the student disciplinary committee or the student deems the advice of a lawyer necessary, such a person may give any advice he or she believes pertinent; but he or she may not enter into the proceedings and/or deliberations of a student disciplinary committee.

Should the situation warrant it, the student may be given a warning, disciplinary probation, a required leave of absence, or dismissal. Appeal of any action of the Student Disciplinary Committee may be made to the faculty in writing. Further appeal may be made after the faculty's decision to the president of the Seminary. Such an appeal must be in writing, and a personal interview will be granted with the appeal.

If the student feels that he/she has witnessed a violation of the honor code, or if they themselves have violated the honor code, they are to take the following steps below:

1. The student completes, signs, and delivers the Student Grievance Form to the director of Student Life, who will then contact the appropriate person(s) to attempt to establish a resolution to the grievance.
2. If the situation remains unresolved, the matter will be addressed by the executive vice president, who will attempt to establish a resolution to the grievance. The student may request that a student council representative or another faculty member attend the meeting as well.
3. The executive vice president will make a final decision concerning the grievance.

Section VI – Academic Grievances

For Grievances Related to Compliance with the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA)

Complaint Resolution Policies and Procedures for Non-Tennessee Resident Students in State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement States, Commonly Known as SARA

Student complaints relating to consumer protection laws that involve distance learning education offered under the terms and conditions of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), must first be filed with the institution to seek resolution.

Complainants not satisfied with the outcome of the Institution's internal process may appeal, within two years of the incident about which the complaint is made, to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (<https://www.tn.gov/thec/bureaus/student-aid-and-compliance/postsecondary-state-authorization/request-for-complaint-review.html>).

For purposes of this process, a complaint shall be defined as a formal assertion in writing that the terms of SARA or the laws, standards or regulations incorporated by the SARA Policies and Standards (<http://www.nc-sara.org/content/sara-manual> (<http://www.nc-sara.org/content/sara-manual/>)) have been violated by the institution operating under the terms of SARA.

For a list of SARA member States, please visit the NC-SARA website (<http://nc-sara.org/sara-states-institutions> (<http://nc-sara.org/sara-states-institutions/>)). Students residing in non-SARA states should consult their respective State of residence for further instructions for filing a complaint.