



MFT STUDENT COMPLAINT & GRIEVANCE POLICY

Purpose & Scope

This policy establishes a clear, timely, and fair process for receiving, reviewing, and responding to student concerns, complaints and grievances within the Master of Arts in Marriage & Family Therapy (MFT) program. It incorporates the Touro University System Student Complaint Policy and is designed to meet COAMFTE Accreditation Standards, Version 12.5, Standard I-C (Plan for Assessing Environmental Supports).

Definitions

- **Concern:** A student concern relates to minor issues of dissatisfaction that may be solved informally between the student and the MFT Program without the necessity of filing a formal Complaint/Grievance. A student Concern that is unable to be resolved informally may become a formal Complaint/Grievance.
- **Complaint/Grievance:** A student's formal allegation that a published policy, procedure, or a student right has been violated, or other expression of dissatisfaction or concern about program operations, services, or interactions, that has adversely affected the student and that seeks a response or resolution. A Complaint/Grievance must be filed by the student through the University Student Voice System (USVS) student portal or through alternative methods as provided below.
- **School Director:** An academic administrator who receives and coordinates complaint processes per the Touro System policy when applicable.
- **Program Director:** The MFT Program Director or designee who oversees program-level complaint intake, response, and escalations.

Policy Statement

Students are encouraged to resolve Concerns at the lowest appropriate level and as early as possible. Retaliation against any person who, in good faith, raises a Concern, files a Complaint/Grievance, or participates in a review is strictly prohibited. This policy does not govern matters covered by other established processes (e.g., Title IX, discrimination/harassment, academic integrity, student conduct, grade appeals); such matters are addressed by the applicable University policies and handbooks. In the event that any process, procedure, or requirement outlined in this Policy conflicts with or differs from those stated on the Touro University Worldwide website or Catalog, the processes, procedures, and requirements in this Policy shall take precedence and supersede the corresponding provisions in the Touro University Worldwide website or Catalog.

Roles & Responsibilities

- **Student**
 - Raises a Concern, or files a Complaint/Grievance, with supporting information and desired remedy;
 - Cooperates in fact finding.
- **Faculty/Staff**
 - Engages in informal resolution of Concerns where appropriate;

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- Forwards formal Complaints/Grievances promptly to the Program Director or designated intake office.
- Program Director
 - Acknowledges receipt;
 - Coordinates review;
 - Ensures timely written communication of actions and resolution;
 - Determines when escalation is required.
- School Director
 - Point of contact identified by the Touro System policy for formal complaints that fall under University jurisdiction;
 - Provides oversight, ensures conflict-free decision making, and maintains official records for formal complaints, in the University Student Voice System (USVS) and/or official University systems.
- Provost/CAO or Designee
 - Final reviewer on appeal where specified;
 - Ensures impartiality.

Procedures and Timelines

Informal Resolution

Students should first attempt to resolve Concerns informally with the involved faculty/staff member or relevant office. An informal resolution may occur at any time and may obviate the need for a formal Complaint/Grievance process.

- 1) Upon written notification of a Concern, the Program Director (or their designee) will contact the student to request an appointment to discuss the alleged Concern.
- 2) If applicable, the student may request that the Program Director (or their designee) facilitate an informal meeting or mediation. Any informal meeting or mediation is up to the sole and absolute discretion of the Program Director (or their designee).
- 3) After investigating the incident and meeting with the student – and where applicable, after the informal meeting or mediation – the Program Director (or their designee) will render a decision within five (5) business days, in writing, of the disposition of the Concern and, if applicable, inform the student of any action items.
 - a. Should a student accept the Program Director’s (or their designee’s) decision, the action items will be effective immediately.
 - b. Should a student reject the Program Director’s (or their designee’s) decision, the student shall follow the formal Complaint/Grievance process.

Formal Complaint/Grievance

- 1) **Where to file:** Formal Complaints/Grievances must be submitted through the University Student Voice System (USVS) via the student portal, or by email/written submission to the Program Director or School Director (per the Touro System policy).
- 2) **What to include:**
 - a. Student name and contact information;
 - b. Respondent/office;

- c. Description of the issue with dates and supporting documentation;
 - d. Relevant policy/procedure if known;
 - e. Remedy requested.
- 3) **Filing window:** Formal Complaints/Grievances should be filed within sixty (30) business days of the alleged incident or when the student reasonably became aware of it. Formal Complaints/Grievances may not be submitted unless the Informal Resolution process (described above) has been completed or the student receives special dispensation from the Program Director (or their designee) to forego the Informal Resolution process.
 - a. If a Formal Complaint/Grievance is filed after the conclusion of the Informal Resolution process, the student shall have ten (10) business days to submit their Complaint/Grievance.
- 4) **Acknowledgment:** The Program Director (or designee) will acknowledge receipt in writing within two (2) business days and advise the student of next steps and anticipated timelines. If the Program Director is the alleged offender in the student's Complaint/Grievance, then the University shall designate an alternative member of the program to oversee this process.
- 5) **Initial review:** Within five (5) business days of acknowledgment, the Program Director (or designee) will determine jurisdiction (program vs. university), assign an investigator if needed, and notify relevant parties.
- 6) **Hearing:** Within ten (10) business days of determining jurisdiction, a Grievance Reviewer or ad hoc Grievance Committee (chaired by an Academic Affairs representative not previously involved) will be appointed. Parties will be offered an opportunity to be heard. The student may request to waive the hearing, which request shall not be unreasonably withheld. In the event the hearing is waived, the Grievance Reviewer or Grievance Committee will be afforded five (5) business days to review the student's written Complaint/Grievance before proceeding to the next step in this Formal Complaint/Grievance process.
 - a. Once a Grievance Reviewer or Grievance Committee is appointed, a hearing will be scheduled no later than five (5) business days from any such appointment. Postponements of the hearing may be made by the interested parties, but in any case, may not exceed two (2) business days.
 - b. During the hearing, both the student and the alleged offender will have an opportunity to present their case, including any submission of supporting evidence. At any time during the hearing, the Grievance Reviewer or any member of the Grievance Committee may raise questions about the information under review so that all aspects of the Complaint/Grievance are clarified.
- 7) **Resolution target:** The Grievance Reviewer or Grievance Committee Chair will present their findings and recommendations, in writing, to the Program Director (or their designee) within three (3) business days of the conclusion of the hearing. The Program Director (or their designee) will endeavor to provide a written determination with actions and rationale within thirty (30) days following the Grievance Reviewer's or Grievance Committee Chair's recommendations, stating findings, conclusions, and remedies, and will be provided to the student and relevant administrators. If additional time is needed due to complexity or unavailability of parties, the student will receive written status updates at least every ten (10) business days until resolution.
- 8) **Appeal:** Within five (5) business days of the decision, the student may appeal to the Provost/CAO (or designee). The Provost/CAO will review the matter and may only sustain the appeal on the basis of one of the following:
 - a. Evidence of bias of the Grievance Reviewer or one or more of the members of the Grievance Committee.
 - b. New material documenting information that was not available to the Grievance Reviewer or Grievance Committee at the time of the initial decision.
 - c. Procedural error.

The Provost/CAO will endeavor to issue a final written decision within fifteen (15) business days. If more time is required, the Provost/CAO will notify the student accordingly.

- 9) **Written closure:** A closing communication will be sent to the student summarizing findings, actions taken, and the resolution. The case will be marked closed/resolved in USVS and records retained per University policy.

Communication, Documentation, and Recordkeeping

All formal Complaints/Grievances, including communications, investigative materials, determinations, and actions taken, will be documented in the University Student Voice System (USVS) and/or official University systems. The student will receive written acknowledgment, status updates when timelines extend, and a closing communication detailing actions and resolution. Records will be maintained in accordance with University record retention policies and applicable laws and kept confidential to the extent permitted.

Publication and Accessibility

This policy will be published on the program's public web page, in the University Catalog/Student Handbook, and linked within the USVS portal so that it is accessible to students, prospective students, faculty, staff, and the public.

External Complaint Options (after internal processes)

If a matter cannot be resolved internally or falls within the jurisdiction of an external body, students may pursue the following, as applicable:

- WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) – Comments/complaints portal at <https://www.wscuc.org/resources/comments/>.
WASC Senior College and University Commission
1080 Marina Village Parkway Suite 500
Alameda, CA 94501
Phone: 510-748-9001
Fax: 510-748-9797
www.wscuc.org.
- California Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education (BPPE) – Complaint process for California residents/programs. Website address: <https://www.bppe.ca.gov/enforcement/complaint.shtml>, email: bppe.enforcement@dca.ca.gov or Phone: (916) 574-8900 Toll Free: (888) 370-7589. All other complaints may be filed with the appropriate state agency in students' state of residence.

Physical Address:

Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education
1747 North Market Blvd., Suite 225
Sacramento, CA 9583

- Hawaii Post-Secondary Education Authorization Program (HPEAP) – For Hawaii authorization and complaints.
Submit your complaint to:
Hawaii Post-Secondary Education Authorization Program
Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs
P.O. Box 541
Honolulu, HI 96809

hpeap@dcca.hawaii.gov

Complaint Process: <https://cca.hawaii.gov/hpeap/student-complaint-process/>

File a Complaint: <https://cca.hawaii.gov/consumer-complaints/>

- NC-SARA consumer protection process for distance education (non-NY residents), after exhausting internal remedies at <https://nc-sara.org/sara-student-complaints-0/> .
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs feedback channels for recipients of VA education benefits. Students who receive military tuition assistance or veterans' benefits may submit complaints to the Postsecondary Education Complaint System, the VA hot-line, or the Principle of Excellence Complaint Intake Questionnaire (see <https://www.benefits.va.gov/GIBILL/Feedback.asp>)

Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

The program will annually review Complaint/Grievance data (e.g., volume, time to acknowledgment and resolution, themes, and actions taken) and solicit feedback from communities of interest. Findings will inform corrective actions and be shared with program and institutional leaders as part of the program's environmental supports review.

How to File / Contact

- **Primary intake:** University Student Voice System (USVS) via the student portal.
- **Alternative:** Email or written submission to the MFT Program Director/School Director, and/or the Compliance Hotline (Compliance@Touro.edu).