

DISABILITY SERVICES GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Meredith College students certified through Disability Services who have a complaint related to the determination of eligibility for and/or the provision of disability-related services are entitled to a prompt and equitable resolution of her/his complaints.

Informal Grievance Process

Provision of Services

Students with concerns regarding the provision of services are encouraged to advocate for themselves by discussing initial concerns directly with Meredith College faculty or staff. They may request support from Disability Services staff to prepare for this conversation.

In the event the issue is not resolved, the student should meet with a Disability Counselor and/or the Assistant Director for Disability Services to further address the issue.

Disability Services staff will work with college faculty and/or staff and the student to resolve the concern. Students are strongly encouraged to pursue every means possible to resolve a grievance informally before filing a formal grievance.

Formal Grievance Process

Submitting a Grievance

If the issue cannot be resolved, or the student is still dissatisfied with the outcome of the informal grievance process, the student has the right to submit a formal written grievance and any relevant documentation to the Dean of Students within 60 days of the alleged issue. External deadlines, such as pending graduation, will not impact the grievance timeline or decision-making process. If extenuating circumstances warrant the grievance to be filed beyond the 60-day deadline, an appeal must be submitted to the Dean of Students for permission to file the grievance.

Disability Grievance Subcommittee

The Meredith College Disability Grievance Subcommittee is charged with the responsibility of handling formal grievances filed by students certified with Disability Services. The Dean of Students serves as a neutral party and guides the student through the grievance process.

The Disability Grievance Subcommittee will be comprised of an odd number of members as follows:

- Three (3) Meredith College employees who are current or former members of the Meredith College Disability Panel. These individuals will be selected collaboratively by the Dean of Students and the student filing the grievance.

Subcommittee Chair: The Subcommittee and the Dean of Students will designate a chair to lead the committee during this grievance process.

- Subcommittee members reserve the right to opt out of serving if their participation is or could be perceived as a conflict of interest.
- In the Dean's absence, or if the Dean of Students' participation is perceived as a conflict of interest, a designee, such as the Assistant Dean of Students, will be asked to assume the role of the neutral party.

Review of Grievance

The Disability Grievance Subcommittee will review the written grievance and supporting documentation submitted by the student. The subcommittee's scope of review will be confined to whether or not there is clear and convincing evidence that the student has been treated unfairly because of a disability and/or whether or not the student's rights, as an individual with a disability, have been violated.

If general documentation or legal information related to Disability Services policies and procedures are required during the review process, the subcommittee will request general information from the Disability Services staff. Confidential student information will NOT be provided unless the student has agreed to release specific documentation.

Grievance Hearing

Within 20 working days of filing the formal grievance, the student will be asked to appear before the subcommittee to present her/his case and answer questions posed by the committee. To prepare for the hearing, the student may ask a currently employed Meredith faculty or staff person to serve as her/his consultant. This person will not be allowed to actively participate in the proceedings of the hearing but may attend to provide moral support and additional student advisement. Disability Services staff can only serve to provide consultative services to assist with the interpretation of legal rights and responsibilities.

When appropriate, other involved parties will be officially summoned to present their interpretation of events surrounding the issue. This may include Meredith College faculty, staff and students.

The Decision

The subcommittee will take all information into consideration, making a final decision within ten working days of the hearing unless delayed by extenuating circumstances. The decision will be communicated in writing (via email) to the student, Dean of Students, and the Assistant Director for Disability Services. Given the nature of the grievance, additional action involving related departments may be required. (Example: Residence Life, Registrar's office, Academic department)

At the discretion of the Dean of Students and Assistant Director for Disability Services, the outcome of the grievance hearing may be shared with other key faculty and staff to improve practices, policies, and procedures at Meredith College. Any identifiable information specific to the student will remain confidential to the extent possible to resolve issue. Likewise, the student has the right to limit information disclosed, understanding that relevant information withheld may impact the outcome of the process.

Next Steps

If the grievance is not resolved, or the student is still dissatisfied with the decision, an appeal can be submitted to the appropriate Vice President and/or Provost within five working days of written notification. Selection of the administrator will be based on the nature of the grievance issue, and the Dean of Students will assist the student to determine the appropriate administrator.

The designated Vice President and/or Provost will review the subcommittee's findings and make a decision within ten working days of receipt of the appeal, unless an extension is warranted. The decision will be communicated in writing to the student, Dean of Students, and Assistant Director for Disability Services. The decision of the Vice President and/or Provost will be final.

If after going through the informal and formal grievance procedures the issues have not been resolved to the student's satisfaction, as a student of Meredith College he or she has the right to file a formal complaint with the Office for Civil Rights with the U.S. Department of Education.

How to File a Discrimination Complaint with the Office for Civil Rights
<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/howto.pdf>