

Dispute resolution guidelines for graduate students

The Department of Geosciences is committed to providing a safe and productive learning environment for graduate students (see our Code of Conduct). Graduate study comes with expectations for both students and advisors; familiarize yourself with these by reviewing the Departmental handbook for your degree. In general, as a graduate student in the Department of Geosciences, you bear the primary responsibility for academic and research progress and completing your degree. You are expected to conduct your research in an ethical manner, and complete research and teaching duties in line with your appointed position as an RA or TA. Your advisor's and committee's role in this process is to support and guide you so that you complete your degree successfully, and to help prepare you for a rewarding career. This may include requiring you to take certain courses and meet research deadlines. Graduate school can be a challenging and stressful endeavor, and disputes may arise with other students, with your advisor, or with other faculty members. In general, disputes can often be resolved or avoided by maintaining good two-way communication with your primary advisor and your advisory committee.

Steps to resolving disputes:

1. Schedule a meeting with your advisor to discuss the issue(s), expectations, timelines, and solutions.
2. Meet with other members of your advisory committee to obtain feedback and advice.
3. In the event that you feel that your concerns are not satisfactorily addressed by your advisor and committee, or your concerns are of a nature that you would rather not discuss them with your advisor and/or committee, you should report the issue to the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS)*. The DGS will help counsel and, if necessary, mediate the issue(s).
4. If the problem remains unresolved, you are advised to write a letter to the Department Head**. The letter should include a concise statement of the allegations, a summary of the informal attempts at resolution, and a suggested remedy. The Department Head will meet with the Department Head Advisory Committee within thirty days of the written request to discuss the issue. They will deliver a letter with a decision, or a set of recommended actions to remediate the situation, within two weeks of meeting. NOTE: in pursuing this action, keep in mind that your written request, and the Department response, will remain on file as a permanent record given the seriousness of the issue. Therefore this process should be reserved for disputes that cannot be resolved through any of the above remediation steps (#1-3).

5. If efforts to resolve the grievance within the Department have failed, a formal grievance complaint may be filed with the Graduate College, which also maintains a Grievance Policy. As noted on the Graduate College grievance summary page, there are some issues not addressed by their policy and procedures. A grievance procedure is available to graduate students who have complaints that:
 - a. Allege violation of a specific University rule, regulation, policy or practice.
 - b. Are not remediable by other University grievance policies and procedures.
 - c. Are within the decision-making jurisdiction of the Graduate College.

*If there is a conflict of interest with the Director of Graduate Studies, you may contact the Department Head or Associate Department Head instead.

**If there is a conflict of interest with the Department Head, or the Department Head is not available, the letter may be addressed to the Associate Department Head or another member of the Department Head Advisory Committee.