Soran University

Student Grievance Policy

English translation

To: The Honourable President of the University

Subject: Policy

Greetings and respect,

Attached to our letter we forward to you a copy of the Student Grievance Policy. Kindly inform us of its approval.

With respect.

Contents

Purpose of the Policy
Policy Summary
Responsible Office
Policy History
Implementing Bodies of the Policy
Scope of the Policy
Policy Statement
Definitions
Principles of the Policy
First: Academic Grievance Procedure
    Level One: Appeal of the grievance with the Faculty Member
    Level Two: Head of Department and the Academic Grievance Committee
Second: Non-Academic Grievance Procedure
    Level One: Non-academic grievance with the Unit Director
    Level Two: Vice President for Student Affairs
Third: Mediation
Fourth: Appeal Procedure
Appendix 1: Statement of Academic Grievance Report Form
Appendix 2: Statement of Non-Academic Grievance Report Form
Appendix 3: Grievance Appeal Form (to the University Presidency)

Purpose of the Policy

This policy has been drafted with the aim of establishing an effective and transparent system so that Soran University deals with student grievances in an impartial manner. It also lays the ground for creating an environment of trust in which students' right to voice their complaints, and to have them resolved promptly and equitably, is guaranteed.

Policy Message

To raise students' confidence in the administrative and academic processes of the University by providing a clear and fair framework for responding promptly and appropriately to the questions and problems raised by students.

Policy Summary

This document sets out the legal and administrative framework for the process of submitting formal grievances by students. The policy clarifies the stages of informal resolution, formal grievances (academic and non-academic) through the Student Information System (SIS), and the statutory response periods at the level of the University Presidency, the faculty, and the scientific department.

Responsible Office

Document owner:	Secretariat of the Vice President for Student Affairs (General Directorate of University Registration). Directorate of Quality Assurance and Programme Development.
Review:	Policies and Guidelines Committee of Soran University.
Approval and implementation:	Soran University Council.
Implementation supervisor:	Secretariat of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Policy History

Date of approval: _____

Date of revision: _____

Implementing Bodies of the Policy

Deans of faculties, heads of scientific departments, the Examination Committee, the Higher Grievance Committee, and the Directorate of Human Resources (HR).

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all students of Soran University who wish to lodge a grievance concerning a violation, problem or decision relating to students.

- Problems and complaints relating to student conduct are dealt with according to the procedures set out in the Student Code of Conduct.
- If a student has a complaint concerning the conduct of Soran University staff, the complaint must first be submitted to the Secretariat of the Vice President for Student Affairs, then forwarded to the Directorate of Human Resources (HR) and handled in accordance with the Employee Code of Conduct Policy.
- If the legal and academic relationship of the complainant or the respondent with Soran University has been severed, the procedures of this policy do not apply to them and any pending processes are terminated.

Policy Statement

This policy sets out the formal process through which students may submit their grievances, and also sets the University's response periods. It affirms students' rights to a review and an appropriate resolution of their grievances. Before starting the formal grievance process, students are encouraged to seek an informal resolution. This may take place through direct discussion between the parties concerned in order to reach a mutually agreed solution, or through mediation by an impartial person. If informal resolution is unsuccessful, the student may proceed to the formal grievance stage. Students have the right to lodge a grievance or request a review in accordance with the Student Grievance Process.

Definitions

- **Grievant:** any student who submits a grievance by email, by the dedicated grievance link, or in writing.
- **Academic Grievance:** a complaint made by a student, formally or informally, concerning unfair or improper treatment in the course of a study course that has caused harm to the student. This definition does not cover cases of academic misconduct and inappropriate behaviour (such as cheating and forgery).
- **Non-Academic Grievance:** a complaint made by a student, formally or informally, concerning arbitrary treatment that violates established policies and procedures and causes real harm outside the academic context. Examples of non-academic grievances include: failure to provide reasonable accommodation for persons with special needs, problems of access and admission to the University, unfair treatment, and certain disputes between lecturers, staff and students, and the like. This does not cover cases of harassment, since incidents of harassment are dealt with under the Anti-Harassment Policy.
- **Academic Judgement:** procedures relating to the awarding of marks and assessment, the method of assessment, consideration of special circumstances (academic accommodations), and other requests relating to academic achievement, which are decided on the basis of scholarly judgement. These matters do not fall within the grievance process but must be handled as an appeal against an academic decision.
- **Unreasonable Complainant Conduct:** any conduct by a complainant which, by its nature or frequency, raises problems for the health, safety, resources (administrative, financial, etc.) or the course of justice of the University and its staff. This includes unreasonable demands, unfounded persistence, and disruptive behaviour.
- **Grievance Register:** a central system for recording all grievances at all levels of the University, containing quantitative and qualitative data for analysis and reporting.
- **Anonymous Complaint:** a complaint submitted by a person without identifying himself/herself. In special cases (a complete case or a significant incident) the University may investigate an anonymous complaint.
- **Mediator:** an impartial, trained person who helps the parties concerned reach a mutually agreed solution through structured dialogue.

Principles of the Policy

The University is committed to the following principles when dealing with student grievances:

- **Personality:** a grievance must be submitted only by the student who has been directly harmed by the conduct or decision giving rise to the grievance. Students do not have the right to lodge a grievance by proxy on behalf of other persons or a group.
- **Gravity:** a grievance must not be submitted if its only basis is an expression of dissatisfaction with the University's approved general policies on the grounds that they are unfair or inappropriate.
- **Informal resolution:** it is recognised that the best and fastest way to resolve grievances is normally through the informal process.
- **Timely resolution:** the University is committed to the prompt and effective resolution of student grievances within the limits and statutory periods specified in this policy.
- **Fairness and impartiality:** every grievance is dealt with fairly, in a manner that ensures an objective and appropriate resolution.
- **Ease and accessibility:** the University must provide appropriate and accessible procedures and channels so that all students can submit their grievances. Any Reasonable Adjustment must be made available by the University so that students can use this process equally and without barriers (for example, students with special needs or those with learning difficulties).
- **Confidentiality:** the principle of confidentiality is respected throughout the grievance process, except where disclosure of information is necessary for the investigation.
- **Protection from retaliation:** students who raise a grievance in good faith will not face any negative consequence or unjust penalty, even if their grievance is not upheld through the formal process.
- **Compliance with policies:** the grievance process fully complies with the University's approved policies and procedures, in accordance with the Employee Code of Conduct, the Student Code of Conduct, and the Anti-Harassment Policy.
- **Right of withdrawal:** students have the right to withdraw their grievance before the process formally begins.
- **Representation:** complainants must represent themselves in any grievance, but may, where necessary, seek advice and guidance from other persons within the University campus.

First: Academic Grievance Procedure

The formal grievance process must begin within ten (10) working days of the date of the formal registration of

the matter complained of. The grievance is formally recognised from the date on which the Academic Grievance Report Form is submitted to the faculty member (see Appendix 1).

Level One: Appeal of the grievance with the Faculty Member

- A student who has a complaint about a specific mark or assessment, or the mark of a module, must first attempt to resolve the matter directly with the lecturer concerned. Appeals against mid-term and final module marks are made through the Student Information System (SIS) and are then directed to the Examination Committee.
- The student must ask the lecturer for clarification of the marking decision, present his/her observations and reasons for disputing the mark, and aim to reach an informal resolution through discussion. If an informal resolution is not reached between the student and the lecturer, the student may formally appeal by submitting the Academic Grievance Report Form to the lecturer. This form must be sent through the Student Information System (SIS) in order to preserve the records.
- Upon receipt of the form, the lecturer concerned must provide a written decision, with an explanation, in the appropriate section of the form; this decision must be shared with the student within ten (10) working days. If the student takes no further action within five (5) working days of receiving the lecturer's decision, the decision is considered final and conclusive.
- If the student is not satisfied with the outcome, or receives no response within ten (10) working days, he/she may proceed to Level Two of the grievance process.

Level Two: Head of Department and the Academic Grievance Committee

- If the student wishes to continue the appeal after the lecturer's decision (or absence of a response), he/she must escalate the grievance by resubmitting the original Statement of Academic Grievance Report Form, with the relevant section completed and the lecturer's written response (if any) attached, to the Head of Department within five (5) working days.
- Upon receipt of the said documents, the Head of Department reviews the case and, within ten (10) working days, confirms whether the appropriate Level One appeal procedures were followed, and informs the student. If the student has not followed the appropriate procedures, the Head of Department informs the student of the Level One requirements that must be met before any further action. If, however, the student has correctly followed the Level One appeal procedures, the Head of Department provides a written assessment in the appropriate section of the grievance form and refers the form to the Academic Grievance Committee.
- The Committee must convene within five (5) working days, except where there is a legitimate reason. All discussions remain confidential and closed to external parties. A written recommendation is submitted to the Head of Department within five (5) working days of the conclusion of the discussions. The Committee must record its decision in the appropriate section of the grievance form; the decision is communicated by the Head of Department to all parties concerned.

The decision of the Academic Grievance Committee is final and conclusive, except in those cases set out in the section "Appeal Procedure" of this policy.

Second: Non-Academic Grievance Procedure

The formal process must begin within ten (10) working days of the date of the formal registration of the matter complained of. The non-academic grievance process formally begins on the date on which the Statement of Non-Academic Grievance Report Form is submitted to the relevant authority (see Appendix 2).

Level One: Non-academic grievance with the Unit Director

Any student who has a complaint about an administrative decision must first, before submitting a written grievance, attempt to resolve the matter with the head of the administrative unit concerned. The student must present his/her observations and concerns and try to understand the reasons behind the administrative decision. The aim of this meeting is to establish mutual understanding and to resolve the matter informally and amicably.

If the attempts at informal resolution are unsuccessful, the student may submit a written grievance, using the Non-Academic Grievance Report Form, to the director of the administrative unit concerned. Upon receipt of the completed form, the director must provide a written decision, with an explanation, in the appropriate section of the form; this decision must be communicated to the grievant within five (5) working days.

If the student takes no further action within five (5) working days of receiving the Unit Director's decision, that decision is considered final and conclusive. If, however, the student is not satisfied with the decision, or receives no response from the head of the unit within five (5) working days, he/she may proceed to Level Two of the grievance process to lodge a formal appeal.

Level Two: Vice President for Student Affairs

If the student decides to pursue the grievance after receiving the decision or recommendation of the Unit Director, he/she may escalate the matter within five (5) working days to the Vice President for Student Affairs. The student must submit the Non-Academic Grievance Report Form (attached with the Unit Director's response, if any).

Within five (5) working days, the Vice President for Student Affairs determines whether the Level One procedures were correctly followed. If they were not, the Vice President for Student Affairs requests that the appropriate steps be taken. The Vice President for Student Affairs decides either to dismiss the case or to form a committee. If the case is dismissed, the Vice President for Student Affairs must complete the appropriate section of the Non-Academic Grievance Report Form and share the completed form with the grievant.

The Committee convenes within five (5) working days, except where there is a legitimate reason, after receipt of the grievance form and after the Vice President for Student Affairs has confirmed that the Level One and Level Two procedures were correctly followed. The Committee issues a written recommendation, which must be recorded in the appropriate section of the Non-Academic Grievance Report Form within five (5) working days of the conclusion of the discussions. This recommendation is sent to all parties concerned through the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs.

The decision of the Committee is final and conclusive, except in those cases set out in the section "Appeal Procedure" of this policy.

Third: Mediation

At any stage of the grievance process, the University may propose Mediation as an alternative means of resolving the matter.

- The mediator must be an impartial and trained person accepted by both parties.
- Mediation must be with the consent of both parties, and no party may be compelled to participate.
- If mediation is unsuccessful, the formal grievance process resumes at the level at which it was paused.
- The mediator must sign a Confidentiality Agreement before the process begins.

Fourth: Appeal Procedure

If a student, the faculty member concerned, or a member of University staff believes that a breach of the procedures set out in this process has occurred, he/she may appeal the Committee's decision by submitting the Grievance Appeal Form (see Appendix 3), with the relevant documents attached, to the President of the University within five (5) working days of the date of issue of the Committee's written decision. The President of the University has full authority to take any necessary steps to carefully review the grievance procedure, and then issues a final and binding decision. This decision is communicated in writing to the student and all parties concerned within five (5) working days of the submission of the appeal, except where there is a legitimate reason.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Statement of Academic Grievance Report Form

Soran University — Student Grievance Policy — Forms
Appendix One: Academic Grievance Registration Form

Please record only one grievance per form. Additional pages may be used for the same grievance if necessary. Use separate forms for new or different grievances.

Section A: To be completed by the grievant

Name:	Student ID number:
Email:	Mobile:

Information about the grievance:

Module:	Assessment:	Date of decision/incident:

Grievance details: Provide a clear and concise summary of the basis of the grievance:

Name of grievant: _____
Signature of grievant: _____
If this form was completed by another person, name of that person: _____
Date of submission: _____

Section B: For the faculty member only

Date of receipt of Section A: _____

Faculty member identification:

Name:	Position/Department:
Email:	Mobile:

Response to the grievance: Provide a clear and concise summary and explanation of the response:

Name of faculty member: _____
Signature of faculty member: _____
Date the grievant was notified: _____

Section C: To be completed by the Dean only

Date of receipt of Sections A and B, if applicable: _____
Confirmation that the Level One procedures were correctly followed: ☐ Yes ☐ No
If the Level One procedures were followed:
Grievance dismissed: ☐ Yes ☐ No
If the grievance is dismissed, give the explanation for dismissal below:

If a committee is formed, provide a clear and concise summary of the final decision:

Name of Dean: _____
Signature of Dean: _____
Date the grievant was notified: _____

Appendix 2: Statement of Non-Academic Grievance Report Form

Please record only one grievance per form. Additional pages may be used for the same grievance if necessary. Use separate forms for new or different grievances.

Section A: To be completed by the grievant

Name:	Student ID number:
Email:	Mobile:

Grievance details: Provide a clear and concise summary of the basis of the grievance:

Name of grievant: _____

Signature of grievant: _____

If this report was completed by another person, name of that person: _____

Date of submission: _____

Section B: For the administrative staff member only

Date of receipt of Section A: _____

Administrative staff member identification:

Name:	Position/Department:
Email:	Mobile:

Response to the grievance: Provide a clear and concise summary and explanation of the response:

Name of administrative staff member: _____

Signature of administrative staff member: _____

Date the grievant was notified: _____

Section C: Vice President for Student Affairs

Date of receipt of Sections A and B, if applicable: _____

Confirmation that the Level One procedures were correctly followed: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If the Level One procedures were followed:

Grievance dismissed: ☐ Yes ☐ No

If the grievance is dismissed, give the explanation for dismissal below:

If a committee is formed, provide a clear and concise summary of the final decision:

Name of Vice President for Student Affairs: _____

Signature of Vice President for Student Affairs: _____

Date the grievant was notified: _____

Appendix 3: Grievance Appeal Form (Appeal on Procedural Grounds to the University Presidency)

This form is used to appeal a grievance decision under the "Appeal Procedure" section of the Student Grievance Policy.

An appeal may be submitted only on the grounds of a suspected breach of the procedures set out in the Student Grievance Policy. The completed form and supporting documents must be submitted to the President of the University within five (5) working days of the date of the Committee's written decision.

Section A: To be completed by the person submitting the appeal

Name:	Student ID number (if applicable):
Role: ☐ Student ☐ Faculty ☐ Staff	
Email:	Mobile:

Type of grievance being appealed:

☐ Academic grievance

☐ Non-academic grievance

Date of the Committee's decision: _____

Section B: Grounds of appeal

An appeal must be based solely on a breach of the grievance procedures.

☐ I, as the grievant, believe that a breach of the grievance procedures has occurred.

Please explain briefly which procedure was breached. (Identify the specific steps of the Grievance Policy that were not carried out in accordance with the policy.)

Explanation:

Section C: Supporting evidence and copies to be attached

☐ Original grievance registration form

☐ Committee decision

☐ Relevant correspondence

☐ Additional supporting evidence

List the attachments below:

Section D: Declaration

I declare that this appeal is submitted in good faith and is based solely on a breach of the set of grievance procedures as set out in the Student Grievance Policy.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date of submission: _____

Section E: Presidency review (office use only)

Date of receipt of the appeal: _____

Was the appeal submitted within five (5) working days? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Grounds confirmed as a claim of breach of the set of procedures: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Decision of the Presidency:

☐ Appeal dismissed – no breach of the set of procedures found

☐ Appeal upheld – breach of the set of procedures confirmed

Action taken (if applicable):

☐ Case returned for re-review

☐ Decision amended

☐ Other (specify): _____

Final decision by:

Name of University President: _____

Signature: _____

Date of decision: _____

Date the parties were notified: _____