



SABARAGAMUWA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

Policy Title – Internal Student Grievance Redressal Policy - SUSL

Policy Number – Policy / SUSL / Gov & Mgmt / 08

Date of Senate Approval –14.12.2021

Date of Council Approval – 24.01.2022

Effective Date –24.01.2022

Revised Dates – NA

Approving Authority – The Council, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka

Administrative Responsibility – The Vice Chancellor, Deans, Senior Student Counsellor, Deputy Senior Student Counsellors, Heads of Departments, Student counsellors, Student mentors, Director/Students' welfare, Senior Assistant Registrar/Academic and Student Services Division are responsible for the implementation of this policy on Internal Student Grievance Redressal.

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that an established and streamlined mechanism exists in the University for Students to submit a grievance and also to provide a framework to investigate and resolve student grievances straightaway in a fair, just and confidential manner. This is intended to create a conducive and relaxed environment for students and will help them to concentrate on their studies.

Currently the University have provided several parallel mechanisms to handle student grievances as listed below:

- Faculty level service of mentors (members of the academic staff of the Faculty, individually assigned to each student)

- Faculty level service of the student counsellors (members of the academic staff of each Faculty, appointed by the vice-chancellor, upon an application made by the relevant academic staff member)
- Service of the Senior Student Counsellor of the University, (a senior member of the academic staff appointed by the Vice-Chancellor)
- Service of Deputy Senior Student Counsellors (senior member of the academic staff, appointed by the vice-chancellor, for each Faculty)
- Services Provided by Wardens and Subwardens of the university hostels
- Services provided by the Student Welfare Director of the University
- Services provided by the Academic and Student Services Division of the University, under the relevant Senior Assistant Registrar
- Services provided by the Career Guidance Unit of the University
- Services provided by the Psychological Counselling Unit of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Languages (*'Sith Arana'* Psychological Counselling Unit)
- Services provided by the Centre for Gender Equity and Equality

However, there is a need to streamline all above mechanisms making it easy for a student to forward their grievances through the correct channel. Having a good grievance handling process will help to solve the students' problems before they become too difficult to handle and solve.

Scope:

This policy is applicable to all internal students enrolled in the University This policy covers all the internal degree programmes offered by the University.

Legislative context:

This policy is supported by the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, Prohibition of Raging and Other Forms of Violence in Educational Institutes Act, No 20 of 1998, the Establishments Code of the UGC, the UGC University Student Charter of 2012, UGC Circulars, Internal (University) Circulars and Circular Letters.

Definitions:

- a. University - Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL)
- b. Faculty - Any Faculty of the University
- c. Department - Any academic Department of any Faculty
- d. CQA - Centre for Quality Assurance of the University
- e. CCS - Centre for Computer Studies of the University

- f. Council - Council of the University
- g. UGC - University Grants Commission
- h. Staff - All staff members of the university whether they are permanent or non-permanent or outsourced.
- i. Grievance - A real or perceived cause for complaint/appeal, dissatisfaction, disagreement or dispute, concerning a student for which resolution is being sought. Grievances must be related directly to the student's studies and/or to the student well-being at the University.
- j. Grievant - The student who has a grievance
- k. Complaint/Appeal - A written application by a complainant to have a decision affecting the complainant/appeal investigated
- l. Complainant - The student raising the grievance/The mentor raising the grievance for the student (mentee).

Policy statement:

The University always supports a healthy and happy learning environment in which the diversity is appreciated and inclusion is ensured avoiding any form of discrimination, with a convenient, transparent and an easy to understand mechanism in place to resolve internal student grievances related to their academic and/or personal matters and the student well-being, straightaway in a fair, just and confidential manner. University treats every internal student grievance as important to settle and pays attention to settling grievances promptly. University accepts the right of appeal by internal students, if a student is dissatisfied over the given solution by the grievance redressal process.

Mechanisms of getting to know grievances and their redressal

University adopts a wide variety of methods to get to know and redress the grievances of employees.

1. Observation, Casual/Informal Discussions and Resolution – It is a general tendency that some of the grievances that the students suffer are not brought to the notice of the relevant staff members verbally or in writing. Therefore, the student mentors, student counsellors, Heads of the Department, Deputy Senior Student Counsellors and the Senior Student Counsellor needs to be vigilant about the behaviours of students to identify whether they have unvoiced grievances. To manage these kinds of grievances, all the relevant staff members should be competent to observe behavioural deviations of students. Having observed any

behavioural deviation, the relevant staff member shall informally discuss with the student on the grievance and settle it as immediately as possible.

2. This policy identifies the need to develop the competence of the academic staff to read student behavior.
3. This policy identifies the need to develop a system to track the student performance at the Department level - A student analytics mechanism to track their academic performance is proposed to be established under each Department Head and to be handled by the student counsellors of the relevant Department. The CCS will assist the initial establishment of this digitized system, which needs to be maintained at the Department under the secretary. This system should progressively monitor digitized assignment marks for each student to detect any abnormality in the student's performance. All the marks should be digitized through a common format (i.e. Google Sheet, Excel Sheet). A dashboard should be developed to analyze the patterns with a report mechanism.
4. A formal grievance complaint / appeal – A formal mechanism to forward grievances as an individual complainant and get them resolved. The formal grievance complaint /appeal should be submitted in the form of a confidential hard document or a password protected attachment to an email to the Dean/Deputy Senior Student Counsellor, through a standard format. This can even be submitted by the complainant and the mentor together or individually by a single party without informing the other party.
5. Open Door Method – An internal student can forward their grievances directly to the Dean of the Faculty, Director/Student welfare or the Vice-Chancellor of the University without forwarding through the Mentor(s), Student Counsellor(s), Head of the Department, the Deputy Senior Student Counsellor or the Senior Student Counsellor, however with a prior appointment from the top-level management.
6. Faculty Board Meeting – Student representatives of the faculty are given the opportunity to air their collective academic matters/grievances at the faculty Board meeting of each faculty. The Faculty Board shall redress the academic grievances of students.
7. Student Welfare Meeting – Faculty level student welfare meetings to redress welfare related collective grievances. This meeting is represented by the Dean of the faculty, HODs and the Assistant Registrar (AR) of the faculty and student representatives.
8. Student Satisfaction Survey – A Student Satisfaction Survey is proposed to be conducted annually with a view to identify potential grievances and create a happy learning environment.
9. Student Grievance Redressal Committee- A committee that is appointed by the Dean of the relevant Faculty to redress grievances that are channeled through a formal grievance complaint on a case-by-case basis.

10. Student Grievance Appeal Committee – A committee that is appointed by the Director/Student welfare of the University to hear and settle appeals of grievances, when the grievant/complainant is not satisfied with the formal grievance resolution mentioned above.
11. The policy also identifies the need for the development of an online system to report authentic grievances, which should be confidentially received by the relevant authorities and handled through the same operational procedure.
12. Confidentiality and information management - It is of utmost importance that the student grievance handling mechanism is incorporated with a well implemented confidential information management system. The progress of handling each grievance should be clearly documented and filed under the Deputy Senior Student Counsellor at the Dean's office.

Implementation:

Please refer to the SOP No. CQA/SOP/Stu Sup/2021/01

Supporting Documents:

The Universities Act No. 16 of 1978

Prohibition of Raging and Other Forms of Violence in Educational Institutes Act, No 20 of 1998

Human Right Code of Practice

The UGC University Student Charter of 2012

Equality and non-discrimination policy – SUSL, approved at 253rd Senate and 276th Council held in 30.10.2021.

Student Mentoring Policy – SUSL in Internal Quality Assurance policy document, approved at 236th Senate held in 31.12.2019 and the 257th Council held in 24.02.2020.

Policy for Psychological Counselling Services and Handling Distressful Situations for students – SUSL in Internal Quality Assurance policy document, approved at 236th Senate held in 31.12.2019 and the 257th Council held in 24.02.2020.

Policy for Gender Equity and Equality – SUSL

Faculty policy on student grievance handling and resolution, Faculty of Applied Sciences of October, 2021

Promulgation:

- (i) This policy will be circulated as a printed document among all the internal students of the university at the time of enrollment. New students will be educated on the policy during the University/Faculty Orientation Programme.
- (ii) This policy will be circulated as a printed document among the members of the Academic Staff of the Faculty
- (iii) This policy will appear under 'Student Support' tab in the University/Faculty Website
- (iv) This policy will be made available via a 'Downloads' link of the CQA web page of the University website

This policy is prepared by a committee suggested by the Senate Standing on Quality Assurance, SUSL (32nd SSC-QA meeting, held in August 2021). Senate approval for the committee was at its 255th meeting held in 14.09.2021.

Composition of the committee

Dr. M. Sandun J. Perera (chair)

Dr. H.P. Rasika Priyankara (Member)

Prof. H.A.D. Ruwandeepika (Member)

Mr. Saman Uyangoda (Member)

Ms. P. Gayani Imanthika Dias (Secretary)

*****Remarks: Initial version of this policy was developed as the student grievance handling and resolution mechanism of the Faculty of Applied Sciences by Dr. M. Sandun J. Perera in consultation of the academic staff members of the Faculty.***

******This has been approved at the 258th Senate held on 14.12.2021 and at the 280th Council held on 24.01.2022***