

MFT Program Policy on Student Concerns, Complaints, and Grievances

Policy Availability

The **Policy on Student Concerns, Complaints, and Grievances** is available to the public via the [MFT Homepage > Accreditation > Policies and Handbook](#).

MFT Documentation of Concerns and Complaints

In the interests of maintaining a learning environment in which students, faculty, and staff are safe, treated fairly and with respect, the MFT Program maintains the following policy on how to proceed in the event of a concern, complaint, or grievance.

Definitions of Concerns, Complaints, and Grievances

The MFT Program follows [VSU policy and procedures on student concerns and complaints/grievances](#), which align closely with the definitions outlined in COAMFTE Accreditation Standards V12.5 glossary:

Student Concerns are informal and relate to minor issues that can be solved between individuals such as student/instructor or student/program director and are usually communicated to the program director or program faculty verbally or through informal written communication (i.e., email). Examples may include concerns about course scheduling, timeliness of faculty feedback, etc. Programs do not generally keep formal records of student concerns, although they should have a policy in place for responding to them

Student Complaints and Grievances refer to formal complaints filed with the program and/or the university through a formal grievance channel. They refer to issues that may violate students' rights. Examples include sexual harassment and discrimination. COAMFTE requires all educational programs to maintain a written record of all formal student complaints and grievances. The documentation should consist of written complaints or grievances, program action, and resolution. Records regarding the resolution of grievances are generally kept on file for a period of time based on the program's and/or university's policy.

How to Report and Respond to a Student Concern (informal)

An aspect of becoming a professional is learning to effectively seek resolution for disagreements, concerns, and complaints in an appropriate and professional manner. The MFT faculty consider the ability to engage in a respectful interchange of ideas and concerns with peers, supervisors, faculty, and staff to be an important part of students' professional development and an important graduate student level skill as well as the most expeditious route to problem resolution. Most student concerns can be effectively addressed and resolved between the student and the involved peer or faculty member(s).

- A. When a student has an informal concern or wishes to lodge a complaint, they should speak first, when appropriate, with the student, faculty, or staff member involved.

- B. If the complainant believes that a direct conversation might inflame the matter or does not feel comfortable meeting with the involved faculty/staff/student to discuss a concern, they should request to meet with a trusted advisor, faculty member, Program Director, or Clinical Coordinator. This meeting will include discussion of the problem, what the student would consider to be a resolution to the problem, and how they would like to proceed after this initial meeting. Notes will not be retained unless the meeting proceeds to a formal procedure.

- C. Faculty response to a student concern is expected to be timely and made within the time frames set forth by university policy (see [VSU policy and procedures on Student Concerns and Complaints/Grievances](#)).

How A Student Reports a Complaint or Grievance (written)

To file a complaint or grievance, click on [Student Concerns and Complaints/Grievance](#), and identify the correct form or online report. Complaint and grievance reports are submitted online or using forms designated by the university, in accordance with VSU policy and procedures on [Student Concerns and Complaints/Grievance](#).

How Faculty Respond to a Student Complaint or Grievance

Faculty response to a written student complaint or grievance is submitted online or using forms designated by the university, in accordance with VSU policy and procedures on [Student Concerns and Complaints/Grievance](#).

Record Retention

MFT Program faculty will adhere to the University System of Georgia (USG) [USG Records Retention Schedules](#) for guidance regarding the length of time records/documents of complaints and grievances shall be kept on file.

The program will retain confidential *Master List of Formal Complaints, Grievances & Appeals* (A. MFT Program > Accreditation folder > MFT Policies > Policy on Student Concerns, Complaints, and Grievances). This list contains a record of all written complaints or grievances, the process by which it was handled, the program response, and the resolution. The Master List will not contain complainants' names or identifying information.

Process for Continuous Improvement

Within a reasonable period not to exceed 90 days from the time a complaint, grievance, or appeal is submitted, the Program Director, a faculty or staff member will bring the overarching problem that prompted the complaint or grievance to the full MFT faculty and facilitate a

discussion of the qualitative data therein for the purpose of continuous program improvement. Questions to be explored include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Is there a program lack/deficiency/failure to act/etc. that played a role in the student's experience leading to the complaint, appeal, or grievance?
 - a. if a lack/failure can be identified, is there something the program can do to correct it?
2. Did the efforts to resolve the complaint, appeal, or grievance follow established COEHS policy and procedure?
 - a. if not, why not?
3. Does the policy and/or procedure for reporting and responding need revision?