

Grievance Policy of East West University (EWU)

1. PREAMBLE

East West University (EWU), located in Aftabnagar, Dhaka, is a leading private university in Bangladesh established in 1996 under the Private University Act of 1992. Recognized among the top private universities in the country, EWU is committed to academic excellence, cutting-edge research, and meaningful community engagement. The University promotes Eastern cultural values while effectively integrating Eastern and Western ideas and innovations. Its administrative structure is designed to ensure strong governance and efficient management across both academic and operational domains. In addition to its academic programs, EWU offers a wide range of support services that enhance overall student experience. The University has also established several specialized centers to develop students' entrepreneurial skills and support new venture creation. EWU maintains extensive facilities, including libraries, research units, sports complexes, and cultural centers, to enrich learning and campus life. The University Administration is committed to fostering a healthy, supportive, and professional working environment for all its academic and administrative staff.

2. SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 Scope

EWU's grievance policy is a statement that outlines how the organization deals with work-related complaints. The policy is part of the grievance procedure, which every employer should have in place. This policy applies to all members of the university community, including students, faculty members, administrative staff, and contractual employees. It ensures that every individual associated with EWU has the right to raise a complaint or concern in a fair and transparent manner.

2.2 Definition of Grievance

A grievance refers to any formal complaint, concern, or expression of dissatisfaction raised by a member of the University community, including students, faculty, administrative staff, or contractual employees, arising from real or perceived unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment, or violations of university rules, policies, or ethical standards. Grievance may involve acts, decisions, or omissions by any individual or office within the University that adversely affect the rights, welfare, or legitimate expectations of the complainant. Grievances may also encompass procedural irregularities, denial of entitlements or benefits, lack of transparency in decision-making, workplace conflicts, or any conduct that undermines the principles of fairness, equity, and respect within the University environment. All grievances shall be addressed through a fair, confidential, and timely redress process to uphold trust, accountability, and institutional integrity. Grievances may include, but are not limited to, the following categories, each requiring different mechanisms for redress and investigation:

2.2.1 Academic Grievances: These relate to teaching, learning, and evaluation matters such as unfair grading, biased assessment, denial of academic rights, supervision issues, or discrepancies in course registration and examination processes. Such grievances are generally handled at the Department or Faculty level under academic regulations.

2.2.2 Administrative Grievances: These arise from issues related to university management, facilities, or services, such as delays in administrative processing, staff misconduct, miscommunication, or denial of benefits and entitlements. These are investigated by the relevant administrative office or section head, depending on the nature and seriousness of the complaint.

2.2.3 Personal or Social Grievances: These cover matters affecting personal dignity, safety, or well-being within the university environment. Examples include harassment, discrimination, threats, accommodation, and welfare-related issues. In cases involving gender sensitivity or harassment, the procedure outlined in the Bangladesh High Court's 2009 Guideline will apply, as adopted in the East West University Sexual Harassment Elimination and Prevention Policy.

3. GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

The following institutional principles govern the grievance redress mechanism:

- 3.1 Due Process:** All complaints shall be heard and adjudicated in accordance with established procedures that ensure fairness and impartiality.
- 3.2 Confidentiality:** All grievance-related records, testimonies, and proceedings shall be treated as confidential and disclosed only on a need-to-know basis or as required by law.
- 3.4 Non-Retaliation:** No complainant or witness shall be subject to reprisals or adverse treatment for filing or participating in a grievance proceeding.
- 3.5 Timeliness:** Grievances must be processed within clearly defined timelines to prevent undue delays.
- 3.6 Equitable Treatment:** All parties shall be afforded equal opportunity to be heard and to present evidence.
- 3.7 Administrative Accountability:** Committees and officers responsible for grievance handling are obligated to act diligently and objectively.

4. TYPES OF GRIEVANCES

Grievances covered by this Policy include, but are not limited to:

- 4.1 Academic Grievances:** Evaluation disputes, supervision concerns, academic decisions, and related procedural matters.
- 4.2 Administrative Grievances:** Service delays, miscommunication, procedural lapses, or denial of entitlements.
- 4.3 Employment-Related Grievances:** Workplace conflicts, disciplinary actions, duty assignments, discrimination, denial of benefits, or breaches of employment policy.
- 4.4 Personal or Social Grievances:** Conduct affecting dignity, welfare, or safety, including harassment and discrimination as defined under the High Court Guidelines (2009).

5. Grievance Handling Guidelines:

EWU operates under the jurisdiction of the Private Universities Act 2010, which governs the establishment, administration, and regulatory framework of private universities in Bangladesh, ensuring fairness, quality education, and the availability of appropriate grievance procedures. This Act remains the principal legal authority for guiding institutional practices. EWU places the highest priority on fair and equitable management practices to ensure prompt and just resolution of grievances. The University follows an open-door policy, allowing students or employees to submit complaints directly to the Head of the Department, Dean of the Faculty, Section Head, Proctor, or Registrar. This approach ensures that grievances are

addressed at the lowest appropriate administrative level and resolved in the shortest possible time, thereby preventing unnecessary escalation and reducing distress for the aggrieved person.

6. Grievance Handling Procedure:

EWU's principal goal is to create a positive environment while upholding the legal rights of its faculty, officers, and staff. The grievance redress policy is constructed as an acceptable mechanism for responding to unfair practices. Therefore, all concerned must adhere to the following guidelines to ensure the transparency and credibility of the Grievance Policy:

6.1 Interviewing guidelines:

The individual lodging a grievance is required to present the nature and details of the complaint to the Department Head or Chairperson, who will subsequently outline the steps that may be taken to address the matter. The authority responsible shall hear the complainant in private and, where necessary, visit the location of the incident to obtain relevant information. If further action is warranted, the case must be forwarded to the appropriate superior together with a complete history of the matter and all evidence collected, in accordance with EWU policies and rules. In carrying out these responsibilities, superiors must maintain a positive and unbiased approach toward both the complainant and the respondent, uphold the equal rights of all parties throughout the process, and provide appropriate guidance and emotional support to ensure fairness and adherence to procedural integrity.

6.2 Steps of Grievance Handling

EWU's grievance process is structured to ensure efficiency and fairness, with detailed steps inspired by university practices:

6.2.1 Informal Resolution:

At East West University (EWU), the informal resolution process for grievances encourages individuals to resolve issues by directly communicating with the parties involved (whether it's a student, faculty member, or staff member). This should be done within 14 working days of the incident or when the authority becomes aware of it.

If direct discussion is considered uncomfortable, complainants may approach the Department Head/Chairman for assistance. The respondent is required to provide a response, either orally or in writing, within 10 working days, aiming for an amicable solution, with discussions documented informally to maintain clarity.

If the grievance is resolved to the complainant's satisfaction, the process concludes; otherwise, the complainant may raise the issue to the next step within 7 working days. The entire informal resolution is targeted to be completed within 14 working days of the initial contact, ensuring a swift and supportive approach to conflict resolution.

6.2.2 Formal Complaint:

The process begins when complainants submit a written complaint to the Department/Section-Level Committee within 21 working days of the incident, including details such as (a) the issue, (b) supporting evidence, (c) desired redress, and (d) prior attempts at informal resolution.

The Committee, chaired by the Department Chairman/Head, then conducts a preliminary inquiry within 15 working days, interviewing relevant parties and reviewing evidence before providing a written response to the complainant.

If the matter is resolved, the case closes; if unresolved, it is escalated to the faculty-Level Committee within 7 working days. The entire process aims for resolution within 3 weeks of the initial filing.

6.2.3 Department and University-Level Committee

Upon the submission of a formal grievance, the matter is reviewed at both the Department/Section and University levels to ensure fairness, transparency, and appropriate escalation, as needed.

6.2.3.1 Department/Section-Level Committee (Step 1)

Upon receipt of a grievance, the Department/Section-Level Committee shall make an initial effort to resolve the issue within one week. If the grievance is minor and amenable to an amicable settlement, the committee shall address it promptly. However, the grievance may involve more serious concerns or require the attention of higher authorities. In that case, the committee must forward the case, along with its initial findings and the response from the Head/Section In-charge, to the faculty-level Committee within 10 working days.

6.2.3.2 Faculty-Level Committee (Step 2)

Upon receiving the grievance, the Faculty-Level Committee will attempt to resolve the issue by convening a grievance hearing with the affected parties. If the grievance is mild, the committee should aim for an amicable resolution within one week. If the issue cannot be resolved satisfactorily, the grievance will be forwarded to the University-Level Grievance Committee within 10 working days, along with a formal statement from the Department/Section Head.

Within 14 working days of receiving the grievance, the Faculty-Level Committee will further investigate the matter, if necessary, to understand the causes and details of the situation. This investigation includes reviewing the roles of those involved, the duration of grievance, and any other relevant factors. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the resolution at this stage, the case will be forwarded to the University-Level Grievance Committee for further review.

6.2.3.4 University-Level Grievance Committee (Step 3)

If the complainant remains unsatisfied after the Faculty-Level Committee's decision, the case will be raised to the University-Level Grievance Committee. This committee will review the grievance, the responses from the Department/Section and Faculty-Level Committees, and any additional findings. The committee shall then prepare a report for submission to the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor within 7 working days. If further investigation is needed, the committee may extend the review period by an additional 7 working days. The Vice Chancellor shall make a final decision based on the committee's report or refer the matter to the Management Committee if deemed necessary.

6.2.3.5 Grievance Committee

The primary responsibility of the Grievance Committee is to critically review the complaint and all recommendations made by the Department/Section and Faculty-Level Committees. Upon receiving grievance, the Committee shall conduct a thorough inquiry and prepare a comprehensive report on its findings. The Grievance Committee must then forward the case, along with its comments, to the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor for final approval within 7 working days. If the Grievance Committee determines that the matter requires further investigation, they may choose to reinvestigate the grievance. In case of reinvestigation, the Committee may take an additional 7 working days to submit its revised report to the

Hon'ble Vice Chancellor. Upon review, the Vice Chancellor may either render a decision based on the Committee's report or refer the matter to the Management Committee for further action, depending on the severity of the complaint.

The Grievance Committee shall:

- a. Receive and investigate all complaints with strict impartiality.
- b. Recommend appropriate resolutions to the Academic Council or Syndicate, as applicable.
- c. Ensure full protection of complainants from retaliation, maintaining strict confidentiality throughout the process.
- d. Address any baseless or malicious complaints through appropriate measures, in order to uphold institutional integrity.

6.3 Appeal:

At East West University (EWU), complainants have the right to challenge a grievance decision by submitting a written appeal to the University Syndicate within 10 working days. The appeal must outline the grounds for contesting the decision. Upon receipt of the appeal, a five-member panel, convened to ensure impartiality, will review the case within 20 working days. The panel's review will focus on ensuring procedural fairness and evaluating any new evidence presented. If necessary, the panel may hold meetings with the parties involved to clarify details of the grievance. The panel will issue a final decision, which will be communicated in writing to all parties involved. This decision is binding, unless the complainant opts for external arbitration. The appeal process is designed to provide a timely and fair resolution within 21 working days, ensuring that all parties are given a full and equitable opportunity to present their case.

7. Conclusion

EWU's Grievance Redress Policy ensures a fair, transparent, and efficient mechanism to address concerns, fostering trust and academic integrity. EWU will organize annual awareness programs and capacity-building workshops to familiarize all community members with the grievance redress process. By integrating global best practices, EWU empowers its community to resolve disputes collaboratively, reinforcing its commitment to excellence and equity.

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