

**Texas Woman's University  
Educator Preparation Program  
Complaint Process**

**DEFINITIONS**

*Educator Preparation Program (EPP):* Academic programs at Texas Woman's University leading to educator certification in any field and level in which TWU is approved by the State Board of Educator Certification to offer such certification.

*Stakeholders:* A candidate or former candidate in the Texas Woman's University (TWU) educator preparation program (EPP), an applicant for candidacy in the TWU EPP, an employee or former employee of the TWU EPP, a cooperating teacher, a mentor, or an administrator in a school district, charter school, or private school.

*EPP Representative:* A faculty or staff member at TWU who has responsibility for directing or coordinating one or more specific certification programs within the EPP and/or has responsibility for making decisions regarding any aspect of an EPP certification program.

*EPP Director:* The Dean of the College of Professional Education at TWU.

*Days:* Does not include weekends, holidays, or days between academic sessions. In calculating time lines under this policy, the day a document is filed is "day zero." The following business day is "day one."

*Response:* At Levels One and Two of the complaint process, "response" shall mean a written communication to the stakeholder from the appropriate EPP Representative or EPP Director. Responses may be hand-delivered, sent by electronic communication to the stakeholder's e-mail address of record, or sent by U.S. Mail to the stakeholder's mailing address of record.

**INFORMAL PROCESS**

TWU's EPP encourages stakeholders to discuss their concerns with the appropriate EPP representative who has the authority to address the concerns. Concerns should be expressed as soon as possible to allow early resolution at the lowest possible level. Informal resolution of a complaint is encouraged but shall not extend any deadlines in this process, except by mutual written consent. Even after initiating the formal complaint process, stakeholders are encouraged to seek informal resolution of their concerns. A stakeholder whose concerns are resolved may withdraw a formal complaint at any time.

**FREEDOM FROM RETALIATION**

Neither the EPP nor any EPP representative shall unlawfully retaliate against any stakeholder for bringing a concern or complaint.

**GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR FILING A COMPLAINT**

Complaint forms and appeal notices may be filed by hand-delivery, electronic communication, including e-mail and fax, or by U.S. Mail. Hand-delivered filings shall be timely filed if received by the appropriate EPP representative by the close of business on the deadline. Filings submitted by electronic communication shall be timely filed if they are received by the close of business on the deadline, as indicated by the date and time shown on the electronic communication. Mail filings shall be timely filed if they are postmarked by U.S. Mail on or before the deadline and received by the appropriate EPP representative no more than three days after the deadline.

**CONSOLIDATING COMPLAINTS**

Complaints arising out of an event or a series of related events shall be addressed in one complaint. A stakeholder shall not file separate or serial complaints arising from any event or series of events that have been or could have been addressed in a previous complaint.

**UNTIMELY FILINGS**

All time limits shall be strictly followed unless modified by mutual written consent. If a complaint form or appeal notice is not timely filed, the complaint may be dismissed, on written notice to the stakeholder, at any point during the complaint process. The stakeholder may appeal the dismissal by seeking a review in writing

within ten days from the date of the written dismissal notice, starting at the level at which the complaint was dismissed. Such appeal shall be limited to the issue of timeliness.

### **COSTS INCURRED**

Each party shall pay its own costs incurred in the course of the complaint.

### **COMPLAINT AND APPEAL FORMS**

Complaints and appeals under this policy shall be submitted in writing on a form provided by the EPP. Copies of any documents that support the complaint should be attached to the complaint form. If the stakeholder does not have copies of these documents the complaint should specify where the documents can be found and accessed. After the complaint has been filed, no new documents may be submitted by unless the stakeholder did not know the documents existed before filing the complaint. A complaint or appeal form that is incomplete in any material aspect may be dismissed but may be refiled with all the required information if the refiling is within the designated time for filing.

### **LEVEL ONE**

Complaint forms must be filed:

1. Within 15 days of the date the stakeholder first knew, or with reasonable diligence should have known, of the decision or action giving rise to the complaint or grievance; and
2. with the lowest level EPP representative who has the authority to remedy the alleged problem.

If the complaint is not filed with the appropriate EPP representative, the receiving EPP representative must note the date and time the complaint form was received and immediately forward the complaint form to the appropriate EPP representative. The appropriate EPP representative will investigate as necessary and may request additional information from the stakeholder or from other individuals and, absent extenuating circumstances, provide a response within ten days after receipt of the written complaint.

In reaching a decision, the EPP representative may consider any other relevant documents or information considered helpful in resolving the complaint. The EPP representative will send to the complainant a copy of the original complaint, the representative's proposed resolution and, if the resolution is not satisfactory, instructions to send those documents to the Level Two representative with an appeal for review.

### **LEVEL TWO**

If the stakeholder did not receive the relief requested at Level One or if the time for a response has expired, the stakeholder may appeal the decision with the EPP Director or designee. The appeal notice must be filed in writing, on a form provided by the EPP, within ten days of the date of the written Level One response or, if no response was received, within ten days of the Level One response deadline. After receiving notice of the appeal, the Level One EPP Representative shall prepare and forward a record of the Level One complaint to the EPP Director or designee along with all related documents and information. The stakeholder may request a copy of the Level One record. The Level One record shall include:

1. The original complaint form and any attachments.
2. All other documents submitted by the stakeholder at Level One.
3. The written response issued at Level One and any attachments.
4. Any additional documents used by the EPP Director or designee in Level One.

In reaching a decision, the EPP Director or designee may consider any relevant documents or information the EPP Director or designee believes will help resolve the complaint. The EPP Director or designee shall provide the stakeholder a written response within ten days following the filing of the appeal.

### **COMPLAINTS TO THE TEXAS EDUCATION AGENCY**

If the stakeholder is not satisfied with the complaint process or outcome, the stakeholder may file a complaint against the EPP with the Texas Education Agency. The official Texas Education Agency complaint process can be found at [http://tea.texas.gov/About\\_TEA/Contact\\_Us/Complaints/Complaints](http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Contact_Us/Complaints/Complaints).