



REVISIONS TO THE UNIVERSITY SHRA EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE POLICY

Hello Colleagues,

The following changes to the SHRA Employee Grievance Policy (attached) have been approved by the State Human Resources Commission and the Governor's Office:

Flexibility in Step 2 Deadline

The policy was modified to state that the Step 2 process "generally" is completed within 35 calendar days rather than "completed within 35 calendar days." This change recognizes that the Step 1 process may be completed in fewer days than its allowable 35-day time frame so that the saved time can be applied flexibly to the completion of the Step 2 process. This does not change the statutory requirement that the grievance process be completed within 90 calendar days of the Step 1 filing.

Final University Decision Review

The policy was modified to reflect a revision to the review process of Final University Decisions (FUDs) on grievances. Currently, UNC institutions send their FUDs and related documents to the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) for review. OSHR may confer with UNC General Administration to address any follow-up issues on the FUD prior to OSHR approval.

The revised process has the UNC institutions send their FUDs and related documents to UNC General Administration first. UNC GA will review the documents and work with the UNC institutions on any follow-up issues prior to OSHR final review and approval. This does not change the 10 day calendar deadline for OSHR to complete its review of the FUD. UNC GA will be in communication with UNC institutions during the Step 2 process in order to expedite the OSHR review process at the end.

Title and Formatting Changes

References to "OSHR Mediation Director" were updated to reflect the correct title "OSHR Statewide Mediation Coordinator," and the policy has been reformatted to match other University policies.

Implementation of Policy

The effective date of the new University policy is **May 1, 2017**. Because these changes are largely administrative, the Commission has waived the usual 30 calendar day notice period for the policy revision.

Questions

For questions on policy interpretation and implementation, please contact Gwen Evans, Director of HR Business Partners and Employee Relations at [336-334-4512](tel:336-334-4512) or via email at gdevans2@uncg.edu.

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I. POLICY

It is the policy of The University of North Carolina that the grievance process exists to allow for prompt, fair and orderly resolution of disputes arising out of employment. The University of North Carolina has therefore adopted this Grievance Policy to further these goals as approved by the State Human Resources Commission.

II. OBJECTIVES

In establishing this Grievance Policy, the University seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- A. Provide procedural consistency across The University of North Carolina;
- B. Ensure SHRA employees have access to an internal process to address grievable issues timely, fairly, cost effectively, and without fear of reprisal; and
- C. Resolve workplace issues efficiently and effectively.

III. DEFINITIONS

The following are definitions of terms used in this policy:

| TERM | DEFINITION |
|--|---|
| Applicant | A person (including a current State employee) who submits an application for an initial hire, promotion or reemployment for a SHRA position within the University. |
| Career State Employee | A State employee who is in a permanent position with a permanent appointment and has been continuously employed by the State of North Carolina or a local entity as provided in G.S. 126-5(a)(2) in a position subject to the North Carolina Human Resources Act for the immediate 12 preceding months. Employees who are hired by a State agency, department or university in a sworn law enforcement position and who are required to complete a formal training program prior to assuming law enforcement duties with the hiring agency, department or university shall become career State employees only after being employed by the agency, department or university for 24 continuous months. |
| Complainant (EEO only) | An applicant, probationary State employee, former probationary State employee, career State employee or former career State employee who initiates an informal complaint through the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Informal Inquiry process. |
| Contested Case Issue | A grievable issue that may be appealed to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). |
| EEO/AA Officer | The University Officer responsible for Equal Employment Opportunity / Affirmative Action. |
| Equal Employment Opportunity Informal Inquiry | An informal process for addressing unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation allegations that may facilitate a resolution prior to the filing of a grievance. |
| Final University Decision | The final decision authorized by the Chancellor (or President for SHRA employees at General Administration) that concludes the internal grievance process. |

| TERM | DEFINITION |
|---|--|
| Grievable Issue | A statutorily defined workplace event or action as defined by NC State statute that allows the alleged workplace event or action to be grieved through established grievance procedures for resolution |
| Grievant | An applicant, probationary State employee, former probationary State employee, career State employee or former career State employee who initiates a grievance. |
| Hearing Officer | An officer appointed by the Chancellor or designee to oversee the proceedings of a hearing and submit a proposed recommendation for a Final University Decision. |
| Hearing Panel | A University appointed panel of no less than 3 members selected to conduct a hearing. The designated panel chair has the responsibility to oversee the proceedings of the hearing and submit a proposed recommendation for a Final University Decision. |
| Impasse | An Impasse occurs when Mediation does not result in an agreement. |
| Informal Discussion | An informal process for addressing grievable issues that may facilitate a resolution prior to the filing of a grievance. |
| Internal Grievance Process | The process available to an applicant, probationary State employee, former probationary State employee, career State employee or former career State employee to file a formal grievance based on issues that are defined as grievable by NC State statute. |
| Internal Grievance Process Timeframe | The internal grievance process must be completed within 90 calendar days. Time spent in the Informal Discussion with supervisor and the EEO Informal Inquiry process is not included in the 90 calendar day timeframe. |
| Mediation | The process in which the Grievant and Respondent use an approved OSHR mediator to attempt to resolve a grievance in a mutually acceptable manner. Responsibility for resolving the grievance rests with the parties. |
| Mediation Agreement | The written agreement resulting from the successful resolution of a grievance reached in Mediation. The Mediation Agreement is legally binding on both parties. |
| Mediator | A neutral third party(s) approved by the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) whose role is to guide the mediation process, facilitate communication, and assist the parties to generate and evaluate possible outcomes for a successful resolution. A Mediator does not act as a judge and does not render decisions. |
| Probationary State Employee | A State employee who is exempt from the provisions of the North Carolina Human Resources Act only because the employee has not been continuously employed by the State for the time period required to become a career State employee. |
| Respondent | A designated University representative who will have the authority to negotiate an agreement on behalf of the University to resolve a grievance. |
| University | A constituent institution or employer unit within the 17 campus University of North Carolina System. |

IV. GRIEVABLE ISSUES AND WHO MAY GRIEVE

A. The following issues may be grieved at the University level only.

| WHO MAY FILE | GRIEVABLE ISSUE |
|--|---|
| 1) Career State employee or former career State employee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Overall performance rating of less than “meets expectations” or equivalent as defined in the Performance Management Policy b) Denial of request to remove inaccurate and misleading information from personnel or applicant file (excludes the contents of a performance appraisal and written disciplinary action) c) Items covered in the University’s AA/EEO statement which promote inclusion and diversity, but not within the definition of unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation as contained in NCGS 126-34.02 (b) (1) and (2) |
| 2) Probationary or former probationary state employee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Denial of request to remove inaccurate and misleading information from personnel or applicant file (excludes the contents of a performance appraisal and written disciplinary action) b) Items covered in the University’s AA/EEO statement which promote inclusion and diversity, but not within the definition of unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation as contained in NCGS 126-34.02 (b) (1) and (2) |
| 3) Applicant for University employment (initial hire, promotion, or reemployment) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Denial of request to remove inaccurate and misleading information from applicant file (excludes the contents of a performance appraisal and written disciplinary action) b) Items covered in the University’s AA/EEO statement which promote inclusion and diversity, but not within the definition of unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation as contained in NCGS 126-34.02 (b) (1) and (2) |

B. The following issues must first be grieved through the internal University process. If the Grievant is not satisfied with the Final University Decision, the Grievant may appeal to the Office of Administrative Hearings.

| WHO MAY FILE | GRIEVABLE ISSUE |
|---|---|
| 1) Career State employee or former career State employee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Dismissal, demotion or suspension without pay for disciplinary reasons without just cause b) Involuntary non-disciplinary separation due to unavailability c) All issues listed below which are grievable by a probationary or former probationary employee d) All issues listed below which are grievable by an applicant for University employment e) Denial of reemployment or hiring due to denial of reduction-in-force priority as required by law (G.S. 126-7.1) f) Denial of promotional opportunity due to failure to give priority consideration for promotion to a Career State employee as required by law (GS 126-7.1) |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>2) Probationary State employee or former probationary State employee</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Denial of hiring or promotional opportunity due to failure to post position (unless hiring opportunity is not required to be posted by law) b) Denial of veteran’s preference as provided for by law c) Any retaliatory personnel action for reporting improper government activities (“whistle blower”) as contained in GS 126 d) Unlawful discrimination or harassment based on race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, or political affiliation if the employee believes that he or she has been discriminated against in the terms and conditions of employment e) Retaliation against an employee for protesting (objecting to or supporting another person’s objection to) unlawful discrimination based on race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, or political affiliation if the employee believes that he or she has been retaliated against in the terms and conditions of employment |
| <p>3) Applicant for University employment (initial hire, promotion, or reemployment)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Denial of hiring or promotional opportunity due to failure to post position (unless hiring opportunity is not required to be posted by law) b) Denial of veteran’s preference as provided for by law c) Unlawful discrimination or harassment based on race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, political affiliation, if the applicant believes that he or she has been discriminated against in his or her application for employment d) Retaliation for protesting (objecting to or supporting another person’s objection to) unlawful discrimination based on race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, or political affiliation if the applicant believes that he or she has been retaliated against in his or her application of employment |

V. GRIEVANCE PROCESS FOR ALL GRIEVABLE ISSUES

A grievance or complaint must be filed within **15 calendar days** of the alleged event or action that is the basis of the grievance. Any grievance or complaint that alleges unlawful discrimination, harassment or retaliation shall be addressed and completed through the University Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Informal Inquiry process before being considered in the formal internal grievance process. Except as provided herein, all other grievable issues must first be discussed with the immediate or other appropriate supervisor in the employee’s chain of command or other appropriate personnel or agency or University that has jurisdiction regarding the alleged event or action that is the basis of the grievance prior to filing a formal grievance. Disciplinary action grievances as well as non-disciplinary separation due to unavailability shall proceed directly to the formal internal grievance process.

Disciplinary action grievances (i.e., dismissal, suspension without pay, demotion) that include both an allegation of unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation and an allegation that the disciplinary action lacks just cause shall first be addressed through the University EEO Informal Inquiry process before proceeding to the formal internal grievance process. Likewise, a grievance that involves both a separation due to unavailability and an allegation of unlawful discrimination, harassment or retaliation shall first be addressed through the University EEO Informal Inquiry process before proceeding to the formal internal grievance process.

After the EEO Informal Inquiry process is completed, all grievable issues remaining (including that an unresolved disciplinary action lacks just cause or that an unresolved separation due to unavailability was improper, and any unresolved allegations of unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation) may be considered in the formal grievance process if pursued by the employee as per the procedures below.

VI. UNLAWFUL DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT OR RETALIATION GRIEVANCE PROVISIONS

A. Option 1 -- EEO Informal Inquiry Process for Unlawful Discrimination, Harassment or Retaliation

An applicant for State employment, probationary State employee, former probationary State employee, career State employee or former career State employee (hereafter referred to as Complainant) alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment or retaliation shall first file a complaint with the University Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)/Affirmative Action (AA) Officer within **15 calendar days** of the alleged discriminatory, harassment or retaliatory act that is the basis of the complaint. If the Complainant alleges facts that would constitute unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation as prohibited by law, the complaint will be investigated as a part of the EEO Informal Inquiry process. The EEO/AA Officer will investigate the complaint and determine if the facts related to the allegations support a finding of reasonable cause or no reasonable cause to believe that unlawful discrimination, harassment or retaliation occurred.

The University has **45 calendar days** from receipt of the complaint to investigate and respond to the Complainant, unless the Complainant and the employer mutually agree in writing to extend the time due to occurrences that are unavoidable or beyond the control of either party. Any extension shall not exceed **15 calendar days**.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the University shall communicate the outcome of the investigation in writing to the Complainant.

If there is reasonable cause to believe that unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation occurred, management shall take appropriate action to resolve the matter. If the complaint is successfully resolved, the Complainant will sign a letter of agreement with the University detailing the terms of the resolution.

The University shall ensure that the terms of the agreement under the control of the University are implemented. If the complaint is not successfully resolved, then the Complainant may continue the process by filing a formal grievance within **15 calendar days** of the written response from the EEO Informal Inquiry process.

If the investigation results show no reasonable cause to believe that unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation occurred, the EEO/AA Officer shall inform the Complainant in writing regarding the conclusions of the investigation. If the Complainant disagrees with the conclusions of the investigation, the Complainant may file a formal grievance within **15 calendar days** of receiving the conclusions of the investigation which will commence with Step 1 mediation.

At any point in the grievance process, the Complainant/Grievant has the right to bypass discussions with or review by the alleged offender. Time spent in the Equal Employment Opportunity Informal Inquiry process is not a part of the formal internal grievance process.

B. Option 2 -- External Filing of a Discrimination Charge

The Complainant alleging unlawful discrimination, harassment or retaliation has the right, at any time, to bypass or discontinue the EEO Informal Inquiry process or the formal internal grievance process and file a charge directly with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The Complainant may not, however, file a contested case with the Office of Administrative Hearings if the internal process has not been completed. Filing deadlines may vary.

Information about filing an EEOC charge and deadlines for filing the charge can be found at: <http://www.eeoc.gov/employees/charge.cfm> or by calling the EEOC regional offices located in Raleigh, Greensboro and Charlotte at 1-800-669-4000.

Information about filing through the Civil Rights Division of the Office of Administrative Hearings can be found at: <http://www.ncoah.com/civil/> or by calling 919-431-3036.

C. Option 3 – Simultaneous Internal and External Filing of a Discrimination Charge

An applicant for State employment, probationary State employee, former probationary State employee, career State employee or former career State employee may file simultaneously with the EEOC at any point in either the EEO Informal Inquiry process or the formal internal grievance process.

VII. INFORMAL DISCUSSION

A request for an Informal Discussion must occur within **15 calendar days** of the alleged event or action that is the basis of the grievance. Prior to filing a grievance about any issue which does not involve an allegation of unlawful discrimination, harassment or retaliation, or a disciplinary action, or a non-disciplinary separation due to unavailability, the employee shall first discuss the grievable issue with the immediate supervisor, other appropriate supervisor in the employee's chain of command, or other appropriate personnel or agency or University that has jurisdiction regarding the alleged event or action that is the basis of the grievance.

The employee must clearly declare to the supervisor or other appropriate personnel that the Informal Discussion request is regarding an alleged event or action that is the basis of a potential grievance. The supervisor or other appropriate personnel shall confirm the intention of the requested Informal Discussion with the employee before beginning the process.

The informal process should be completed within a **15 calendar day** timeframe. However, if progress is being made toward a successful resolution to the dispute or if unavoidable circumstances (e.g. illness, academic calendar) require an extension in the timeframe, both parties may agree to an extension. This extension must be agreed to in writing and approved by HR.

The supervisor or other appropriate personnel shall notify Human Resources when an employee requests an informal discussion. The supervisor is responsible for attempting to resolve the grievable issue with the employee.

The University HR Office will serve as a content and procedural resource advisor during these discussions, and work with both parties to strive for a timely resolution to the workplace dispute. The outcome of the informal discussions must be clearly communicated to the employee by the supervisor or other appropriate personnel in writing

If the Informal Discussion is unsuccessful in resolving the grievable issue, the employee may choose to file a formal grievance. If no written response is provided by the supervisor within the **15 calendar day** timeframe, the employee may proceed by filing a formal grievance. Time spent in the Informal Discussion with Supervisor is not a part of the formal internal grievance process.

VIII. FORMAL GRIEVANCE - STEP 1 MEDIATION

The formal internal grievance process begins when a Grievant files a formal grievance request in accordance with the SHRA Grievance Policy. The Grievant must begin the formal internal grievance process by filing a written grievance to the Human Resources Director or designee within the University in accordance with the SHRA Grievance Policy. The Grievant must complete the required informal processes before filing a formal grievance.

The University, upon approval by OSHR, has the discretion to bypass Step 1 and proceed directly to Step 2 in situations involving discipline for jeopardizing campus safety, personal misconduct, or other similar egregious workplace issues. A decision to request bypassing mediation must be approved by the University Human Resource Office and authorized by the Chancellor. The decision to bypass Step 1 only occurs after careful consultation with parties involved in the workplace dispute.

A. Purpose of Mediation

Mediation provides the Grievant and the University Respondent an opportunity to openly discuss the grievance in a neutral environment with the goal of reaching a mutually acceptable resolution.

B. Mediation Process

University Human Resources shall submit the request for mediation within **3 business days** of receipt of the grievance. The mediation process shall be concluded within **35 calendar days** from the filing of the grievance unless the Grievant and the University mutually agree in writing to extend the time due to extenuating circumstances. Any extension of Step 1 will not extend the **90 calendar day** timeline.

C. Location and Time Allocation

Mediation shall be conducted in a location identified by the University and approved by the OSHR Statewide Mediation Coordinator or designee. The mediation shall be scheduled for an amount of time determined by the Mediator(s) to be sufficient. Mediation may be recessed by the Mediator(s) and reconvened at a later time.

D. Office of State Human Resources-Approved Mediators

Only OSHR-approved Mediators will mediate SHRA (employees subject to the State Human Resources Act) grievances for Universities. OSHR will maintain a pool of qualified Mediators to facilitate mediations. Mediators will not be selected from the University requesting the mediation.

E. Mediation Attendees

- 1) Grievant
- 2) Respondent
- 3) The OSHR-appointed Mediator(s).
- 4) The OSHR Statewide Mediation Coordinator and designees may attend Mediations as observers.
- 5) Emergency substitution of a Mediator must be approved by the OSHR Statewide Mediation Coordinator or designee.

Attorneys and other advisors may not attend the mediation. Either the Grievant or Respondent may ask for a recess at any time in order to consult with an attorney or other advisor.

Audiotape, videotape, recording devices, and transmission devices are not permitted during mediation.

F. Post Mediation

- 1) If an agreement is reached, the following shall occur:
 - a) The Grievant and the Respondent will sign a Mediation Agreement that states the terms of agreement and is a legally binding document.
 - b) The original signed Mediation Agreement is provided to the University Human Resources. A copy of the signed Mediation Agreement is provided to the Grievant, Respondent and the OSHR Statewide Mediation Coordinator.
 - c) Human Resources will review the provisions of the Mediation Agreement to assure that the terms comply with the State Human Resources Commission policies or rules, University policies or rules, and applicable State or federal law.
 - d) Human Resources will ensure that terms of the Mediation Agreement that are under the control of the University are implemented.
 - e) The Mediation Agreement shall be maintained on file for three years.
- 2) If an agreement is not reached (Impasse), the following shall occur:
 - a) The Grievant and the Respondent will sign a Notice of Impasse stating that the mediation did not result in an agreement.
 - b) The original signed Notice of Impasse is provided to the University Human Resources Office. A copy of the signed Notice of Impasse is provided to the Grievant, the respondent and the OSHR Statewide Mediation Coordinator.

- c) At the end of the mediation session, the University must provide the Grievant information regarding Step 2 of the internal grievance process and inform the Grievant that the Step 2 filing must be received by the University within **5 calendar days** of the date of mediation.
- d) The Notice of Impasse shall be maintained on file for three years or until any known litigation is completed.

G. Confidentiality of Documents Produced in Mediation

All documents generated during the course of mediation and any communications shared in connection with mediation are confidential to the extent provided by law.

H. Limitations on a Mediation Agreement

The Mediation Agreement shall serve as a written record and shall:

- 1) Not contain any provision(s) contrary to State Human Resources Commission policies, administrative rules, University policies or rules, and applicable state and federal law;
- 2) Not contain any provision(s) that exceeds the scope of the parties' authority; and
- 3) Not be transferable to another state agency or University.
- 4) When Mediation resolves a grievance but it is determined upon review by University Human Resources or OSHR that one or more provisions of the Mediation Agreement do not comply with the State Human Resources Commission policies or rules, University policies or rules, or applicable State or federal laws, Mediation shall be reconvened to resolve the specific issue(s). This will not extend the **90 calendar day** formal grievance period. If the parties are unable to resolve the noncompliance issue(s), the mediation will reach impasse and the Grievant may proceed to Step 2 of the internal grievance process.
- 5) Should additional information or clarification be needed to implement the terms of the Mediation Agreement, communication with all parties may occur remotely. In the event the Mediator that facilitated the mediation is not available, the OSHR Statewide Mediation Coordinator or designee will have the authority to stand in place of the Mediator in these communications.

I. Mediation Agreement Approval

The approval of the Director of Office of State Human Resources or designee is required for mediation agreements that need a personnel transaction to be processed, except where the only personnel action is the substitution of resignation for dismissal. If a mediation agreement involves an exception to State Human Resources Commission policy, the approval of the Director of the Office State Human Resources or designee is required.

J. Mediation Responsibilities

1) Grievant Responsibilities

- a) Attending the mediation as scheduled by the University;
- b) Preparing for the mediation by being able to communicate clear and concise information regarding the issues surrounding the grievance and the remedies sought;
- c) Notifying and receiving approval from University Human Resources, in advance of the scheduled mediation, if occurrences that are unavoidable or beyond the control of the Grievant prevent attendance at the mediation; and
- d) Making a good faith effort to resolve the grievance.

A Grievant who has an unexcused failure to attend mediation as scheduled forfeits the right to proceed with the internal grievance process.

2) *Respondent Responsibilities*

- a) Attending the mediation as scheduled by the University;
- b) Preparing for the mediation by becoming knowledgeable regarding the issues surrounding the grievance and remedies sought;
- c) Notifying and receiving approval from University Human Resources, in advance of the scheduled mediation, if occurrences that are unavoidable or beyond the control of the respondent prevent attendance at the mediation;
- d) Consulting with management, Human Resources and/or legal counsel regarding possible areas of negotiation for grievance resolution; and
- e) Making a good a faith effort to resolve the grievance.

3) *University Human Resources Responsibilities*

- a) Administering the mediation program within the University;
- b) Appointing a University Mediation Coordinator, and other personnel as needed, to manage and schedule mediations;
- c) Ensuring that the Grievant receives appropriate information about the mediation process;
- d) Designating a qualified and informed University representative to serve as the Respondent for each mediation and who will have the authority to negotiate an agreement on behalf of the University that resolves the grievance;
- e) Ensuring that the Respondent is adequately prepared for the mediation to understand possible areas of negotiation for grievance resolution;
- f) Ensuring appropriate personnel (management, Human Resources or legal counsel) are available to respond to any issues that may arise during the course of the mediation;
- g) Designating appropriate personnel to be available to review the terms of the draft agreement to ensure it is complete and contains the necessary information for implementation;
- h) Reinforce the expectations for confidentiality of the Mediation;
- i) Identifying suitable locations for Mediations;
- j) Using only OSHR-approved Mediator(s) for each mediation session;
- k) Reimbursing Mediators for travel at state-approved rates;
- l) Providing nominees for consideration that meet the qualifications set forth by OSHR to be trained as OSHR mediators; and
- m) Assuming financial responsibility for the initial and ongoing training of University nominated mediators.

4) *Office of State Human Resources Responsibilities*

- a) Developing and maintaining mediation procedures and forms;
- b) Establishing mediator eligibility and training requirements;
- c) Maintaining a pool of qualified mediators;
- d) Providing employment mediation training;
- e) Maintaining a process for assigning mediators upon University request;
- f) Ensuring that mediators adhere to the OSHR Mediator Code of Conduct; and
- g) Conducting ongoing studies/analyses to evaluate program effectiveness.

IX. FORMAL GRIEVANCE - STEP 2 – HEARING PANEL/HEARING OFFICER

A. Hearing Process

If Mediation does not result in a resolution at Step 1, the Grievant has the ability to proceed to Step 2 of the internal grievance process. Human Resources will notify the Grievant of the opportunity to present the grievance orally to a Hearing Panel/Hearing Officer outside of the employee's chain of command. The Step 2 filing must be received by the University HR Office within **5 calendar days** of the date of the completion of mediation. The hearing process generally shall be concluded within **35 calendar days of filing Step 2 of the grievance**.

B. Right to Challenge Appointed Hearing Officer or Hearing Panel Members

The Grievant has one opportunity to challenge the appointed Hearing Officer or up to 2 members of the Hearing Panel if the Grievant believes they cannot render an unbiased recommendation due to a real or perceived conflict of interest. The Grievant must submit the basis for the challenge in writing. Human Resources will review the challenge and replace the member(s) as appropriate. If the Grievant wishes to make a challenge, it must be done within **5 calendar days** of receiving the notification of Hearing Officer/Hearing Panel.

C. Hearing Attendees

- 1) The Grievant who initiated the grievance;
- 2) Hearing Officer or Hearing Panel members;
- 3) Witnesses, as approved by the Hearing Officer or Hearing Panel Chair in accordance with the University process; and
- 4) Appropriate University and HR representatives. Attorneys and other advisors may not attend the hearing.

Audiotape, videotape, recording devices, and transmission devices are not permitted during the hearing unless approved by the Chancellor, or designee, of a constituent institution, or approved by the President, or designee, for UNC General Administration.

D. Hearing Participant Responsibilities

1) Grievant Responsibilities

- a) Attending the hearing as scheduled by the University;
- b) Notifying and receiving approval from Human Resources, in advance of the scheduled hearing, if occurrences that are unavoidable or beyond the control of the Grievant prevent attendance at the hearing;
- c) Preparing for the hearing by being able to present clear and concise information regarding the issues surrounding the grievance and remedies sought; and
- d) A Grievant who has an unexcused failure to attend a hearing as scheduled forfeits the right to proceed with the internal grievance process.

2) Hearing Officer/Hearing Panel Chair Responsibilities:

- a) Calling the hearing to order and establishing the process for the proceedings;
- b) Maintaining order and decorum;
- c) Ensuring that all parties are allotted adequate time to present evidence and question witnesses; and
- d) Submitting a proposed recommendation with documentation for a Final University Decision.

3) University Human Resources Responsibilities:

- a) Establishing the use of either a Hearing Panel/Hearing Officer;
- b) Administering the hearing process within the University;

- c) Providing that all parties receive appropriate information about the hearing process;
- d) Establishing a process for the Grievant to challenge the appointed Hearing Officer or Hearing Panel members; and
- e) Consulting with OSHR on the proposed Final University Decision Recommendation.

E. Grievance Presentation

- 1) The Hearing Officer or Hearing Panel Chair will preside over the hearing to allow the parties to present information relevant to the nature of the grievance, facts upon which the grievance is based, and the remedies sought.
- 2) Each party shall be given a fair opportunity to present evidence on the issues to be heard and to question witnesses.

F. Hearing Report, Proposed Recommendation, and Final University Decision

- 1) The Hearing Panel Chair or Hearing Officer will draft a hearing report that includes a proposed recommendation for a Final University Decision (FUD), including justification to support the recommendation, and submit it to the Chancellor or designee.
- 2) The Chancellor or appropriate designee will forward the hearing report and the proposed FUD to UNC General Administration's Vice President for Human Resources or designee for review.
- 3) The Vice President for Human Resources or designee, in consultation with the Director of the Office of State Human Resources or designee, will review the hearing report and proposed FUD and will respond to the Chancellor or designee within **10 calendar days**.
- 4) The proposed FUD shall not be issued or become final until reviewed and approved by the Office of State Human Resources. Once approved, the Chancellor or designee must issue the FUD to the Grievant within **5 calendar days** of the approval and no later than **90 calendar days** from the date the grievance is filed.

G. Settlement Approval

The approval of the Director of the Office of State Human Resources or designee is required for settlements that need a personnel transaction to be processed, except where the only personnel action is the substitution of a resignation for a dismissal. If a settlement involves an exception to the State Human Resources Commission policy, the approval of the Director of the Office of State Human Resources or designee is required.

X. APPEAL TO THE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

A. University Requirements to Notify Grievant of Appeal Rights

The Final University Decision shall inform the Grievant in writing of any appeal rights through the Office of Administrative Hearings for contested case issues. The Grievant must be specifically informed of the following:

- 1) The appeal is made by filing a "Petition for a Contested Case" hearing with the Office of Administrative Hearings;
- 2) The appeal to the Office of Administrative Hearings must be filed within **30 calendar days** after the Grievant receives the Final University Decision; and
- 3) A fee is charged for filing a Petition for a Contested Case Hearing.

B. Grievant Access to the Office of Administrative Hearings

- 1) If the Grievant is not satisfied with the Final University Decision, the Grievant may file a Petition for Contested Case Hearing in the Office of Administrative Hearings in cases where the grievable issue may be appealed. An Administrative Law Judge will conduct a hearing and render a Final Decision.

- 2) A Petition for Contested Case Hearing must be filed within 30 calendar days after the Grievant receives the Final University Decision. The Grievant may file the appeal at:

Office of Administrative Hearings
1711 New Hope Church Road (Physical Address) Raleigh, NC 27609
6714 Mail Service Center (Mailing Address) Raleigh, NC 27699-6700
(919) 431-3000

Hearing procedure requirements and filing form (OAH Form H-06A) can be obtained from the Office of Administrative Hearings at: <http://www.ncoah.com/hearings/> or by calling (919) 431-3000.

XI. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE SHRA EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE POLICY

A. University Human Resources, AA/EEO Office Responsibilities

- 1) Adhere to the SHRA Grievance Policy;
- 2) Develop and communicate internal procedures as needed;
- 3) Provide current employees and new hires with access to the Employee Grievance Policy;
- 4) Notify employees of any change to the internal University grievance process no later than 30 calendar days prior to the effective date of the change;
- 5) Maintain grievance data in the Grievance Log provided by OSHR. Data must be entered as events occur; and
- 6) Provide employee grievance reports to OSHR as request.

B. Office of State Human Resources Responsibilities

The Office of State Human Resources shall:

- 1) Seek appropriate approval of the SHRA Grievance Policy any time modifications are made;
- 2) Provide consultation and technical assistance to Universities as needed; and
- 3) Conduct ongoing studies/analyses to evaluate policy effectiveness and communicate results to improve the program effectiveness.