



## A Student Guide to Concerns, Complaints, and Grievances

One of the most challenging aspects of the college process can be understanding how the system for reporting concerns and/or complaints is structured. This guide was developed to help students access the appropriate resources in order to address issues on campus and create a more transparent process for improving campus climate.

What to do if something happens in class, on campus, or in the residence halls?

Addressing issues on campus has a lot to do with what, where, and who. Below is a chart that can help you get started with addressing an issue on campus with the right person or office.

What happened?	Who was involved?	What do you do?
An act and/or threat of physical violence	Anyone	Report to Public Safety immediately.
A concerning statement in a classroom, including incidents of bias	Another student	Start by reporting it to the instructor. If you do not feel comfortable reporting to the instructor, instead report to the Department Head. The Associate Dean of Students can provide support in the reporting process.
A concerning statement in the classroom or anywhere else on campus, including incidents of bias	A faculty member	Report to the Divisional Dean or School Dean. If you do not feel comfortable reporting to either of these positions, then report to the Associate Provost. The Associate Dean of Students can provide support in the reporting process.

A concerning statement on campus, including incidents of bias	A staff member	Start by reporting it to the staff member’s supervisor if you feel comfortable doing so. If not, you can discuss all resolution options with the Associate Dean of Students.
An act of sexual misconduct, sexual assault, stalking, or harassment	Anyone	You can report to the Student Support Coordinator (who is <b>not</b> a confidential reporter) in the Division of Student Life. Note that the only <b>confidential reporters</b> in DSL are counseling staff in CAPS.

What if the first person on the “who to report to” is the person I have a complaint about or I don’t feel comfortable reporting to them?

In this situation, you can skip directly to the next person in the reporting process or speak with the Student Support Coordinator in the Division of Student Life (located in Cowell) about any questions or concerns you may have. **Remember:** If you are in a situation where you are concerned for your immediate safety, call Public Safety first.

What will happen once I report my concern?

Once you report a concern, the individual you spoke with (in consultation with you) will determine which course of action is most appropriate. In some situations, you may feel better able to discuss the concern with the other person(s) involved in the incident, if you feel this can be done in a constructive manner.

If no resolution results, you can take the next step in the reporting process. This can include having someone facilitate a conversation, participating in a restorative justice process, or having an informal account of the issue shared with the person(s) you have the concern about. For most cases, this method can resolve the matter and create opportunities for dialogue and learning. Know that you can always contact the Student Support Coordinator for assistance.

When concerns are reported, we will also evaluate whether or not our student conduct code or employment policies are applicable. This is especially relevant to cases involving sexual misconduct, stalking, partner violence, and/or sexual assault as well as those that fall within federal definitions of prohibited discrimination.

What is the difference between a complaint and the grievance process?

A *complaint* is any concern brought forward by a member of the Mills community.

Mills defines a *grievance* as an accusation with a specific reporting process to respond to a behavior or action of a student, faculty, or staff where elements of hostility or discrimination are present based on a *protected class* such as, but not limited to: race, color, sex, gender identity,

gender presentation, disability, sexual orientation, age, ancestry, ethnicity, national origin, family status, and/or spiritual and religious beliefs. Some complaints will fit this definition and immediately be transferred to a grievance process.

While the grievance process offers a possible resolution, many issues are more effectively addressed without a formal grievance process. You can always talk with the Student Support Coordinator to learn more about the different processes and options.

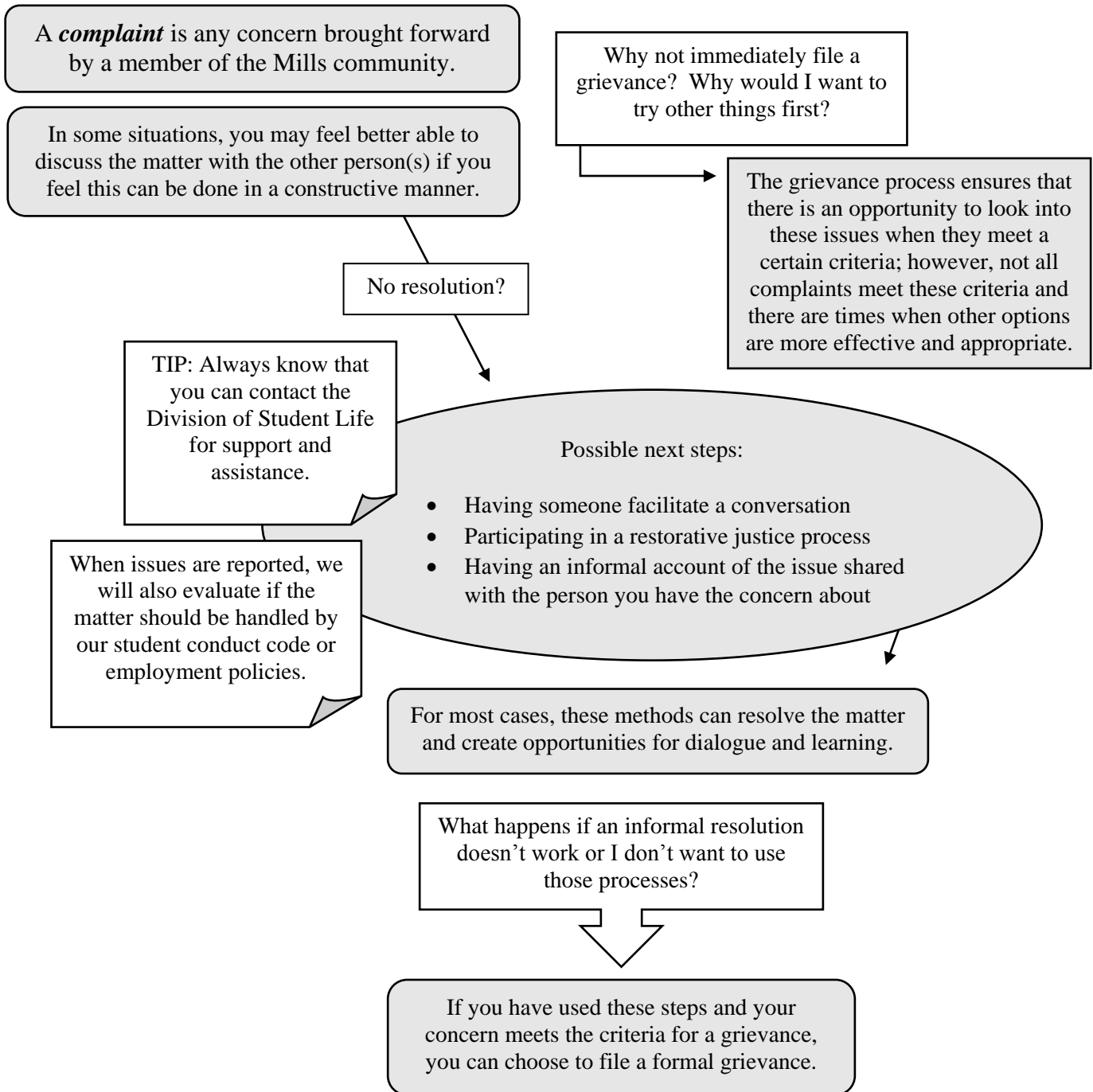
Why would I want to try other things before filing a grievance?

The Mills grievance process ensures that there is an opportunity to look into these issues when they meet certain criteria; however, there are times when other options like a facilitated dialogue, restorative justice circles, or educational sanctions are more effective and appropriate. In addition, a complaint may not fall into these areas

The steps in the following charts are designed to help students access the support and information needed to navigate and utilize campus processes to address complaints that impact our campus community.

The complete text of the Grievance Policy and Student Conduct Code can be found here:  
<https://inside.mills.edu/handbook.pdf>

# What are the options for resolving a complaint?



## What is the process for filing a formal grievance?

### STEP ONE: Submit a notice

- Submit a **written notice** to the **Division of Student Life** informing them that you will be filing a formal grievance.
- **If you attempted an informal resolution** and it was unsuccessful, include this information.
- Your notice must be submitted **within two weeks** of when the informal resolution attempts occurred.



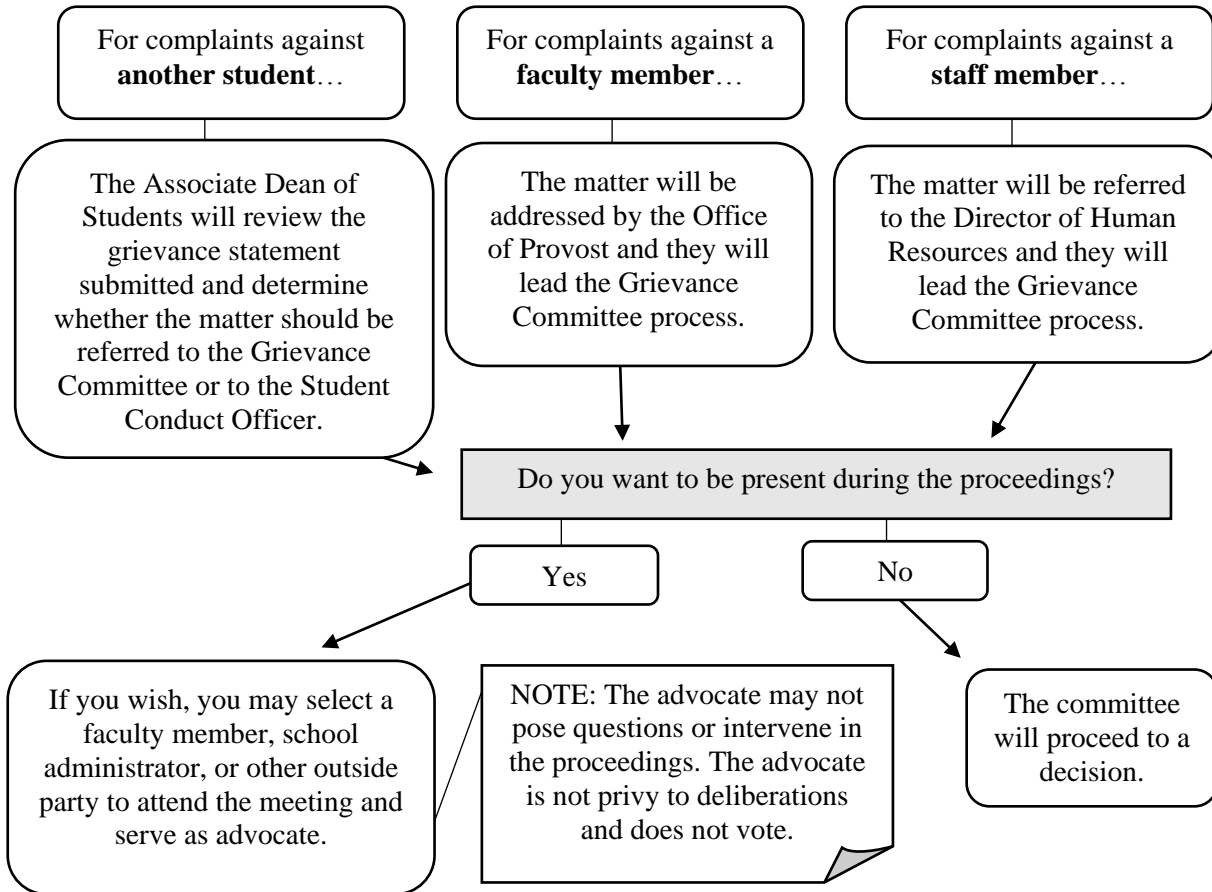
### STEP TWO: Submit a statement

- Use a **grievance form** to submit a **written statement** to the **Associate Dean of Students**.
- In this form, you must document and describe:
  - The source of the complaint
  - Its consequences
  - Any informal efforts of resolution
  - The remedy sought for this complaint
- Your statement must be submitted **within two weeks** of when you sent your initial notice.



*Continued on next page*

STEP THREE: Review of grievance statement



STEP FOUR: Evaluation of grievance

- The merits of the grievance are **evaluated within the context of the College policy**.
- A **consensus** is reached by a **majority vote**.
- When appropriate, a remedy is recommended.

STEP FIVE: Committee decision

- The Committee **responds with a written decision** in a timely fashion, that is, **no later than the end of the semester** following that in which the grievance was filed.
- Common outcomes of the grievance process typically involve **making changes in college policy, practice, or procedure**, or an **apology**.
- Monetary damages, fines, penalties, or disciplinary action against the individual who is the subject of the grievance is **not** an option available to the student under this policy.