

Student-Athlete Grievance Policy and Procedure

The Dartmouth College Athletic Department is committed to protecting the health, safety, welfare, and fair treatment of student-athletes at all times. This policy describes the process available to student-athletes who believe that they have been subject to inappropriate, unprofessional or unfair conduct by a coach.

Dartmouth has institutional processes in place for handling certain types of complaints, including discrimination, harassment on the basis of sex, race, sexual orientation, or gender identity, sexual assault and sexual misconduct. Therefore, certain matters brought to the attention of the Athletics Department may be more appropriately resolved by other Dartmouth staff, and those complainants should be referred to the appropriate offices or procedures for resolution. The “Student-Athlete Grievance Policy and Procedure” is designed to address grievances that are appropriately resolved within the framework of the athletics program and are not covered by another Dartmouth process for dispute resolution.

The educational value of athletic participation includes student-athletes assuming responsibility for their own grievances. In most cases, and especially in the case of formal complaints, student-athletes will not be able to proceed with grievances anonymously; the coach about whom the complaint is made will normally receive all pertinent information relative to the complaint, including the identity of the student-athlete. Additionally, while the Athletics Department recognizes that student-athletes may rely upon parents, friends, or other mentors to provide advice and support in attempting to resolve a grievance, athletics department staff members will expect to communicate directly with the student-athlete throughout the process.

The athletics department will make every effort to protect the privacy of individuals pursuing grievances and will refrain from discussing complaints or sharing written materials with anyone other than those who, in their best judgment, have a need to know. Similarly, student-athletes and witnesses are expected to refrain from discussing a complaint or its details with anyone other than those who have a need to know, which could include family members, deans, personal advisors, or legal counsel, if necessary. Anyone who violates the confidentiality of this process may be subject to disciplinary action.

When a coach or athletics department staff member receives a complaint or grievance from a student-athlete, it is their responsibility to assure that the grievance is treated seriously and as privately as possible given the circumstances. Retaliation against a student-athlete for reporting a grievance is a serious violation of this policy and may result in disciplinary action.

As a general policy, a student-athlete should follow the guidelines below to resolve an issue with a coach:

Informal Grievance Process:

Step 1:

In many cases, informal discussion can be useful in resolving perceived or real issues with coaches. Whenever possible, a student-athlete should attempt to resolve the issue directly with the coach. Team captains are often a good resource to help mediate an issue.

Step 2:

If the student-athlete cannot reach a satisfactory resolution of the issue through direct communication, or is uncomfortable making direct contact with the coach, the student-athlete should report the grievance to their sport administrator. In an effort to resolve the matter, the sport administrator may pursue a number of informal options such as providing advice or facilitating a conversation between the involved parties.

Formal Grievance Process

Step 3:

If the issue cannot be resolved informally, or if a student-athlete is uncomfortable pursuing their concerns with the coach or sport administrator, the student-athlete may report their grievance to the director of athletics in writing. The student-athlete should write the statement by him or herself; the director of athletics will not accept statements written by others on behalf of the student-athlete. The student-athlete's statement should include the nature of the concern, the steps that have been taken, and the outcome that the student-athlete is seeking.

The director of athletics will determine the individual(s) best suited to formally review the issue. In many cases, the sport administrator will be most appropriately positioned to conduct the review. In situations where the sport administrator is implicated or otherwise an inappropriate choice, the director of athletics will appoint one or more members of the athletic department's senior staff to lead the review. In rare instances when compelling reasons exist, the director of athletics may involve an individual outside the athletic department to participate in, or lead, the review.

Upon receiving the student-athlete's written grievance, the reviewer will show a copy of the statement to the coach but the coach will not be provided a copy of the statement.

The coach will be given the opportunity to provide his or her own statement in response to the student-athlete's statement within a time frame set by the reviewer. The coach's statement will be shown to the student-athlete, but a copy will not be provided.

After reviewing the statements of the student-athlete and the coach, the reviewer will investigate the allegations and responses as he or she sees fit. While the decision to interview other individuals shall be left to the discretion of the reviewer, both the student-athlete and coach should feel free to suggest particular individuals who may be knowledgeable of the facts of the situation.

The reviewer will draft a report summarizing the review for submission to the athletic director.

Step 4:

After reviewing the report, the athletic director will either accept the report or ask the reviewer to pursue additional information.

Upon accepting the report, the athletic director will inform the student-athlete and coach that the review has been completed. The report will normally not be shared with either the student-athlete or coach, but the athletic director may share the report and/or consult with other Dartmouth staff who, in the judgment of the athletic director, offer certain expertise or have a need to know.

The athletic director will determine any action(s) to be taken as a result of the report.

The athletic director has broad discretion to determine what information from the report is shared but generally the coach will be informed of any action that is determined by the athletic director. In certain circumstances, the student-athlete or other members of the Dartmouth community may also be informed of the action that was taken.

The athletic director's decision on the matter is final.