

**School of Political Sciences,
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki**

Postgraduate Degree in Political Theory

**Regulations on the operation of the
mechanism for
the management of student complaints and
appeals**

Preamble

This Regulation aims to establish a mechanism for students of the School of Political Sciences of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki to file complaints and appeals regarding academic or administrative issues they face in the context of their studies at the School. The purpose of the Regulation is to ensure that students' concerns are heard and addressed in a timely and effective manner, respecting their rights and dignity. It aims to promote transparency, accountability, and fairness in dealing with complaints. All authorities of the Department are committed to dealing with complaints in a timely and effective manner and to implementing measures to prevent the recurrence of issues raised.

Article 1: Purpose and Scope

- 1.1. The purpose of this Regulation is to provide a mechanism for students to submit complaints and to file appeals thereupon in case their complaint is not heard about any academic or non-academic issues they may encounter while enrolled in the Department. This Regulation applies to all students enrolled in the Department and covers complaints related to academic or administrative matters, including but not limited to:
 - Admission process
 - Quality of teaching
 - Assessment and grading
 - Facilities and infrastructure
 - Student services offered by the Department
 - Discrimination and harassment
- 1.2. This Regulation covers students of all three cycles of studies (including postgraduate programs in which the School acts as the leading School), as well as students who are enrolled or study at the Department through exchange programs (such as the Erasmus+ program).
- 1.3. Each Postgraduate Program of the School or in which the School acts as the leading School may, if it so chooses and by decision of its governing body, approve a special complaints mechanism for the specific Program and its students in accordance with the following.
- 1.4. This Regulation does not apply to any action or complaint that has been taken charge of by the law enforcement or judicial authorities.

Article 2: Definitions

- 2.1. A "complaint" is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction by a student relating to any academic or non-academic issue that concerns him/her and is related to his/her studies at the Department.
- 2.2. An "objection" is defined as any challenge by the complaining student of the decision taken by the complaints officer.

Article 3: Complaints officer

- 3.1. At the beginning of each academic year, the School Assembly appoints a faculty member or a Special Teaching Staff member of the Department who will be responsible for receiving complaints (complaints officer) with an annual term.
- 3.2. The complaints officer is accessible to students by establishing regular weekly office hours and providing alternative methods of counselling (such as email or videoconference). Office hours and

alternative forms of communication are published on the School's website and are updated without delay in case of change.

Article 4: Complaints Procedure

4.1. Students should first try to resolve the issue they want to raise directly with the member of the teaching or administrative staff involved. If the matter cannot be resolved in this way, the following proceedings shall apply.

4.2. Students shall submit their complaint in writing or by e-mail to the School secretariat. The complaint receives a protocol number from the secretariat and is forwarded without delay to the complaints officer and to the head of the School or the Director of the Postgraduate Program as appropriate (in case of a student of the second cycle of studies). If the complaint concerns the complaints officer, the complaint is not forwarded to the latter but, the Head of the School or the Director of the Postgraduate Program appoints an ad hoc faculty member or a Special Teaching Staff member of the Department or the Postgraduate Program to handle the specific complaint. The complaint must include the following information:

- A detailed description of the issue(s) and circumstances surrounding it.
- The name and contact details of the complainant.
- Any supporting documents or evidence, if any.

4.3. The complaints officer will acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing or by e-mail to the complainant within 3 working days of its receipt.

4.4. The complaints officer will investigate the complaint thoroughly and impartially. The investigation will include:

- Gathering relevant information and evidence.
- Discussing with the complainant and any other person involved.
- Giving the complainant the opportunity to respond to any information collected.

4.5. The complaints officer will seek to resolve the complaint as soon as possible. Resolution may include:

- Providing explanations or apologies to the complainant.
- Provide redress or resolution to the issue(s) raised.
- Implement corrective measures to prevent recurrence of the issue(s).
- In the event that the person in charge of complaints finds that a disciplinary offense has been committed by the person who is being called (faculty or administrative staff), he/she informs the School Assembly that refers, if it so decides, the matter to the competent disciplinary university bodies.

4.5 The decision and final response to the complaint is sent to the complainant within 14 working days of receipt and should describe the measures taken to investigate the complaint and how to resolve it. In exceptional and complex cases, duly justified, this period may be extended by one week. The reply shall also be communicated to the secretariat which assigns it a file number.

4.6. The correspondence of the complainant and all acts related to the examination and resolution of the complaint have the character of confidential documents and all parties involved undertake not to disseminate or disclose them to another person.

Article 5: Appeals procedure

5.1. If the complaint is not resolved at this stage or if the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the complaints officer, the student may come back, submitting a relevant objection to the dean of the

faculty. The objection shall be submitted to the faculty secretariat no later than 2 working days after receipt of the decision on the complaint.

5.2. The Dean will investigate the objection, will have access to the entire complaint file and may, if s/he so wishes, invite the appellant or any other person s/he deems useful, to an oral hearing. The dean shall decide on the appeal within 20 working days of its receipt. The decision shall be notified to the appellant and to the Secretariat of the Department which shall assign a file number.

Article 6: Record-keeping

All complaints and decisions to resolve them as well as their documentation are kept on file by the secretariat of the School of Political Sciences until the year of graduation of the complainant. This information shall always remain confidential and shall only be accessible to authorized personnel.

Art. 7: Protection from retaliation

The School and its governing bodies will not tolerate any form of retaliation against students who file a complaint. Any form of retaliation will be considered a violation of the University's code of ethics and will be subject to disciplinary sanctions.

Article 8: Confidentiality

All complaints and related investigations will be treated with confidentiality and the School Assembly shall take measures to protect the privacy of complainants and of any other party involved in the complaint.

Article 9: Training and professional development

The School Assembly ensures that complaint officers be offered, as a matter of priority, the opportunity of further education, continuous training, and professional development through the international cooperation programs for training in which it participates, in order to obtain better information about current policies, practices and research related to the treatment, internationally, of complaints in an academic environment.

Article 10: Evaluation and feedback

10.1. The School Assembly establishes, upon the recommendation of the School's Internal Evaluation Committee (IEC), a procedure for evaluating the complaints mechanism. The process includes annual feedback from students, teachers and other stakeholders and takes into account criteria such as student satisfaction, the effectiveness of the mechanism and compliance with the policies and procedures of the School.

10.2. At the end of each academic year, the School Assembly approves and sends to all involved (teachers, students, members of the administrative staff) a questionnaire that may be linked to the general questionnaire for the evaluation of the infrastructure and courses of the School for the performance and operation of the mechanism.

10.3. The initiative for the evaluation process and the responsibility for the preparation of the above questionnaire lies with the School's IEC.

Article 11: Complaints Mechanisms of Postgraduate Programs

11.1. The governing body of a Postgraduate Program (Coordinating Committee or Program Committee) may adopt and implement a separate complaints mechanism for its students in accordance with Article 3 above. In such a case, it shall promptly inform the Department's Assembly thereof. From the moment of approval of a separate complaints' mechanism in a Postgraduate Program, the competence of this Regulation for students of this Program ceases.

11.2. The complaints officer of a Postgraduate Program must be a faculty member or a Special Teaching Staff member, teaching in the specific Program. The appeals procedure is the same in the case of a Postgraduate Program.

11.3. The responsibilities of the complaints officer, the term of office, the procedures for submitting, registering, examining, and resolving a complaint and the rules of confidentiality and protection from retaliation in the complaint resolution mechanisms of a Postgraduate Program are those mentioned in this regulation, *mutatis mutandis*.

11.4. The governing body of a Postgraduate Program may at any time, by decision, reinstate any special complaints procedure in the present regulation of the Department.

Article 12: Communication

The School Assembly ensures that all students are aware of this regulation and the complaints procedure. The complaints procedure is available to all students through the Department's website and the study guide.

Article 13: Revision of the Regulation

12.1. This regulation will be reviewed every two years by the School Assembly, to ensure that it remains effective. Any necessary updates or changes will be made in consultation with all stakeholders, including students.

12.2. Any revision of the Regulation applies to complaints submitted after the entry into force of the revised Regulation.

Article 14: Entry into force

13.1. This Regulation shall enter into force on the date of its approval by the School Assembly and shall apply to complaints submitted after that date.

13.2. If the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki adopts a single regulation of the complaints mechanism, this regulation is repealed and replaced by the corresponding regulation of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki as regards the articles that include any contrary provisions.