

COMPLAINTS	In this policy, the terms “complaint” and “grievance” shall have the same meaning.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES	The UTRGV Educator Preparation Program encourages in-terns/teacher candidate to discuss their concerns and complaints through informal conferences with their program staff immediately upon occurrence or becoming aware.
INFORMAL PROCESS	Concerns should be expressed as soon as possible to allow early resolution at the lowest possible administrative level.
FORMAL PROCESS	<p>If an informal conference regarding a complaint fails to reach the outcome requested by the candidate, he or she may initiate the formal process described below by timely filing a written complaint or use of form/template.</p> <p>Even after initiating the formal complaint process, a candidate is encouraged to seek informal resolution of his or her concerns. A candidate, whose concerns are resolved, may withdraw a formal complaint at any time.</p>
COMPLAINT FILING FORM	Complaints under this policy shall be submitted in writing on a form provided by the program within 10 business days. “Days” shall mean program business days. In calculating timelines under this policy, the day a document is filed is “day zero,” and all deadlines shall be determined by counting the following day as “day one.”
DAYS	
RESPONSE	<p>Complaint forms and appeal notices may be filed by hand-delivery, or use of official university email.</p> <p>At Levels One and Two, “response” shall mean a written communication to the candidate from the appropriate EPP Director or designee.</p>
GENERAL PROVISIONS	<p>Complaints arising out of an event or a series of related events shall be addressed in one complaint. Candidates shall not bring separate or serial complaints arising from any event or series of events that have been or could have been addressed in a previous complaint.</p> <p>When two or more complaints are sufficiently similar in nature and remedy sought to permit their resolution through one proceeding, the program may consolidate the complaints.</p>
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 candidate, at any point during the complaint process. The candidate may appeal the dismissal by seeking review in writing within ten business days, 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 FORM	<p>Copies of any documents that support the complaint should be attached to the complaint form. If the candidate does not have copies of these documents, he/she may be presented at the Level One conference. After the Level One conference, no new documents may be submitted unless the candidate did not know the documents existed before the Level One conference.</p> <p>A complaint form that is incomplete in any material aspect may be dismissed, but it may be refiled with all the requested information if the refileing is within the designated time for filing a complaint.</p>
AUDIO RECORDING	As provided by law, a candidate shall be permitted to make an audio recording of a conference under this policy at which the substance of the candidate's complaint is discussed. The candidate shall notify all attendees present that an audio recording is taking place.
LEVEL ONE (OEPA)	<p>Complaint forms must be filed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Within 10 days of the date the candidate first knew, or with reasonable diligence should have known, of the decision or action giving rise to the complaint or grievance; and2. With the director or designee. <p>The director or designee shall hold a conference with the candidate within ten days after receipt of the written complaint.</p> <p>The director or designee shall have ten days following the conference to provide the candidate a written response.</p>
LEVEL TWO (DEAN'S OFFICE)	<p>If the candidate is not satisfied with action/resolution at Level One or if the time for a response has expired, the candidate may appeal the decision to the program's legal authority, Dean or designee.</p> <p>The appeal notice must be filed in writing, on a form/template provided by the program, within ten days after receipt of a response or, if no response was received, within ten days of the response deadline at Level One.</p>

The program's legal authority or designee shall inform the candidate of the date, time, and place of the meeting at which the complaint will be discussed.

The director or designee shall provide the program's legal authority or designee with copies of the complaint form, the response at Level One, the appeal notice, and all written documentation previously submitted by candidate. The program's legal authority or designee shall consider only those issues and documents presented at the preceding level and identified in the appeal notice.

The program's legal authority or designee must provide written notice of the decision to the candidate.

The EPP must retain information concerning the complaint for a minimum of three years.

After the candidate has exhausted all attempts at the program level to resolve a complaint that occurred within the past two years and has not received the relief sought, information on how to file a complaint with TEA can be secured from the EPP by information posted at their physical facility, on their website or, upon request, directions in writing.

**LEVEL THREE
(TEA)**

The official TEA complaint process can be found at tea.texas.gov by scrolling down to the Educator Preparation Programs. TEA's EPP page has instructions for candidates and applicants who feel an EPP did not fulfill requirements for certification or broke the law. EPPs may also follow those instructions to file a complaint about the actions of other EPPs on behalf of a candidate transferring into their program.

The complaint process allows for an applicant, candidate, employee or former employee of an EPP, a cooperating teacher, a mentor, or an administrator in a school district, charter school, or private school to submit a complaint about an EPP for investigation and resolution.

The complaint process allows individuals to seek redress in areas where they feel that the program did not fulfill requirements for certification or for actions that the individual feels are wrong. Educator preparation programs may also file a complaint about the actions of other EPP programs when it involves a candidate's transfer into or out of a program.

Not all complaints fall under the authority of TEA. TEA has jurisdiction to investigate allegations of noncompliance regarding specific laws and rules, generally related to state and federal requirements. Complaints may address educator preparation program requirements listed in Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §§ 227, 228, 229, ethics (TAC 247), fingerprinting (TAC §§227, 232) and certification (TAC §§230, 231, 232, 239, 241, 242).

TEA staff and the SBEC do not have jurisdiction over complaints related to contractual arrangements with an EPP, commercial

issues, obtaining a higher grade or credit for training, or seeking reinstatement to an EPP.

All complaints filed with the TEA must be in writing. TEA does not accept complaints by phone. A person or entity may file a written complaint with TEA by filling out the complaint form online [complaint form](#) or by mailing a hard copy to the address on the form.

If the complainant is not the parent of the student or an adult student filing on his/her own behalf, the complainant is referred to as a third party; and therefore, requires a **FERPA release** from the person standing in parental relation. Please attach the completed **FERPA release** form to your online complaint form, or email it to generalinquiry@tea.texas.gov.

TEXAS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE §228.121