

# INSTITUTIONAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

## Purpose

Directives from the United States Department of Education and accreditation principles require institutions of higher education to establish procedures for resolving institutional complaints. Compliance requires the maintenance of a record of complaints received by the institution, related to all written complaints, a log recording a summary of the complaint, the person or office charged to resolve the complaint and the resolution or actions taken in response to the complaint.

This procedure specifically addresses any miscellaneous complaints against the institution that do not fall into the categories covered by the Student Code and Grievance process. The institutional catalog and student handbook provide for the Student Code and Grievance complaint process for the following specified situations which are not covered by this procedure:

1. Complaints regarding discrimination
2. Complaints regarding sexual harassment
3. Complaints regarding academic matters, excluding individual grades

## Procedure

A formal institutional complaint is one that is submitted in writing, signed and sent to the attention of a Greenville Technical College (GTC) executive officer (president or vice president). The college will neither entertain complaints that are not in writing or which are anonymous; however, the college will consider complaints that are sent electronically or through facsimile transmission.

Complaints typically relate to one of four basic areas: Institutional Complaints, Student Grievances, Student Misconduct or Academic Misconduct. The intake system for these areas generally starts with a student discussion with a GTC employee. In the case of Student Misconduct and Academic Misconduct, the process usually begins with an instructor or staff member. Regardless of the origin, the process will flow as follows:

1. Once an individual (complainant) has lodged a complaint to a GTC employee, it is up to that employee to do his or her best to address the problem at that level. The resolution could include discussing the problem with his or her immediate supervisor(s), or higher, but it always includes a discussion with the individual (complainant) regarding the outcome of the individual's complaint. The complainant then has the option to accept the resolution or if he or she believes the resolution is insufficient or unacceptable, he or she must register a written complaint on GTC's official Institutional Complaint Form (see Attachment A) within three working days after discussing the complaint with the employee.
2. After the complainant has lodged a formal written complaint, the form is forwarded to the office of the vice president for student services for disposition and tracking. The vice president for student services, or designee, will determine if the written complaint should be classified as one of the four problems noted above and route the issue accordingly. Once the formal written complaint is submitted, the college will acknowledge it, in writing, within two working days of its receipt. Within five working days after acknowledging receipt of the

complaint, the appropriate college personnel will review the complaint and its documentation and determine:

- if the complainant falls within the scope of college policies;
- if the complainant has provided adequate documentation;
- if the complaint identifies issues that may jeopardize the quality of educational programs or the general welfare and integrity of the college; and
- if the complaint raises significant questions about the college's compliance with college standards.

3. **Institutional Complaint.** If the issue is classified as an Institutional Complaint against a specific department, the vice president for student services, or designee, will forward the Institutional Complaint Form to the appropriate department head and other personnel either named in the complaint or who have basic knowledge of policies impacting the complaint. Within five working days, the department head will review the form, determine if any additional action is required and respond in writing to the vice president for student services. The vice president for student services, or designee, will review the written response from the department head and others contacted, confer with the appropriate dean, or vice president of learning and workforce development if the issue is related to faculty members or academic staff members, and make a decision.

The vice president for student services, or designee, will communicate the decision to the complainant in writing, within five working days after the decision. Once an Institutional Complaint has been reviewed by the vice president for student services, or designee, and a decision has been made, that decision is final and the issue may not be appealed.

4. **Student Grievance.** If the issue is classified as a Student Grievance, the due process procedures listed in the GTC Student Handbook, Student Grievance Procedure, Sections I-IV will be followed. These procedures provide specific direction for student grievances and the appeal process used if desired. The student grievance appeal process may escalate to the president, whose decision is final.
5. **Student Misconduct.** If the dean of students determines that a complaint should be classified as Student Misconduct, the due process procedures listed in the Student Handbook, Student Misconduct, Section IV, C will be followed. These procedures provide specific direction addressing student misconduct issues and the appeal process if desired. A student misconduct appeal process may escalate to the president whose decision is final.
6. **Academic Misconduct.** If the issue is determined to be an Academic Misconduct issue, the vice president for learning and workforce development, or designee, will resolve the issue using the due process procedures outlined in the Academic Affairs policy and procedure for Academic Misconduct. This procedure incorporates tracking, appeal and final resolution for all Academic Misconduct complaints and is in full compliance with the Academic Misconduct procedures listed in the Student Handbook, Academic Misconduct, Section IV B.
7. **Tracking and Notification.** For all written complaints other than academic misconduct, the office of the vice president for student services tracks, maintains a log of complaints and manages the process, including notification to the complainant.

For all academic misconduct issues, the vice president of learning and workforce development is responsible for tracking, maintaining a log of complaints, managing and notifying students.

The college will maintain a log of complaints and periodically review the types of complaints filed. Steps will be taken to address any patterns(s) that may be observed in the review.

These procedures will be published in the Consumer Information section of the college web site, the Student Handbook, Faculty and Academic Staff Manual and an abbreviated version in all syllabi, noting the first steps for registering a complaint and where the form is located. The form for an institutional complaint will be available in each vice president's office. Once completed and signed by the complainant, the form must be forwarded to the vice president for student services to be processed within three working days.

## References

- 1.1. SBTCE Policy 3-2-106, Student Code and Grievance Procedure
- 1.2. SBTCE Procedure 3-2-106.1, The Student Code for the South Carolina Technical College System
- 1.3. SBTCE Procedure 3-2-106.2, The Student Grievance Procedure of the South Carolina Technical College System
- 1.4. Greenville Technical College Student Handbook
- 1.5. Academic Affairs Procedure for Academic Misconduct.