



Title: Student Complaint Policy
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Student Complaint Policy

Policy Statement

A student grievance refers to non-academic and non-financial complaints of students against employees of South Louisiana Community College. It does not include academic integrity sanctions, grade appeals, academic status appeals, admission appeals, student discipline by the institution, financial aid appeals, refund appeals, and all other matters that are within the jurisdiction of other committees of the institution.

The procedures contained in this memorandum are to be followed for all complaints and/or grievances, as defined above, which are filed against employees of the College. The College is committed to affording all students, including distance education students, the opportunity for accessibility and due process during the student grievance process. To ensure this, at each step of the process an available distance option will be provided when necessary.

Procedures & Specific Information

The purpose of the college's policy is to provide a problem-solving atmosphere which affords students a process for "resolution" to address non-academic and non-financial grievances.

Scope and Applicability

This policy and procedures applies to all enrolled students and all employees of the college or when an enrolled student initiates an action against employee(s) of the college.

Definitions:

- A. Grievance, as used in these procedures, refers to non-academic and non-financial complaints of students against employees of the college. It does NOT include: grade appeals; academic status appeals; admission appeals; student discipline imposed by the institution; financial aid appeals; refund appeals; or any other matters that are within the jurisdiction of other committees of the institution.

- B. Student, as used herein, refers to any individual currently enrolled as a student at the College.
- C. Employee refers to any individual employed by the college. A student employee is considered an employee of the college when an alleged grievance occurs during paid working hours.
- D. Complainant refers to the student making a complaint or filing a grievance
- E. Respondent refers to the employee against whom a complaint or grievance has been filed.
- F. Supervisor refers to the immediate supervisor of the respondent.
- G. Day as used herein refers to a day (Monday through Friday) on which the college's administrative offices are open and operating. This timeline is based on business days, not calendar days.

Mediation Procedures

General provisions, unless the respondent is a faculty member in whose class the student is currently enrolled, a student who wishes to make a complaint under these procedures, must do also within ten **(10) days** of the alleged either:

- I. Complete an online Student Complaint Form – This can be done electronically on the SLCC website and will be directly reported to the Chancellor (or designee). Within five **(5) days** of the student requesting an appointment or the Chancellor (or designee) receiving a completed Student Complaint Form, the Chancellor (or designee) meets with the complainant to discuss the alleged incident. If in the opinion of the Chancellor (or designee) no violation of college policy has occurred, the Chancellor (or designee) so informs the student and makes a written record of the discussion he/she had with the complainant.

The complainant may accept the decision of the Chancellor (or designee) or file a formal grievance using the official grievance procedures. If the Chancellor (or designee) finds that a violation of college policy might have occurred, the Chancellor (or designee):

- Offers to: (1) Hold a Mediation Conference during which the complainant has an opportunity to discuss his/her complaint with the respondent, the respondent's supervisor, and the Chancellor (or designee). The Chancellor (or designee) may serve as both the supervisor and mediator; or (2) investigate the alleged incident and provide feedback to the complainant without holding a mediation conference.

Mediation Conference

A Mediation Conference provides an opportunity for the complainant, respondent, respondent's supervisor, and Chancellor for the college (or designee) to discuss and attempt to resolve the alleged incident without a Grievance Hearing.

A mediation conference shall be conducted to allow productive communication and attempt to resolve the alleged incident without a Grievance Hearing. All efforts will be made to resolve the matter by mutual agreement by the complainant, respondent, respondent's supervisor, and Chancellor (or designee). The respondent and her/his supervisor will receive a copy of the student complaint form from the Chancellor (or designee) **(5)** days prior to the mediation conference.

When the Chancellor for the college (or designee) reviews the evidence and deems a violation has occurred the Chancellor (or designee) will establish a **day, time, and location for the conference** and will inform, in writing, to the complainant, respondent, and the respondent's supervisor.

The Chancellor (or designee) will provide the respondent with the Student Complaint form if he/she chooses not to attend the Mediation conference. The respondent is encouraged to complete and return the form within five **(5) days**, to the Chancellor's office, and it will be forwarded to the grievance committee.

The **respondent** will have the opportunity to respond in writing, utilizing the Response to Student Complaint form when he/she attends the Mediation Conference. If the complaint is resolved to everyone's satisfaction, the Chancellor (or designee) will document the outcome in his/her files.

If the **complaint** is still unresolved during the Mediation Conference, the Chancellor (or designee) will inform the **complainant** that he/she has the option of filing a formal grievance.

- Dismiss the matter if there is no basis for the allegations or if the allegation does not justify disciplinary actions.
- Refer the incident to mediation; or
- Proceed to the formal disciplinary charges

Mediation without a Conference

The Chancellor (or designee) follows the same procedures (and corresponding time line) as outlined above for a Mediation Conference, but will not hold a face-to-face conference between the **complainant** and **respondent**. In these situations, the complainant must complete an online Student Complaint Form and the respondent is strongly encouraged to complete the Response to Student Complaint Form, be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, Chancellor (or designee) informs the complainant that she/he has the option of filing a formal grievance following procedures outlined in student compliant policy.

Grievances

A. The following are recommended referrals to the Student Grievance Committee

1. The Chancellor (or designee) has identified that a violation of the college policy may have transpired;
2. Or if the complainant decided to abstain from the mediation conference;
3. Or if the respondent decided not to attend the mediation conference;
4. Or if the complainant is dissatisfied with the result of the mediation conference;
5. Or if the complainant completed a Student Complaint Form within **(5) days** of 1 through 4 above to the Chancellor (or designee).

The grievance would then be referred to the Student Grievance Committee.

The Chancellor (or designee) compiles all information that may be relevant to the violation of college policy. He/she also forwards the Student Relevance Form, Student Complaint form, and Response to Complaint form to the Student Grievance Committee. The information **may** include the following:

- Notes from the interview conducted with the complainant, respondent, respondent's supervisor, or witness;

- A brief summary of other complaints, grievances, or incidents, on file that are found to have merit, against the respondent
- A brief summary of any on-file administrative charges of similar behavior, found to have merit against the respondent.

Responsibilities and Composition of Student Grievance Committee

The Student Grievance Committee is responsible for making recommendations regarding student grievances, and for ensuring that consistency in interpretation of these guidelines is maintained at all hearings. Each year the Chancellor (or designee) appoints the Student Grievance Committee, which consists of a pool of three faculty members, two unclassified staff, and one student appointed from each campus or site with full-time faculty and staff. The Chair is appointed by the Chancellor (or designee) and serves as a voting member of the committee. For each hearing, the Chancellor (or designee) appoints five members of the Committee, including the Chair, with two members from the campus/site where the alleged violation occurred.

All five appointed members of the committee must be present at the hearing; however, in the event an emergency prohibits the committee member from attending, the Chancellor (or designee) names a replacement. A committee member may recuse himself/herself from a particular hearing if the committee member feels there might be a conflict of interest in the particular case. In the event a member recuses himself/herself, a replacement, for that hearing, is named by the Chancellor (or designee).

1. Location: All hearings are handled on the campus/site where the alleged violation occurred regardless of the home campus/site of the complainant(s) or respondent(s).
2. Scheduling: The grievance committee schedules a hearing within ten **(10)** days of receiving the Student Grievance Form.
3. Notification: Immediately, the committee, in writing, notifies the complainant, respondent, respondent's supervisor and the Chancellor (or designee) of the day, time, and location of the hearing.

Hearing Procedures

In order to protect the rights of all those who might appear before the grievance committee and to provide the respondent with a fair hearing, the following procedures are followed:

1. The complainant and respondent shall receive written notice of the hearing within **(72) hours** in advance.
2. The hearing is closed to the public and all matters shall remain confidential
3. Both the complainant and the respondent are permitted to be present during all testimony heard by the committee.
4. If the complainant does not appear or does not request a postponement in advance, the grievance is nullified.
5. The complainant and the respondent are provided the opportunity to testify if they so desire.
6. The complainant and the respondent are provided the opportunity to recount the testimony, either in writing or orally of any competent witnesses who have personal knowledge of the grievance.

7. The complainant and respondent are permitted to have a representative attend the hearing. However, he/she may not speak or ask questions of any committee member or anyone appearing before the committee.

Findings

The committee shall deliberate in closed session after the hearing. The committee shall issue a written decision, which will be based solely on the testimony and evidence presented at the hearing. The issue will be determined by simple majority of the voting members. If the committee finds the grievance has merit, it recommends an appropriate punishment or sanction.

The student will be sent a copy of the committee's decision within **(5)** days of the conclusion of the hearing, by regular mail and e-mail. A copy of the committee's findings/rulings will also be sent to the Chancellor (or designee). The Student Complain/Grievance files will be maintained by the Chancellor (or designee), and the Office of Human Resources.

Appeals

The final appeal in grievance cases, at the college level, is to the Chancellor. If the complainant or respondent wishes to appeal the ruling of the Student Grievance Committee, the complainant or respondent must file his/her appeal, in writing, within five **(5)** days of being notified of the Chancellor (or designee). Within five **(5)** days of receiving the appeal, the Chancellor notifies, in writing, all parties to the grievance, the committee members, and the Chancellor a (or designee) of her/his ruling on the appeal. A copy of the Student Grievance Committee's ruling is filed in the Student Complaint/Grievance Files maintained by the Chancellor (or designee), Vice Chancellor of Student Services, and office of Human Resources.

Sanctions

1. **Warning:** A written statement to the student, faculty, and staff acknowledging that he/she has committed a violation and that he or she will face more severe sanctions if they violate again.

2. **Probation:** Probation is the loss of privileges, possible loss of employment in the case of students who are employed by the college, campus restrictions, or special restrictions under which a student may remain in college. Infraction(s) committed during the specified period of disciplinary probation are likely to result in suspension.

Disciplinary probation may be general, encompassing adherence to all College policies, or it may be limited to particular types of conduct (e.g., alcohol and/or drug use). Exclusion from participation in privileges or co-curricular college activities may also be included in disciplinary probation. A record of the proceedings which led to the sanction is kept on file in the Office of the Chancellor (or designee) for a **minimum of six (6) months** and a **maximum of three (3) years**. Since probation does not become a part of the permanent record, it is not reported on the official academic transcript. However, if transfer forms require a listing of disciplinary actions, it is reported.

3. **Suspension:** Separation of the student from the college for a definite period of time. The student is not guaranteed readmission at the end of such period of time, but is guaranteed a review of the case and a decision regarding eligibility for readmission. During the period of suspension, a student may not be enrolled in classes, participate in a college related activities, whether they occur on or off campus.

A record of the suspension is kept in the student's official file in the Registrar's Office and on the applicant file in the Admissions Office until such time the student is readmitted. An overlay **may** be placed on a student's record during the period of suspension. Further, while on disciplinary suspension, a hold will be placed on a student's record for record keeping purposes. When the student is readmitted, the record is kept for a maximum of three **(3) years**. The notation, Disciplinary Suspension, is placed on the student's official academic transcript. This notation is removed after the suspension has expired. However, if transfer forms require a listing of disciplinary action, it is reported.

4. **Expulsion:** Separation of the student from the college whereby the student is not eligible for readmission to this College. Expulsion is a sanction which removes the student from his/her academic program and permanently separates a student from the College without opportunity to graduate or re-enroll at the College in the future. An overlay **may** be permanently placed on the student's record. Further, a hold will be permanently placed on a student's record for record keeping purposes. Expulsion remains permanently on file in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

Employee Sanctions

If sanctions are warranted, the Chancellor (or designee) forwards his/her recommendation to the Director of Human Resources and the appropriate Vice Chancellor within five **(5)** days. Among measures the Chancellor (or designee) might recommend are:

- a written reprimand;
- suspension
- demotion;
- termination.

If the final recommendation involves termination, revocation of tenure, or separation, additional due process procedures are required and initiated by the college.

Timeline "At A Glance" for Procedures

- Within ten **(10)** days of the alleged incident, a student must either:
 1. Request an appointment with the Chancellor (or designee)
 2. Complete an online Student Complaint Form, and provide that report to the
 3. Chancellor (or designee).
- Within five **(5)** days of the student's requesting an appointment or filing a Student Complaint Form, the Chancellor for (or designee) meets with the complainant to discuss the alleged incident.
- Within ten **(10)** days of meeting with the complainant, if the Chancellor (or designee) has found that a violation of college policy might have occurred and the complainant accepts the offer of a mediation conference, the mediation conference will be scheduled.
- At least five **(5)** days prior to holding a mediation conference, the Chancellor (or designee) notifies, in writing, the complainant, respondent, and respondent's supervisor of the day, time, and location for the conference and provides the respondent and her/his supervisor with a copy of the Student Complaint Form, completed by the complainant.

- If, at the time of the alleged incident, the respondent is a faculty member in whose class the student is enrolled, the complainant has until ten (10) days following the official end of that semester to provide a completed Student Complaint Form to the Chancellor (or designee) to discuss the incident.

Reference: SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.13.3 (Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions)

SACSCOC Federal Requirement 4.5 (Student Complaints)

	Reviewing Council/Entity	Approval Date	Effective Date	Date of Last Review & Revisions Approval
x	<i>Executive Committee Approval</i>	<i>2/9/17</i>	<i>2/13/17</i>	<i>N/A</i>
x	<i>Chancellor Approval</i>	<i>2/9/17</i>	<i>2/13/17</i>	<i>N/A</i>

Distribution: Distributed Electronically via College's Internet

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**Appendix A
Electronic Form**



South Louisiana
Community College

STUDENT COMPLAINT FORM

Please exercise care in completing this form. Take the time to print or write clearly.

Student Name: _____

Student ID: _____

Today's Date: _____

First date on which the events or issues occurred: _____

Name(s) of the person(s) involved: _____

Instructions: Describe your complaint in detail. Please include the location, dates and the names of the persons involved.

What attempts have you made to resolve this complaint? Please state who you contacted and the result.

What remedy/solution are you seeking?

Signature: _____

Date: _____

