

GRACE COLLEGE AND SEMINARY
Student Formal Complaint Resolution Process

Policy: Grace College will investigate in a fair and prompt way, and to the extent possible according to its policies and the law, all student complaints that are submitted to the institution.

Purpose

Grace College recognizes that complaints about the institution may surface from time to time. We believe that it is in the best interest of all involved to resolve these matters as soon as possible and at the lowest possible level. Regardless of the outcome, when receiving a complaint, Grace will use this as an opportunity to clarify and explain its policies, procedures, or actions, and review and modify its practices as necessary.

Scope

This process is to address institutional complaints, grievances, or issues that have not or otherwise would not be resolved by an existing academic or institutional appeals procedure. This process may also be used to submit anonymous complaints regarding situations in which there is concern about retribution, retaliation, a conflict of interest, or a clear power differential.

It is *not* intended to replace institutional appeals policies and procedures that exist in various support offices, such as those in the academic office, campus safety, registrar, or student affairs related to grade disputes, fines and citations, academic status, or discipline. A student appeal, whether for an exception to a policy, decision by a disciplinary board, or a financial award, is not considered a complaint.

Further, this process is *not* intended to supersede application of an individual professor's or department's published policies and complaint resolution process such as those related to attendance, course participation, course expectations, or grading.

Complaints Related to Title IX, Sexual Misconduct or Discrimination

Complaints regarding gender or other discrimination or sexual misconduct will be reviewed and investigated according to the institution's policies and the law. The institution's Title IX and related misconduct policies are available on the institution's [Title IX webpage](#) and outline procedures for resolution of both Title IX and non-Title IX Sexual Misconduct complaints.

Definitions

Complaints are defined as grievances or dissatisfaction with the campus community, its policies, or its employees that have not been resolved informally or by an existing procedure.

Submitting and Documenting Complaints

Complaints should ideally be submitted in writing by the complainant, including the nature of the complaint, prior efforts to resolve the complaint, and the desired outcome. Complaints will also be accepted verbally through a meeting or phone call, but a written complaint is preferred.

Complaints that rise to this level – beyond those that are resolved through regular institutional processes – are submitted to the vice president of administration and compliance or to the dean of students, and logged and monitored by the vice president of administration and compliance.

Complaints may be submitted in the following ways:

1. A notification form, **Student Formal Complaint Form**, is available on [Student Right to Know page](#) of the institution's web site. Complaints submitted using this form should include the student's name and contact information, but can be submitted anonymously. This is the preferred method of notification.
2. An email to the campus administrator, such as a dean or a vice president, most likely to be able to respond to the complaint.
3. Scheduling a meeting or phone call with a campus administrator to discuss the complaint.

In any instance in which a complaint is made anonymously, Grace will be limited in its ability to investigate the complaint or follow-up without contact information.

Reporting to Other Agencies

FERPA complaints: Parents and eligible students who need assistance or who wish to file a complaint under Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) or Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) should do so in writing, sending pertinent information through the mail to the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-5920
Phone: 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327)

For more information, see the U.S. Department of Education FERPA [Guidance](#).

Accrediting Agencies: Students and others also have the right to go directly to one of the institution's [accrediting agencies](#).

General Procedures

Grace asks that all parties first try to reconcile their complaints with the individual or department in which the complaint surfaced. If the complaint cannot be resolved at this level, parties should follow the procedures as noted below.

1. *Informal Complaint:* A student who has a complaint about Grace College and Seminary but has not been able to resolve it by speaking with the individual(s) involved should discuss the issue with the college official responsible for that area – typically the dean or director of that area. The student should attempt to resolve the issue informally within 30 days of the original occurrence. If the matter still cannot be resolved, then the student may file a formal written complaint.
2. *Formal Complaint:* A student who has attempted to resolve the issue through the informal complaint process and is still not satisfied with the outcome may file a formal written complaint with the vice president of administration and compliance or the dean of student affairs. This should be done as soon as possible after the informal process is completed, but within three months of the occurrence.
 - a. The student should complete the **Student Formal Complaint Form**, which is available in the office of administration and compliance, in the student affairs office, and on the college's *Student Right to Know* [webpage](#).
 - b. The completed form should be submitted to the vice president of administration and compliance or the dean of students, who will forward the complaint to the vice president of the area involving the complaint.
 - c. If the complaint is about a vice president or dean of students of the college, then the student should file the complaint with the office of the president.
 - d. If the complaint is about the president of the college, then the student should file the complaint with the chief human resources officer.
 - e. If the student is enrolled in an online program, and the complaint has not been resolved in the program in which it originated, complaints should be submitted in writing to the agency representing the student's home state, all of which are located on the NC-SARA [webpage](#).

Procedures for Resolution of Formal Written Complaints

1. The vice president of administration and compliance or the dean of students – whoever receives the initial formal complaint – will forward the written complaint to the vice president who oversees the area related to the complaint.
 - a. The vice president or his/her designee will review to the extent possible the circumstances, procedures, individuals, and prior efforts to resolve the complaint. This process may include interviews with those involved, review of the student's educational record, consultation with other campus personnel, or other efforts to investigate and resolve the complaint.

2. The vice president (or designee) will conduct a timely, thorough, and fair review of the complaint within 10 business days while the institution is in session. If the review process is delayed for any reason and, therefore, expected to take longer than 10 days, then the vice president (or designee) will advise the student within those 10 business days the expected date of completion and reason for the delay.
3. If the complaint involves a specific staff or faculty member's action, the vice president (or designee) should consult with the chief human resources officer for guidance. The vice president (or designee) will also inform any staff or faculty member upon receipt of a formal complaint that names that specific employee.
4. Depending on the nature of the complaint, the vice president (or designee) may request a meeting of all parties involved to mediate the situation and find a reasonable solution. The vice president (or designee) can also send the complaint directly to the senior administrative team if she or he chooses in lieu of mediation.
5. The vice president (or designee) will provide a written decision to the student and party(-ies) involved in the dispute (if any) within 10 business days of the conclusion of the informal or formal resolution.
6. If no resolution is found or the resolution is unsatisfactory to any party, then the student or the individual directly involved in the dispute may re-submit the written complaint – including any updated information – to the senior administrative team (cabinet) through the president's office within 72 hours of the attempt to resolve the matter.
7. Upon receipt of the complaint, the senior administrative team (cabinet) has 10 business days while the school is in session to convene for a final decision, which will be communicated in writing to the student and parties involved (if any). When school is not in session, the senior administrative team (cabinet) will convene as soon as reasonably possible and communicate all delays and an expected decision date to the parties involved.
8. The cabinet's decision, which will be final, will be provided in writing to the parties involved within 5 days of the decision.

Recordkeeping

When notified of a specific complaint, the vice president of administration and compliance will maintain a master list of student complaints.

Related Policies

Academic Appeals

Academic Status Appeals

Title IX

Sexual Misconduct (non-Title IX)

Employee Grievance Procedures (*Employee Handbook*)

Student Handbook (including housing and lifestyle policies)

Non-Retaliation (see *Nondiscrimination and Equity Policy*)

Revision History:

Date	Description of Revision
6/13/14	Creation and initial approval
8/13/14	Revised
8/26/14	Revised
3/12/15	Revised
11/1/18	Revised; added process to resolve complaints; deleted <i>Korean Students</i> section because program is no longer offered; deleted individual sections by program type and for employee complaints. Added related policies.
12/4/20	General revisions and updates, including that formal complaints can be submitted via email.
6/8/21	Corrected links. Provided clarifying language. Added clarifying statement in <i>Procedure for Resolution #5</i> .
6/17/24	Revised procedure 2d, complaints about the president. Added #5 and #8 to Resolution of Formal Complaints. Added "Recordkeeping." Corrected links.