

Webber International University

Florida and North Carolina Campuses

Written Student Complaints	Approved: August 26, 2014
	Approved By: Joint Institutional Planning Committee
Standard 12.4 (CS 3.13.3 and FR 4.5)	Revised and re-approved by JIPC: April 10, 2018 October 19, 2021

Standard 12.4 The institution (a) publishes appropriate and clear procedures for addressing written student complaints, (b) demonstrates that it follows the procedures when resolving them, and (c) maintains a record of student complaints that can be accessed upon request by SACSCOC. (*Student complaints*)

Definitions

Complaint: A formal written allegation by an impacted party of significant non-compliance with standards, policies, or procedures.

Appeal: A process that does not rise to the level of complaint, which results from some decision, and seeks reversal or modification of that decision.

Grievance: A statement of wrong, dissatisfaction, or other claims not rising to the level of complaint or appeal

Policy

As an institution which endeavors to prepare students for the workforce, irrespective of their chosen profession, Webber International University attempts to maintain an environment where problems are dealt with honestly, openly, collaboratively, and as close to the source as is possible. Consistent with our belief that collaboration rather than escalation is often the answer, faculty, staff, and administration all have open door policies.

In addition to a wide array of informal resolution strategies, students have the right to file written complaints. Written student complaints will be addressed in a fair and professional manner, consistent with established policy and procedure, good educational practice, and the facts and evidence presented. While there are specific procedures for complaints involving harassment, discrimination, grade appeals and Title IX violations, this policy documents the policy and procedure for other written student complaints.

The policies and procedures governing written student complaints: (a) will provide clear and consistent avenues/guidelines for resolution; (b) will be approved through appropriate institutional processes; (c) will be published in appropriate institutional documents accessible to those affected by the policy or procedure; and (d) will be consistently implemented and enforced by the University.

The University will not respond to or consider anonymous complaints, complaints containing defamatory statements, complaints submitted on behalf of another individual, or those sent electronically or through facsimile transmission. Written complaints must be submitted, signed and dated by the student who is making the complaint (a typed “signature” is not acceptable).

A written student complaint must include:

- a. A statement describing the complaint in the clearest possible terms.
- b. A clear and concise written description of the evidence upon which the allegation is based.
- c. Names and contact information for those with personal, firsthand knowledge of the facts of the matter.
- d. A description of any attempt that was made to resolve the matter prior to submission of the written complaint.
- e. A description of any external channels the complainant is pursuing

In compliance with the requirements of Standard 12.4, the disposition of written student complaints will be properly documented in a written record that will be available for review by SACSCOC or other individuals with a legitimate need (subject to normal privacy protections under the law).

Submitting a written complaint:

A complaint involving:

1. The University President is submitted to the Chair of the Board of Trustees
2. The Campus President is submitted to the University President
3. Academic Affairs is submitted to the VP for Academic Affairs/Chief Academic Officer
4. Student Life is submitted to the Dean or Vice President of Student Life
5. Athletics is submitted to the Athletics Director.
6. The equestrian program (NC campus) is submitted to the Director of the Equestrian Program
7. Financial Aid is submitted to the Director of Financial Aid
8. Academic Records to the Registrar
9. The Business Office is submitted to the Chief Financial Officer
10. The Admissions Office is submitted to the Director of Admissions

11. The above-mentioned administrative officers at the NC Campus is submitted to the Campus President; the above-mentioned administrative officers at the FL Campus is submitted to the University President

The institutional officers mentioned above are identified in the Catalog for each respective campus. In the event that a student is unsure of the person to whom a written complaint should be sent, the student should request clarification from the office of the President and CEO (Florida) or Campus President (North Carolina).

In the event that the student is lodging a complaint against the person to whom a complaint would normally be sent, the student should instead send his or her complaint to the office of the President and CEO (Florida) or Campus President (North Carolina).

Timely Response:

Except as otherwise provided, after a written student complaint is received, the University official who received the complaint will send an acknowledgement of receipt within five (5) days.

Except as otherwise provided, a written institutional response to the complaint will be sent to the student by the responsible University official (for example the Chief Academic Officer, Dean of Student Life, Chief Financial Officer, Athletics Director, etc.) within thirty (30) days of receipt of the complaint. This 30-day period accounts for providing the student appropriate interim relief, in cases where there is strong preliminary evidence that a student's complaint is meritorious and that the student may suffer immediate and irreparable harm.

Possible Outcomes:

The University may:

[a] agree that the complaint is valid and take appropriate action based on the nature of the complaint;

[b] may conclude that the complaint lacks substance and does not require any remedial action by the University.

Appeals:

In the event that a student complaint is found to lack merit, the student may file a written appeal of any appealable decision with the designated student grievance officer. Webber's appeal process is documented in the *Procedure for Appeals (Including Designated Student Grievance*

Officers) section of the policy, which is also published in the graduate and undergraduate handbooks.

As indicated in the *Procedure for Appeals (Including Designated Student Grievance Officers)* section of the policy, the decision of the President and CEO (Florida) / Campus President (North Carolina) is final and not subject to further appeals.

Maintenance of relevant correspondence and disposition of written student complaints:

At the Florida campus, the relevant correspondence and a summary record of the disposition of written student complaints will be maintained in the office of the President and CEO. The *Written Summary Record* form will be used to document the disposition on the student's complaint.

At the North Carolina campus, the relevant correspondence and a summary record of the disposition of written student complaints will be maintained in the office of the Campus President. The *Written Summary Record* form will also be used to document the disposition on the student's complaint.

Elements of a written student complaint review that are kept in the record (See Exhibit A):

1. Academic year
2. The campus generating the report
3. Date of receipt
4. Person and office receiving the written student complaint
5. The nature of the written student complaint (summary)
6. The manner in which the complaint was reviewed, including any appeal
7. The final resolution/disposition
8. The person and office responsible for the final resolution/disposition
9. The date of the final resolution/disposition
10. The office maintaining the complete record of the complaint

Other Relevant Policies:

This policy is intended to provide guidance for a wide variety of complaints. Several specific types of complaints are governed by other, more specific policies.

Complaints Involving Discrimination, Harassment, or Title IX: In recognition of its responsibility to provide a safe and wholesome environment in which to study, live, and work, the University has detailed policies, found on the intranet, regarding discrimination, harassment, and Title IX violations. Because these policies provide the student with additional rights, privileges, and protections, students are urged to consult these policies, or the campus designated Title IX officer, regarding complaints of this nature.

Policy Pertaining to National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) Requirements: Webber International University adheres to the State of Florida SARA Complaint Policy for online learners. Students in online classes may submit an online complaint to the university from the Online Learning webpage. The online complaint

form is provided to students at [Microsoft Word - Online SARA Complaint Form 6-9-20.docx \(webber.edu\)](#).

If the student's grievance is not satisfactorily resolved through the institutional policy and process, the student may submit unresolved grievances not related to grades or student conduct violations to the Postsecondary Reciprocal Distance Education Coordinating Council. The FL SARA Complaint Policy allows for students to submit to the council a complaint within two years of the incident.

Procedure for Appeals (Including Designated Student Grievance Officers)

A student who is not satisfied with a decision made by a University official often has an avenue of appeal.

Unless otherwise addressed in a specific procedure, a student who wishes to appeal a decision of a University official may do so in writing, within seven (7) days after the student has been informed. A student not availing himself or herself to this policy within this timeframe will forfeit any right to appeal that he or she may have had.

While there is no particular format which a student must follow, the student should completely and concisely spell out his or her case, including such documentation as is necessary, and a full and clear statement of the basis/justification for the appeal. Specifically, the student should make clear the circumstances surrounding the issue and why he or she believes the decision reached was contrary to University policy, unjust, or should otherwise be reconsidered. Because the presumption is that the decision was reached for appropriate reasons, the burden of proof, by a preponderance of the evidence, lies with the student filing an appeal.

After a written student appeal is received, the designated student grievance officer will send an acknowledgement of receipt to the student within five (5) days of receipt of the appeal.

A written institutional response to the appeal will be sent to the student by the designated student grievance officer within thirty (30) days of receipt of the appeal.

While a student may always avail himself or herself to the University's open door policy, doing so will not substitute for filing a written appeal and will not preserve his or her rights of appeal under this policy.

To Whom Decisions May Be Appealed (Designated Student Grievance Officer)

Any decision involving the:

1. Academic areas of the University may be appealed to the Chief Academic Officer/Dean of Academic Affairs (first level of appeal); the President (second level of appeal)
2. The student life areas of the University may be appealed to the Dean or Vice President of Student Life (first level of appeal); the President (second level of appeal)

3. Athletics may be appealed to the Athletics Director (first level of appeal); the President (second level of appeal)

The following decisions are final and may not be appealed:

1. Decisions of the President of the University
2. Decisions on academic standing by the Graduate Council
3. Decisions of the Academic Standing Committee
4. Decisions of Fresh Start Evaluation Committees
5. Any decision not appealed within seven (7) days, unless otherwise stated in a specific policy.

Implementation responsibility: President's Office

Policy review cycle: At least every three years

Compliance: Mandatory

EXHIBIT A

**Webber International University
Written Student Complaint Record (Standard 12.4)**

Academic Year:

Campus:

Date of receipt:

Person & Office receiving the written student complaint:

Nature of the written student complaint:

In compliance with institutional procedures, the complaint was reviewed in the following manner:

Final resolution / disposition of the student complaint:

Person & Office responsible for the final resolution / disposition:

Date of the final resolution / disposition:

Office maintaining the complete record: