4.5 Student Complaints

4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints.

Judgment of Compliance

In Compliance

Narrative of Compliance

Overview

The Dean of Students Office in the Division of Student Affairs serves as the primary contact point for students who wish to register a complaint. The students’ questions are answered and procedures are described for filing complaints, appeals or grievances. A web-based system has been created, entitled the Student Complaint and Appeals System, to streamline the process and procedure.

Student Complaint and Appeals System

The purpose of the Student Complaint and Appeals System is to assist students in submitting complaints and appeals to the appropriate area and to direct students to the most accurate information regarding their
complaint or concern. By following the system, students may be directed to the appropriate office to address their concern. Students who are not sure who might be responsible for handling a particular complaint are directed to submit their concern to the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, at which point it will be handled internally or directed appropriately.

There are three sections to the System:

1. complaints regarding Student Affairs Units and Departments,
2. Appeals, and
3. Other Complaints, which includes the Academic Misconduct, Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment policies and procedures.

**1. Complaints:**

Once at the Web site, students are directed to select the option that best relates to their concern/complaint.

A Student then selects and clicks on one of the three headers to be directed to another series of questions. By responding to each question prompt, students are directed to the appropriate office and/or policy that can assist them in addressing their concern, appeal and/or complaint.
4.5 Student Complaints

Student Complaints and Appeals

1) Have you addressed the specific department under which your concern/complaint falls, Column A or B?

A. No, I have not addressed the specific department.
B. Yes. I have addressed the department and would like to continue here.

3) Please contact the appropriate department by choosing one of the following:

- Blackburn Institute
- Career Center
- Community Service Center
- Counseling Center
- Dean of Students Office
- Graduate Student Services
- Greek Affairs
- Housing & Residential Communities
- Student Involvement & Leadership
- Student Judicial Affairs
- Student Media
- University Recreation
- University Union & Ferguson Center
- Women's Resource Center
- Vice President for Student Affairs Office
For students wishing to submit a complaint regarding a Student Affairs department, a form is provided. The form is then automatically submitted electronically to the Associate Dean of Students who initially reviews the submission and then directs it to the appropriate department within the Division of Student Affairs.

An individual designee has been established in each department in the Division of Student Affairs who is responsible for responding to all complaints.

2. Appeals

For many students a complaint actually involves an appeal of a university policy or procedure. There are eight areas in which students can file a formal appeal:

1. Academic Appeals (Undergraduate & Graduate),
2. Academic Suspension & Probation Appeals,
3. Academic Reinstatement & Financial Aid Appeals
4. Freshman Residency Exemption,
5. Library Fines,
6. Meal Plan Exemption,
7. Parking Appeals,
8. Student Judicial Appeals.
All eight areas are listed in the appeals section of the Student Complaints and Appeals System.

Once a student selects and clicks on the appropriate area of appeal they are directed to the policy and procedures outlining the process a student must follow to complete the appeal process.
There are appeal policies for each of the 8 categories of appeals as referenced below:

- Academic Appeals (Undergraduate & Graduate)
- Academic Reinstatement & Financial Aid Appeals
- Academic Suspension & Probation Appeals
- Freshman Residency Exemption
- Library Fines
- Meal Plan Exemption
- Parking Appeals
- Student Judicial Appeals

(3) Other

Three areas are listed in the Other section of the Student Complaints and Appeals System.

If a student selects “Other”, he is directed to the Academic Misconduct, Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment policies and procedures.

List of Other Policies

- Academic Misconduct
- Non-Discrimination
- Anti-Harassment
Complaints from Online Students

Students enrolled in online courses or off-campus courses who wish to enter a written complaint also regularly use the Student Complaint and Appeals System. In addition, sometimes a student who experiences a difficulty in an online course seeks clarification or assistance in resolving the difficulty. The sample ticket demonstrates the interaction between an online student who is experiencing problems with their course and technical support personnel. This ticket documents the student inquiry, the recommended solution, and the notice of resolution.

Dissemination of Policies and Procedures

Information about complaint procedures, appeal policies and procedures and filing grievances is widely published on University Web sites and in numerous student publications. The University's online Policy webpage, online Student Handbook and the Student Complaints and Appeals System located on the Division of Student Affairs Web site are the main sources of information for students, parents, faculty, and staff regarding policies and procedures. These online resources are readily accessible to students, employees, and the public. Printed copies of the Student Handbook are always available in the Dean of Students Office and the Office of the Vice President of Student Affairs. The Student Handbook is also available online at the website for the Dean of Students Office. All units within the Division of Student Affairs have a link to the Complaints and Appeals System on their individual websites.

Evidence Documenting the Resolution of Individual Complaints

Complaints

- Example: University Recreation Officiating Complaint
- Example: 2009 Spring SGA Elections Complaint
- Example: Campus Dining Complaint

Appeals

- Example: Freshman Residency Exemption
- Example: Student Parking Appeal & Transportation Complaint
- Example: Judicial Appeal
- Example: Academic Grade Appeal

Other Complaints

- Example: Academic Misconduct

Conclusion

The University of Alabama provides appropriate methods and processes for adequately addressing students’ complaints on a wide range of issues. Students may access information about reporting grievances or making complaints through University Web sites and multiple student publications. The University makes every effort to address students’ concerns in a timely manner while ensuring due process.