



## **Student Complaint Policy**

### Policy Intent

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and procedures for Tusculum University students, faculty and staff members with regard to the handling of informal and formal student complaints. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) requires that there be a policy specific to handling and logging written student complaints.

For many student concerns or complaints that do not involve harassment, the University seeks to support informal communication channels involving the student and those most directly involved. The purpose of this document is to outline the formal student complaint policy and procedures.

### General Procedures

Students are encouraged to discuss particular concerns or complaints with the appropriate faculty or staff member as soon as possible. For concerns that are not resolved through the informal process, the student should follow the process outlined below in the Routing of Student Complaints section.

### Routing of Student Complaints

When a student approaches a faculty member, staff member, or administrator with a verbal concern or complaint or proceeds with a formal complaint as defined below, the nature of the complaint/concern determines the direction of the process:

- (a.) Any complaints of harassment or sexual assault/rape, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking should follow the sexual harassment policy and reporting procedures in the Tusculum University Student Handbook.
- (b.) Any grade issue should follow the grade appeal process found in the Tusculum University Catalog.
- (c.) Any complaint involving other students or student -- related issues should be addressed to the Dean of Students as described in the Tusculum University Student Handbook.
- (d.) Any other complaint/concern should be addressed to the appropriate Vice President or Dean responsible for the applicable area with the procedures below.

### Formal Student Complaint

To be considered a formal student complaint, the complaint must meet the following criteria:

1. Be written, either in a letter or an email
2. Be received by a Dean, Vice President or President, and
3. Include the complainant's name, date and signature (electronic signatures are acceptable).

Upon receiving a formal, written complaint from a student, the Dean or Vice President will then

proceed to investigate the complaint thoroughly. The Dean or Vice President will begin by requesting written documentation from the faculty or staff member involved. The Dean or Vice President may also meet with the complainant to gather further information. The Dean or Vice President will gather and document all relevant information before making a decision. The Dean or Vice President will inform the complainant and the relevant faculty or staff member of the decision in writing. In the case of academic complaints, if the issue is still not resolved, the student may take their concern to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs or the Executive Vice President for Health Sciences. In all cases, the final appeal is to the President of the University. Any appeal must be made within a week (seven days) of receipt of the decision.

A log of written student complaints and their resolution will be maintained by each of the Vice Presidents and Deans of the University. The offices of the Provost/VPAA and Executive Vice President for Health Sciences will collect logs from their respective Deans on an annual basis.

### Off-Campus Authorities

Before pursuing complaints through an off-campus authority, the complainant is expected to follow the procedures as described above, except in the cases of harassment or sexual assault/rape, which may originate with an off-campus authority. If after following these procedures, the issue is still not resolved, the student can direct complaints to the following agencies:

- Complaints relating to quality of education or noncompliance with accreditation standards, policies, and procedures may be made to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097. (The Commission's complaint policy, procedure and the Complaint form may be found on their website: <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/complaintpolicy.pdf>);
- Complaints related to the application of state laws or rules related to approval to operate or licensure of a particular professional program within a postsecondary institution shall be referred to the appropriate State Board (e.g., State Board of Health, State Board of Education, and so on) within the Tennessee State Government and shall be reviewed and handled by that licensing board (<http://www.tn.gov>, and then search for the appropriate division);
- For students attending programs in Tennessee, complaints related to state consumer protection laws (e.g., laws related to fraud or false advertising) shall be referred to the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs and shall be reviewed and handled by that Unit (<http://www.tn.gov/commerce/section/consumer-affairs>).
- Student complaints relating to consumer protection laws that involve distance learning education offered under the terms and conditions of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), must first be filed with the institution to seek resolution.
  - Complainants not satisfied with the outcome of the Institution's internal process may appeal, within two years of the incident about which the complaint is made, to the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (<https://www.tn.gov/thec/bureaus/student-aid-and-compliance/postsecondary-state-authorization/request-for-complaint-review.html>).
  - For purposes of this process, a complaint shall be defined as a formal assertion in writing that the terms of SARA or the laws, standards or regulations incorporated by the SARA Policies and Standards (<http://www.nc-sara.org/content/sara->

manual) have been violated by the institution operating under the terms of SARA.

- For a list of SARA member States, please visit the NC-SARA website (<http://nc-sara.org/sara-states-institutions>). Students residing in non-SARA states should consult their respective State of residence for further instruction for filing a complaint.
- Complaints about the university can also be directed to the President, Tusculum University, 60 Shiloh Road, P.O. Box 5048, Greeneville TN 37743.
- Complaints that originate with SACSCOC or other accrediting bodies are to be forwarded to the appropriate liaison who will follow the general procedures addressed in the Student Complaint Policy.

Original Policy May 12, 2016

Updated January 4, 2019

Approved by Cabinet: January 16, 2019