

SMSU Complaint Policy and Procedure

1. Students shall first attempt to resolve complaints informally at the point of the dispute.
2. If the dispute cannot be resolved informally, students shall submit, in writing, their grievance/complaint to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs.
3. The Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs may refer a grievance/complaint to an appropriate staff member (“designee”) for investigation and/or disposition of the grievance/complaint.
4. The Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs or her/his designee will meet with the student within ten (10) class days to discuss the student’s grievance/complaint.
5. The grievance/complaint will be investigated and resolved in a timely manner. Only in exceptional circumstances will this take more than thirty (30) class days. All documentation regarding the grievance/complaint shall be kept in the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs.
6. Once an inquiry into a grievance/complaint has reached a conclusion, the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs or his/her designee will meet with the student and inform him/her of the outcome of the grievance/complaint.
7. If a student wishes to file an appeal of a grievance/complaint, that student must do so within five (5) class days of the closing meeting. Appeals from this grievance/complaint procedure shall be routed to the Office of the President for consideration.

Code: G-011
Date: May 13, 2004
Approved: David C. Danahar
Revised: January 2016
Approved: Connie J. Gores
Revised: September 2017
Approved: Connie J. Gores

SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

POLICY

INSTITUTIONAL RECORD OF STUDENT COMPLAINTS

Institutional Record of Student Complaints

[\(SMSU Policy G-011\)](#)

Background: The U.S. Department of Education expects the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Colleges and Schools (HLC) evaluation teams to be aware of major complaints or categories of student concerns that may or may not be addressed in the self-study. The primary source of that information will be an institutional log of student complaints and their disposition. The visiting team will use the log to consider whether institutions generally deal with complaints in a timely manner and in a way that demonstrates fairness to students. The visiting team will also look for any pattern to the complaints that suggests problems with institutional quality or with factors related to the General Institutional Requirements or Criteria for Accreditation. The team will not be reviewing or second-guessing institutional decisions in specific complaints.

Policy: To comply with federal regulations and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Colleges and Schools, Southwest Minnesota State University will maintain a record of formal written and signed student complaints. The complaints tracked are those filed with a University Officer with the responsibility to handle the complaint. The records provided to the federal government and the HLC include summary information that is in compliance with the Data Practices Act and FERPA.

Procedure:

1. Students with complaints about any aspect of academic and non-academic programs may take those complaints to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs (FH 214).

2. University employees that receive a signed, written student complaint regarding any aspect of academic and/or non-academic programs will send a record of the complaint along with the resolution to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs (FH 214). Actual complaint and supporting documents will remain in the initial office.
3. The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs will establish a method of logging formal signed, written student complaints and resolutions that have been filed with any university employee.
4. The log will include:
 - The date the complaint was first formally submitted to the appropriate employee.
 - Nature of the complaint (e.g. grade dispute, allegation of sexual harassment, etc.).
 - The steps taken by the institution to resolve the complaint.
 - The institution's final decision regarding the complaint, including referral to outside agencies.
 - Any other external actions initiated by the student to resolve the complaint, if known to the institution (e.g. lawsuit, EEOC investigation, etc.).
5. The log will only be used to track current and recent student complaints, not parents, employees, etc., even if the complaint relates to a student.
6. Individual students' identities and names will not be included on the log and will not be shared with the visiting HLC team.
7. A formal written and signed student complaint includes complaints received by email or fax as long as the address and/or phone number and the name of the complainant are included.