

STUDENT COMPLAINT PROCESS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA - STUDENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

UNA is committed to reviewing and responding to student complaints appropriately. A complaint is an expression of discontent based on the result of behavior or circumstances that the student believes are unjust, unsafe, inequitable, or create an unnecessary hardship.

This Complaint Procedure applies to student complaints that are not addressed in other University procedures which have established processes for resolution, such as Final Grade Appeal, Academic Dishonestly Appeal, Dismissal from Academic Programs, Student Conduct, or Title IX; unless the complaint is based on discrimination or other forms of inequity, or failure to follow established procedures.

If a complaint does not fall within established procedures, a student may submit a complaint via following procedures.

• Informal Complaint Resolution Process:

Prior to initiating the formal complaint process, a student complainant should first request to meet with the individual(s) with whom he/she has a concern. The informal complaint procedure is intended to encourage communication between the parties involved in order to facilitate a mutual understanding of different perspectives regarding the complaint.

There are times when it is not possible to initially address the individual(s) of concern directly. At that point, the student should consider meeting with the Department Chair, Supervisor, or Dean as the first step. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached with the individual(s) involved, the student complainant may then request a meeting with the Department Chair, Supervisor, or Dean who shall assist in finding a resolution.

At any point during the informal process, a student may seek resolution with the University Ombudsman (<https://www.una.edu/administration/offices-and-administration/ombudsman.html>).

• Formal Complaint Resolution Process:

If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached informally, a student complainant may initiate the formal complaint procedures by submitting the **Student Complaint Form** (online, via email, mail, or hand-delivered) to the appropriate Vice President's Office – the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost, or the Vice President for Business and Finance, depending on the area of concern. All formal complaints must be in writing and must be signed by the student. Electronic or digital signatures clearly attributable to the student (i.e., the student's name in an email message received from his or her UNA email account) are acceptable.

Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the Vice President to whom the complaint was submitted will 1) will respond to acknowledge receipt of the complaint and to inform the complainant on the next steps, 2) forward the matter to the proper University office for a response, or 3) initiate an investigation as outlined in the following paragraph.

If the complaint can be resolved with a direct response from the appropriate Vice President or by another administrative office, the complaining party will receive a written response within 10 business

days of the receipt of the written complaint. If the Vice President feels an investigation is warranted, the complaining party will be informed of the initiation of an investigation, the name of the investigating party, and of the date he/she should receive a report of its outcome. The investigation should be carried out by the senior administrator of the office/department from which the complaint arose, unless that individual is named in the complaint, and should conclude within 30 business days of the formal complaint, unless extenuating circumstances occur. Once the investigation has been completed, it is the responsibility of the office/department investigating the complaint to recommend resolution to the appropriate Vice President's Office, who will determine the resolution.

Following the investigation process and resolution determination outlined above, the Vice President that supervises the area or individual(s) involved in the complaint will provide a written response to the student complainant that will address the appropriate action(s) taken by the University. Once this response has been sent to the student, the matter will be considered closed, and the Vice President's decision is final.

Students who feel that they have not reached a satisfactory resolution upon completion of the UNA Student Complaint Procedure may file a complaint with the Alabama Commission of Higher Education at https://ache.edu/ACHE_Reports/Forms/NRI/federal-reg.pdf

Adopted 2-6-19

Complaint Tracking

The Vice President for Student Affairs and the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost Offices will track each formal student complaint, and will maintain a record that includes, at a minimum, the following information:

- The names of the Student(s) initiating the complaint and the Individual(s) named in the complaint.
- The date that the Student Complaint was received.
- The Student(s) identified with the Complaint.
- The nature of the complaint, including a copy of the Student Complaint, to be retained for not less than two (2) years after its final disposition.
- The University official(s) assigned to investigate the complaint and the steps taken to resolve it.
- The date and final resolution or disposition of the complaint.
- Any external actions taken by the complainant, if any, of which Vice President becomes aware.

Tracking of student complaints helps the University identify any serious or systemic problems affecting the quality of student life and assist in identifying patterns of conduct that raise a legitimate concern with respect to the University's academic or co-curricular programs, and to comply with obligations imposed by federal regulations for receiving, responding to and tracking student complaints.

The information tracked will be made available to regulatory agencies and accrediting bodies, including the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, as required in accordance with applicable laws, regulations and policies.

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