Regulation on Student Complaints

I. Purpose. The Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, provides that for institutions of higher education to participate in the federal student aid programs authorized by Title IV, an institution must be legally authorized to provide post-secondary educational programs within the state in which it is located. Part of the state authorization requirement is that the state must have a process to review and appropriately act on complaints concerning the institution, including enforcing applicable State laws.[1] The Attorney General of the State of North Carolina has general authority to enforce consumer protection laws and specific authority to enforce the licensing of certain nonpublic post-secondary educational institutions.[2] This regulation establishes a process by which students can initiate complaints against a post-secondary institution offering programs in the state of North Carolina when all other forums at the institutional level have been exhausted.

II. Complaints Against UNC Constituent Institutions.

A. Constituent institutions must provide current and prospective students with a process, or processes, for filing complaints concerning the institution, including enforcing applicable state laws.

B. Constituent institution student complaint processes should be documented and administered in compliance with all applicable laws and UNC System Policies.

C. If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the student complaint process after they have exhausted all forums and appeals available to them at their constituent institution, they may elect to file a complaint with the University of North Carolina System Office (the "System Office").

D. To file a complaint with the System Office, a student must submit the complaint either through the student complaint web portal or by mail to the University of North Carolina System Office, Division of Academic and Student Affairs. The complaint must include all relevant information and supporting documentation. The web portal link and mailing address will be made available online.

E. Upon receipt, the System Office will consult with the relevant constituent institution(s) on the status of the complaint to ensure the student has exhausted all forums and applicable appeals processes at the constituent institution level.

F. The System Office will review the complaint and may, but shall not be required to, take any of the following actions, or other actions it deems appropriate based on the complaint (see section IV. for General Provisions):

[1] See 34 C.F.R. § 600.9(a)(1) (2026).
[2] See N.C.G.S. § 75-105 et seq.; N.C.G.S. § 116-15(j).

1. Refer the complaint to the constituent institution where the complaint was initiated through the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs or Provost or their designee (or equivalent positions) to provide a final response on the disposition of the matter and close the complaint; the final institutional response will be provided to the complainant, or

2. Make available to the complainant contact information for the accrediting body of the constituent institution where the complaint was initiated, and/or other appropriate avenues for filing complaint(s), as may be appropriate.

Following this action, the student complaint will be closed. The System Office will close without further review any student complaint concerning a matter it has already reviewed and closed.

III. Complaints Against Licensed Institutions, Certain Exempt Institutions, Independent Colleges and Universities, and State Community Colleges.

A. To file a complaint with the System Office, a student must submit the complaint either through the student complaint web portal or by mail to the University of North Carolina System Office of Academic and Student Affairs. The complainant must include all relevant information and supporting documentation. The web portal link and mailing address will be made available online and in relevant institution publications.

B. The System Office may, but shall not be required to, take any of the following actions, or other actions it deems appropriate based on the complaint:

1. Refer the complaint to the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU), the North Carolina Community Colleges System (NCCCS), the applicable institution, or other state agency or entity, as appropriate;

2. Where the complaint involves consumer protection or post-secondary degree licensure enforcement, refer the complainant, or forward the complaint, to the North Carolina Department of Justice; or

3. Make available to the complainant contact information for the accrediting body of the constituent institution where the complaint was initiated, and other appropriate avenues for filing complaint(s), as may be appropriate.

Following this action, the student complaint will be closed. The System Office will close without further review any student complaint concerning a matter it has already reviewed and closed.

IV. General Provisions.

A. The System Office complaint process is not an avenue for seeking administrative remedies or compelled action by constituent institutions, licensed institutions, independent colleges and universities, and community colleges. The appropriate action to be taken for student complaints to the System Office is to refer them to the appropriate constituent institution or agency for disposition. The System Office shall not re-adjudicate any matter previously decided through institutional processes.

B. Any complaint contemplated herein does not, is not designed to, and shall not be interpreted to toll any statute of limitations or provide any remedies or defenses that may be available to a student or a constituent institution through other avenues, including the court system.

C. If a student is unsatisfied with the referral of their complaint, they may contact the accreditor, if applicable, for the constituent institution where the complaint was initiated. By submitting a complaint to the System Office, the complainant consents to their complaint being referred, including complaint details and complainant contact information, to appropriate third parties.

D. The review process contemplated herein is a general review process, and not specific to any type of complaint. To the extent this process conflicts with any other provision of the UNC Policy Manual, including any specific rights available to students provided under applicable provisions of *The Code* and UNC Policy Manual; those provisions shall prevail.

V. Other Avenues for Complaints.

A. Where constituent institutions participate in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) administered by SARA North Carolina, students may file a complaint with SARA North Carolina. Contact information for SARA North Carolina will be made available online.

B. Students, as consumers, may also file complaints with the North Carolina Department of Justice. Contact information for the North Carolina Department of Justice will be made available online.

VI. Other Matters.

A. Effective Date. The requirements of this regulation shall be effective on the date of adoption of this regulation by the president.

B. Relation to Federal and State Laws and Policies. The foregoing regulation as adopted by the president is meant to supplement, and does not purport to supplant or modify, those statutory enactments, regulations, and policies which may govern or relate to the subject matter of this regulation.