

Webber International University

Florida and North Carolina Campuses

Written Student Complaints	Approved: August 26, 2014
	Approved By: Joint Institutional Planning Committee
CS 3.13.3 FR 4.5	Revised and re-approved by JIPC January 5, 2016

CS 3.13.3: “Applicable Policy Statement. Each institution is required to have in place student complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well-publicized. (See FR 4.5). The Commission also requires, in accord with federal regulations, that each institution maintains a record of complaints received by the institution. This record is made available to the Commission upon request. This record will be reviewed and evaluated by the Commission as part of the institution’s decennial evaluation.”

FR 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.” (Student complaints)

Introduction

As an institution which endeavors to prepare students for the workforce, irrespective of their chosen profession, Webber International University attempts to maintain an environment where problems are dealt with honestly, openly, collaboratively, and as close to the source as is possible.

Consistent with our belief that collaboration rather than escalation is often the answer, faculty, staff, and administration all have open door polices.

In addition to a wide array of informal resolution strategies, students have the right to file written complaints. While there are specific procedures for Grade Appeals and complaints involving Harassment, Discrimination, and Title IX violations, this procedure documents the policy and procedure for other written student complaints.

Policy

Written student complaints will be addressed in a fair and professional manner, consistent with established policy and procedure, good educational practice, and the facts and evidence presented.

The policies and procedures governing written student complaints: (a) will provide clear and consistent avenues / guidelines for resolution; (b) will be approved through appropriate institutional processes; (c) will be published in appropriate institutional documents accessible to those affected by the policy or procedure; and (d) will be consistently implemented and enforced by the University.

The University will not respond to or consider anonymous complaints, complaints containing defamatory statements, complaints submitted on behalf of another individual, or those sent electronically or through facsimile transmission. Written complaints must be submitted, signed and dated by the student who is making the complaint (a typed “signature” is not acceptable).

In compliance with the requirements of FR 4.5, the disposition of written student complaints will be properly documented in a written record that will be available for review by SACSCOC or other individuals with a legitimate need (subject to normal privacy protections under the law).

In addition to the above, a written student complaint must include:

- a. A statement describing the complaint in the clearest possible terms.
- b. A clear and concise written description of the evidence upon which the allegation is based.
- c. Names and contact information for those with personal, firsthand knowledge of the facts of the matter.
- d. A description of any attempt that was made to resolve the matter prior to submission of the written complaint.
- e. A description of any external channels the complainant is pursuing, including legal action.

Submitting a written complaint:

- A complaint involving academic affairs is submitted to the Chief Academic Officer.
- A complaint involving student life is submitted to the Chief Student Affairs Officer.
- A complaint involving athletics is submitted to the Athletic Director.
- A complaint involving the equestrian program (NC campus) is submitted to the Director of the Equestrian Program.
- A complaint involving financial aid is submitted to the Director of Financial Aid.
- A complaint involving the business office is submitted to the Chief Financial Officer.
- A complaint involving the admissions office is submitted to the Director of Admissions.

Note:

1. The institutional officers mentioned above are identified in the Catalog for the respective campus.

2. In the event that a student is unsure of the person to whom a written complaint should be sent, the student should request clarification from the office of the President and CEO (Florida) or Campus President (North Carolina).
3. In the event that the Student is lodging a complaint against the person to whom a complaint would normally be sent, the student should instead send his or her complaint to the office of the President and CEO (Florida) or Campus President (North Carolina).

Timely Response:

Except as otherwise provided, after a written student complaint is received, the University official who received the complaint will send an acknowledgement of receipt within 5 business days.

Except as otherwise provided, a written institutional response to the complaint will be sent to the student by the responsible University official (for example the chief officer for academic affairs, student affairs, business office, athletics, etc.) within 15 business days of receipt of the complaint.

Possible Outcomes:

- (1) The University may:
 - [a] agree that the complaint is valid and take appropriate action based on the nature of the complaint;
 - [b] may conclude that the complaint lacks substance and does not require any remedial action by the University.

Appeals:

Webber's appeal process is fully documented in the policy titled *Procedure for Appeals (Including contact information for designated Student Grievance Officers)* which is published on the intranet and in graduate and undergraduate handbooks.

In the event that a student complaint is found to lack merit, the student may file a written appeal of the decision with the relevant campus officer.

- President and CEO at the Florida campus
- Campus President at the North Carolina campus.

A written statement of appeal must be received within 7 days.

- An appeal must contain a full and clear statement of the basis / justification for the appeal.

After a written student appeal is received, the President / Campus President will send an acknowledgement of receipt to the student within 5 business days of receipt of the appeal.

A written institutional response to the appeal will be sent to the student by the President / Campus President within 15 business days of receipt of the appeal.

As indicated in the published Procedure for Appeals, the decision of the President & CEO (Florida) / Campus President (North Carolina) is final and not subject to further appeals.

Maintenance of the relevant correspondence and the disposition of written student complaints:

At the Florida campus, the relevant correspondence and a summary record the disposition of written student complaints will be maintained in the office of the President and CEO.

At the North Carolina campus, the relevant correspondence and a summary record the disposition of written student complaints will be maintained in the office of the Campus President.

Elements of a written student complaint review that are kept in the record:

1. Academic year
2. The nature of the complaint (summary)
3. The manner in which the complaint was reviewed.
 - a. Including any appeal
4. The final resolution

Other Relevant Policies:

This policy is intended to provide guidance for a wide variety of complaints. Several specific types of complaint are governed by other, more specific policies.

Grade Appeals: As stated in the Student Handbook: “A student may request a review of a final grade within thirty (30) days of assignment of grade. Such a request must be submitted in writing to the Chief Academic Officer and shall state the reason(s) for believing the grade to be unjust. If the Chief Academic Officer determines that the student has reasonable grounds for requesting a review, he will, within 7 days of receiving the student’s request, appoint a committee of faculty members to conduct a review.

An Academic Review Committee has the sole responsibility to determine the justness of the disputed grade. It may not properly make any recommendation beyond that point. The student who requests an academic review of a final grade bears the burden of proof in establishing that the grade was undeserved. Failing to prove by preponderance of the evidence, the grade must stand as assigned by the faculty member. The presumption is always that the faculty member assigned the grade for good cause and without bias. An Academic Review Committee shall report its finding of the justness of the disputed grade, in writing, to the Chief Academic Officer within 7 days of being constituted.

The Chief Academic Officer will inform the student of the decision, which can be (1) affirming the grade as awarded; (2) assigning a new grade based on the evidence of the case; or (3) remanding the case to the instructor with instructions, within 7 days of receiving the report from the Academic Review Committee.” As stated in the policy titled *Procedure for Appeals (including contact information for designated Student Grievance Officers)* which is published on the intranet and in graduate and undergraduate handbooks, this decision is final and cannot be appealed.

Complaints Involving Discrimination, Harassment, or Title IX: In recognition of its responsibility to provide a safe and wholesome environment in which to study, live, and work, the University has detailed policies, found on the intranet, regarding discrimination, harassment, and Title IX violations. Because these policies provide the student with additional rights, privileges, and protections, students are urged to consult these policies, or the campus designated Title IX officer, regarding complaints of this nature.

Implementation responsibility: President’s Office

Policy review cycle: At least every three years

Compliance: Mandatory

(Policy Written Student Complaints Revised Jan 2016.doc)
[Policies]