

Office of Human Resources

Student Complaint / Grievance Policy

Policies and Procedures



ALFRED STATE
COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Student Complaint / Grievance Policy Policy and Procedures

In accordance with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) guidance relative to Verification of Compliance with Accreditation-Relevant Federal Regulations, Alfred State has created the following Student Complaint/Grievance Policy, which provides procedures for decentralization of student complaints with several avenues for filing both informal and formal complaints (grievances) as described herein. In addition, the policy provides structure for the college to track formal complaints (grievances) to ascertain trends and address areas that could benefit from continuous improvement.

The following definitions provide guidance for student complaints/grievances:

Student Complaint: An issue related to a perceived academic or non-academic injustice, whereby a student believes that he/she has been dealt with arbitrarily, unfairly or in a way that violates established State and Federal laws, the College Code of Conduct and Student Code of Conduct (<https://www.alfredstate.edu/student-code-of-conduct>), and/or policies or procedures by a member of the Alfred State community.

Informal Complaint: An informal student complaint occurs without formal tracking. The student meets with the college employee who directly supervises the affected area (office or person) to attempt an informal resolution of the situation. In this case, no formal written documentation is completed. If a student is unsure who supervises an office, they should contact the Human Resource Office at 607-587-4025, Pioneer Center.

Grievance (or Formal Complaint): A formal and documented complaint following the college process described here.

Grievance types:

- Academic A student complaint regarding an instructor, grade, classroom issue, department chair, advisor relative to academic program. (See process below – Section I.)

- Administrative A student complaint regarding a service, process, or treatment in any administrative area including:
 - Student Affairs (residence life, health & wellness services, athletics, police, student engagement, equity & inclusion, career services, fraternity or sorority life, or other department or office, safety or other office/department in student life/student affairs),
 - Enrollment (records, financial aid, billing, and admissions), facilities, and
 - Academic Service Areas (technology services - helpdesk, library, student success center, accessibility services, advising center, and center for online learning).(See process below – Section II.)

- **Student** A student Complaint regarding the behavior of another student
See Alfred State’s Student Code of Conduct or go to:
<https://www.alfredstate.edu/student-code-of-conduct/administration-of-the-conduct-code/procedures>

There are specific state and federal laws relative to legal rights and ethical standards including, but not limited to, an accommodating and inclusive environment free of discrimination, harassment, etc. If you feel your complaint is related to a legal or ethical issue involving an Alfred State College employee or contractor involving the following legal issues contact the Office of Human Resources:

- Harassment
- Discrimination
- Immigration
- OSHA violation
- Theft/Fraud
- Unemployment
- Violence
- Wage/Hour
- Workers Comp
- Other legal issues

Legal Protections Include:	Division:
Americans with Disabilities Act	HR/OAS
Anti -Discrimination State and Federal Protections	HR/CDO
Title IX	CDO

If you are reporting an emergency or an imminent threat, please contact University Police at 607-587-3999 or 911 immediately.

Informal and formal complaints should be initiated in the appropriate departments and with direct supervisors first. Follow the procedures in the list of Complaints Section. In the absence of a timely response or resolution, a student should contact one of the following offices:

- Provost (Academic Affairs), Administration Building, 2nd floor, 607-587-3913
- Vice President (Enrollment Management), Student Leadership Center, 2nd floor, 607-587-3945
- Vice President (Student Affairs), Student Leadership Center, 4th floor, 607-587-3911
- Chief of Staff, Administration Building, 2nd floor, 607-587-4025
- Chief Diversity Officer, Student Leadership Center, 4th floor, 607-587-4076
- Accessibility Service Coordinator, Hunter Student Development Center, 1st floor, 607-587-4506
- Chief Financial Officer (CFO/Facilities), Administration Building, 2nd Floor, 607-587-3985

If a student has exhausted all internal reviews and is dissatisfied with the resolution, the student may pursue resolution via an external agency.

- Students who have exhausted Alfred State review rights may pursue a concern or complaint with the SUNY System. The SUNY mailing address for such a purpose is State University of New York, System Administration, State University Plaza, Albany, NY 12246. More information regarding pursuing such concerns at the SUNY System level is available at <http://system.suny.edu/university-life/student-concerns/>.
- A final level of complaint review by the New York State Education Department will only be considered if it is demonstrated that reviews at the campus and SUNY system levels have been exhausted. For more information of filing such a complaint with NYSED, see <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/spr/COMPLAINTFORMINFO.html>
- Students may file a complaint with the U.S. Office of Civil Rights (OCR) for discrimination complaints. Please refer to OCR's website for filing information at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/qa-complaints.html> .
- For financial aid, students may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education – Student Financial aid. Please refer to the FSA website for more information at feedback.studentaid.ed.gov.

SECTION I. Academic Grievances Procedures for Students

Student Complaint in an Academic Setting (Instructor, Advisor, Grade, Classroom Issue, Department Chair)

In preparation for negotiating challenges in one's professional life, Alfred State College recommends that students begin by engaging directly with the faculty member, employee, or their direct supervisor to resolve the issue. If the student is not satisfied with the resolution or believes that there is a systematic issue that needs to be addressed, the student follows the following grievance process.

These procedures are intended to provide the student with a just and efficient method for investigation and recommendation of resolution of a **grievance of an academic nature in an academic setting (faculty, advisor, grade, academic department, etc.)**. An academic grievance shall include, but not be restricted to, a complaint by a student that there has been a violation, misinterpretation, or inequitable application of the regulations by the instructor, department chair, or advisor.

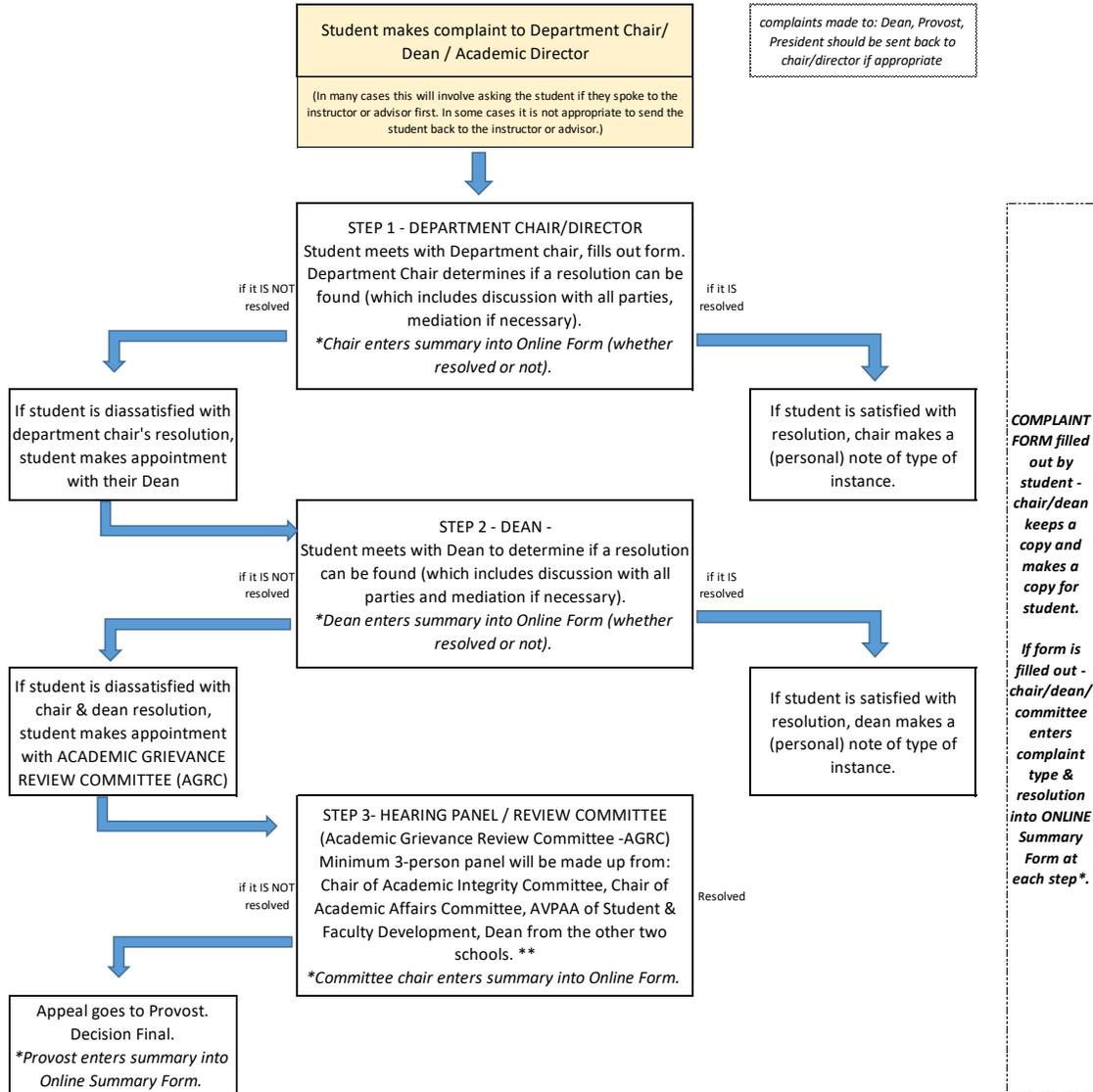
There is a three-step process for student complaints described in the flowchart below. The situation could be resolved at any step. At each step, the chair/dean/committee will enter summary information only into the Online Reporting Summary form. In most cases, students should try to resolve the situation with the instructor first. If that is not possible, or if it is attempted but not resolved:

- Step 1 is a meeting with the Department Chair
- Step 2 is a meeting with the Dean
- Step 3 is a Hearing Panel review. The Academic Grievance Review Committee (AGRC) will meet to review the case if it was not resolved at Step 2, collect any documentation, interview all parties involved, and to make a formal recommendation. An advocate for the faculty, and an advocate for the student, are welcome to attend the Hearing at Step 3 as non-voting supports. Final appeals go to the Provost.

Student Appeals of Academic Regulations

Students are expected to adhere to all academic regulations of the college. However, unusual and extenuating circumstances may warrant a modification of certain regulations. Students can request a waiver of any regulations with very strong evidence to justify the waiver. Appeals can be directed to the chair of the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Appeals Committee. Examples of issues brought to Academic Affairs committee include late registration into a class, late drop/withdrawal from a class, graduating from a major never in, etc.

Complaint By a Student in an Academic Setting



**The AGRC Hearing Panel will meet to review the case if it was not resolved at Step2, collect any documentation, interview all parties involved, and make a formal recommendation. An advocate for the faculty and an advocate for the student are welcome to attend the Hearing at Step3 as non-voting supports.

ONLINE SUMMARY entries are collected and summarized by the Director of OIRPE. The summaries will be reviewed at Dean's Council (Provost, Deans, AVPAA, Academic Directors). An institutional effectiveness review will be conducted, with action plans developed, for improvements (policy, procedure, professional development, etc).

/approved by ____ on ____

Form for Filing a COMPLAINT BY A STUDENT IN AN ACADEMIC SETTING

To be completed by a student.

Chair/Dean makes a copy – keeps one in the department - and gives one to the student.

This form is to be used by a student(s) to file a complaint or concern of an academic nature or that occurred in an academic setting.

Informal Complaint – reporting the incident in email or in person

Formal Complaint/Grievance – completing this form initiating a formal review

Student Name:		Student ID:	
Date of Filing:		Contact #:	
Email Address:		Local Address:	
Location of Event:		Faculty/Staff/Office Involved:	
Date of Event(s):			

In most academic situations the student should attempt to resolve the situation directly with the instructor first.

Did you meet with the faculty member? Yes No Date _____

If you did not meet with the faculty member, please explain why?

Complaint is about a:

- ___ Course Grade
- ___ Faculty/Instructor (instruction, classroom issue, etc.)
- ___ Academic Advisor
- ___ Other _____

Description

- 1) Describe briefly the Nature of the Complaint/Grievance (allegation, inequity, wrongdoing) including dates. (Be brief here – if further investigation is warranted more information will be collected.)

- 2) Describe here the steps you have already taken to-date to resolve the situation. Be specific – who did you contact, how did you contact them, who did you meet with, and when. Was there any resolution?

- 3) Proposed/Recommended Action to be Taken or Considered

	I want this to be considered a formal complaint/grievance and initiate a formal review
	Other:

Proposed recommended action *(student view on what should occur):*

Honesty Statement & Report Submission

I affirm that I have carefully reviewed the charge(s) documented above and that it is true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief. *I agree _____(signature)*

-----**Items below are completed by the Collector - Chair/Dean**-----

Collected By: _____ Date: _____

Action by Collector:	
(Was it resolved completely?):	

Student Forwarded to _____ on _____

AGRC Committee Collected on _____

SECTION II. Administrative Grievances by Students about a Service, Process or Office

A student may utilize the following process in seeking resolution of a concern or complaint about an administrative service, process, or office at Alfred State.

Informal: attempt at resolution without formal tracking – student meets with the office/person and expresses the concern; no formal written documentation is needed but internal notes are a suggestion.

Formal: A student wishing to lodge a *formal* grievance would follow the steps outlined here. This process involves a formal tracking process.

Step 1: The student should meet with the department coordinator or director and fill out the Student Administrative Complaint form and work toward a resolution of the complaint. The staff member should retain a record of the meeting and its outcome. If the student and the coordinator/director cannot resolve the complaint, the complaint should be shared with the next level supervisor. In all cases, the director/coordinator should keep form and log the complaint.

Step 2: The supervisor at the *next* level will review the complaint, conduct appropriate investigations, attempt to resolve the situation, and log all actions and results. This process will be completed within 10 class/business days of the receipt of the complaint with notification of outcome to the person filing the grievance/complaint.

Step 3 (Vice President level): If the previous steps do not resolve the complaint, the student may take the complaint to the appropriate vice president or his/her designee from within whose area the complaint arises (see list below). The vice president will review the complaint, review or gather additional relevant information, may meet with the complainant, offer a finding (to either resolve or explain the college position) of the process within 10 class/business days of receipt of the complaint. In the case where the appropriate vice president is directly involved in the complaint or has already acted/been involved in previous steps, the College can designate an alternate vice president or go to the College President. In all cases, the director/coordinator should keep form and log the complaint.

NOTES: *Students shall be assured that no adverse action will be taken against them for filing a formal complaint. In circumstances where another established, formal grievance procedure is already in place to address the student concern (e.g. parking ticket appeal), that grievance procedure shall be used instead of this grievance/complaint process.*

Grievance/Complaint Referral Guide for Administrative Areas

Student Complaint about Type:	Descriptions/Examples	Unit:	Division
Student Records, Financial Aid, or Billing	Complaint about an office, treatment or process relating to records, financial aid, billing, transfer credit.	Records, Financial Aid, Student Accounts	Enrollment Management/VPEDM
Student Affairs or Student Life	Unfair treatment or processes by the offices or staff including residence life, health & wellness services, athletics, university police, student engagement, equity & inclusion, career services, fraternity or sorority life, or other department or office.	Department Director for area most related to complaint	Student Affairs/VPESA
Academic Support Areas	Complaint regarding Student Success Center, Tutoring, Accessibility Services, Academic Advising, Technology Services - helpdesk, Library, or Center for Online Learning	Department Director for area most related to complaint	Academic Affairs/Provost
Facilities	Complaint about completion of work orders, treatment, or unresolved facility issue	Facilities Services	Admin/CFO

Student Administrative Complaint Form

To be completed by a student.

Director/Supervisor makes a copy – keeps one in the department - and gives one to the student.

Student Name:	Student ID:
Date of Filing:	Contact #:
Email:	
Local Address:	
Date of Event:	

Complaint is related to:

- Enrollment or Student Records & Financial Services** (records, financial aid, billing, and admissions, transfer credit)
- Facilities** (buildings, cleaners, grounds, work orders, other)
- Student affairs** (residence life, health & wellness services, athletics, police, student engagement, equity & inclusion, career services, fraternity or sorority life, or other department or office, safety or other office/department in student life/student affairs)
- Academic service areas** (technology services - helpdesk, library, student success center, accessibility services, academic advising, or center for online learning)
- Other** - please specify: _____

1) Describe briefly the nature of the complaint or concern.

2) Describe any steps you have already taken to-date to resolve the situation. Be specific – who did you contact, how did you contact them, whom did you meet with, and when. Was there any resolution?

3) Briefly describe how you might like this situation resolved.

Honesty Statement & Report Submission

I affirm that I have carefully reviewed the concerns documented above and that it is true to the best of my knowledge, information and belief.

I agree _____(signature) _____(date)

----- Below this line is the Alfred State Staff only -----

Received by: _____ Date:

Entered online by: _____ Date:

(Initial committee Nov 2016, updates Nov 2019, VPs review & changes June 2020 / Approved PC 08/27/2020)