



OFFICIAL POLICY

Subject/Title: Student Complaint Policy and University Appeals Committee

Policy Number: FPU-3.0031P

_New _Revised _Technical Revision Only _Emergency Policy

Date First Adopted: November 4, 2014

Date Revised: January 17, 2017; July 21, 2021

Responsible Division or Department: President's Office

Initiating Authority: Terry Parker, Provost & Executive Vice President, Academic Affairs

A. APPLICABILITY & PURPOSE:

This policy applies to all university students.

B. POLICY STATEMENT:

It is the policy of Florida Polytechnic University to take the concerns of its students seriously and seek to provide an optimal environment for learning and personal growth. The intent of this policy is to provide a venue for students to express thoughtful concerns where no other forum exists and to provide a final appeals pathway for process that either do not have an appeals pathway or where existing pathways have been exhausted.

Wherever possible, the University strongly encourages students to seek informal resolution to any issues they may be facing. The University's personnel are committed to advancing the education of the students and active, meaningful dialogue and working through misunderstandings and disagreements is a large part of the educational process. Informal resolution of complaints may be continued throughout the execution of this policy or resorted to at any time during and up to the conclusion of a formal process.

1. Limitations:

The University Appeals Committee serves as the final appeal board for all complaints and/or appeals for which no existing appeal process exists in the appropriate policy. Where other current policies include an appeal process, that policy's process should be followed.

2. Authority:

The University Appeals Committee serves as the voice for the President in all matters brought before it. Its decisions are final and not themselves appealable.

C. DEFINITIONS:

1. **"Written Complaint"** means a complaint in-writing, and does not include anonymous complaints; complaints submitted electronically; complaints submitted via facsimile transmission; complaints on behalf of another individual or group; complaints forwarded to the University by another party.

2. **"Complaint"** means a complaint or concern occurring when a student thinks that an action or decision by the University affecting him/her is unjust, inequitable or creates unnecessary hardship. Such complaints include but are not limited to problems with student or academic services, other university departments, or other matters.
3. **"Complainant"** means any student who files a formal written Complaint under this policy.
4. **"Student"** means any student enrolled or admitted to Florida Polytechnic University.
5. **"University Appeals Committee" or "Committee"** means a group appointed annually by the Provost and will consist of three academic administrators (Vice Provosts, Registrar, or Department Chairs or Directors), two faculty members appointed by the Provost, and one administrative official outside of academic affairs. An Office of General Counsel representative will serve in an advisory capacity.

E. PROCEDURES

1. **Informal Process.** Students are encouraged to seek informal resolution of any issue before filing a formal written complaint; however, students are not required to attempt an informal resolution prior to filing a formal written complaint in accordance with the process detailed below. A student may seek informal resolution by:
 - a. Talking with the individual he/she believes has caused the Complaint to see if informal resolution is possible, and/or
 - b. Talking with the supervisor of the individual he/she believes has caused the Complaint to see if informal resolution is possible.
 - c. Availing themselves of the services of the Student Ombudsman Office.

The Student Ombudsman office exists to serve all students of the University. Reporting directly to the President/designee, the Office operates in an impartial, informal and non-adversarial manner pursuant to Section 1006.51, Florida Statutes and Board of Governors Regulation 6.011. Students may voluntarily choose to utilize the services of the Student Ombuds office at any time, before, during or even after formal written grievance processes have been exhausted or proven unsuccessful.

The purpose of the Student Ombuds office is to assist students in resolving problems and conflicts that arise in the course of a student's interactions with Florida Polytechnic University. By considering problems in an unbiased way, the Student Ombudsman works to achieve a fair resolution and works to protect the rights of all parties involved. The Student Ombudsman will work with students to interpret University policy, help identify options and strategies for resolving complaints, and serve as a mediator when appropriate. The Student Ombudsman does not initiate action on behalf of the student but may refer the student to the appropriate academic officer.

In service to students, the Student Ombuds office will:

- a. Administer, through its processes, fair and equitable services to students voluntarily seeking assistance with complaints the students have or complaints students feel were not adequately addressed through formal channels.
- b. Operate in accordance with standards of practice, upholding principles of independence, neutrality, and confidentiality when responding to any student complaint, inquiry, concern or conflict.
- c. Recommend changes to the processes or procedures that hinder resolving the issue or are causing an inordinate delay.
- d. Seek to resolve problems through various methods, including investigation, mediation or making referrals to the appropriate University department for review.

- e. The Ombudsman Office receives no formal notice on behalf of the University, nor do its actions or speech formally represent any position of the University.

2. **Formal Process**

a. Step One

- i. A Complainant must provide a formal written Complaint to the Committee by providing the Complaint to the Office of the President including:
 - A. The date of the formal written Complaint.
 - B. The Complainant's name, local address, University email address (for purposes of receiving communications related to the formal written Complaint) and phone number.
 - C. The name and location of the office/department or individual with whom the Complainant has issue.
 - D. A concise statement of the nature of the complaint and a description of the events, including dates.
 - E. A statement of any action previously taken to resolve the Complaint and the results of these actions; and
 - F. The outcome desired by the Complainant.

b. Step Two

- i. Upon receipt, the President's Office will transmit the complaint or appeal to a designee of the University Appeals Committee who will determine appropriate scheduling for the Committee.
- ii. The University Appeals Committee meets at the end of every month during the regular semester and once in the summer, or as needed, to resolve complaints or appeals.
- iii. The student will be notified by a designee of the Committee as to when the Committee will hear the complaint/appeal.
- iv. Mutual agreement is required to make changes to scheduled hearings.

c. Step Three

- i. At the scheduled meeting, the hearing committee will go over the facts of the case before hearing from any specific parties.
- ii. The student should be present at the Committee's hearing. The student may bring their own evidence and a support person provided the support person has signed all appropriate FERPA waivers. The support person may not speak for, nor present the student's case. The Committee is not a court of law and therefore does not recognize outside counsel.
- iii. After receiving notice of the scheduled hearing, the student may submit a timely request for a postponement (at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled hearing). If the student does not attend the scheduled hearing, the hearing will take place as scheduled. The same holds true for any other party presenting to the hearing committee.

This is the final, and only appeal a student may make with respect to a single issue.

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- a. Florida Board of Governors contact:
 - i. To request that a complaint be addressed by the BOG, a student may complete and submit the Student Complaint Form to the BOG. That form is available at the following web address:
http://www.flbog.edu/contact/_doc/ComplaintFormRevisedFinal.pdf
 - ii. The Florida Board of Governors may be contacted at:

 The Florida Board of Governors State University System
 325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1614 Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
 Phone: 850.245.0466
 Fax: 850.245.9685
 E-mail: info@flbog.edu
- b. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC):
 - i. To request that a complaint be addressed by SACSCOC, a student may complete and submit a complaint form to SACSCOC. That form is available at the following web address:
<https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/01/ComplaintPolicy-1.pdf>
 - ii. SACSCOC may be contacted at:

 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges
 1866 Southern Lane Decatur, GA 30033
 Phone: 404.679.4500
 Fax: 404.679.4558

For complaints associated with distance learning courses that are not resolved through any Florida Poly process, see the Florida State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement website here: <http://www.fldoe.org/sara/complaint-process.shtml> for instruction on how to file a complaint.

| POLICY APPROVAL | |
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| Policy No.: FPU-3.0031P | |
| _____ | Date _____ |
| Initiating Authority | |
| _____ | Date _____ |
| Policies Committee Chair | |
| _____ | Date _____ |
| President/Designee | |
| Approved by Florida Polytechnic University BOT, if required | Date _____ |
| EXECUTED SIGNATURE PAGES ARE AVAILABLE IN THE OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL | |