

COMPLAINTS

Student Complaints, Grievances and Appeals

Columbus State University (CSU) takes student needs and concerns very seriously. To that end, the University has developed a process through which individuals can submit complaints and appeals. The following information will direct you to the appropriate process to submit a specific type of complaint/grievance or appeal. If you have additional question or need more help please contact Dr. Annice Yarber-Allen at yarberallen_annice@columbusstate.edu or 706-569-3440.

CSU Complaint, Grievance, and Appeals Processes

Grievance/Complaint/Grade Changes Based on Unfair Treatment

You have a grievance if you feel that you have been treated unfairly by a representative of the University or that the regular policies of the University were not followed or were applied unfairly against you. This includes if you feel the grade you received was unfair or inconsistent with your performance and/or the criteria outlined in the course syllabus. You can not challenge a policy itself but you can challenge the application of a policy that you feel is unfair. Grievances and complaints can either be academic or non-academic in nature.

- **Academic Grievances** are usually related to the regular progression of a student in an academic program. They can relate to the actions of a particular faculty member or a department or program. This may include
 - appealing a course grade based on fairness or accuracy of the grade,
 - student rights as defined in the course syllabus the CSU Student Handbook, university policy, or policies of the University System of Georgia;
 - Refute academic dishonesty charges;
 - Compel a faculty member to fulfill his/her instructional responsibilities as defined in the CSU Faculty Handbook and published department or college policy; and/or
 - Plead for a less severe penalty in case of an acknowledged incident of academic dishonesty.
 - *Institutional policy gives the instructor the prerogative of determining the penalty for academic dishonesty, including the assignment of an F as the course grade. An appeal for a lesser penalty should explain why the penalty is excessive, that it somehow constitutes disparate treatment by the instructor, or how the penalty violates a policy of the institution or the University System of Georgia.*

File an academic grievance (<https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/appeals/academic-grievance.php>)

- **Non-academic grievances and General Complaints** typically relate to topics that do not relate to the student's individual performance in a course but provide a means of communicating a need or concern to faculty, staff, and/or administrators.
 - These complaints include special complaints such as Title IX, ADA, FERPA, and sexual harassment complaints. Learn more about non-academic grievances (<https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/appeals/specialized-student-complaints.php>).
 - They can also relate to your treatment by or concerns about employees or units with the CSU community.

File a student complaint. (<https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/complaints/student-complaint-form.php>)

- If you are uncertain about the type of grievance you have you can view our Non-Academic and General Complaints (<https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/appeals/complaint-process-info.php>) page for more information. You can complete the General Student Complaint form from that page and someone will contact you and help direct you to the proper channels for reporting it.

Appeals and other grade changes not based on a grievance

Appeals are typically requests to set aside specific University or University System policies based on extenuating circumstances. As with grievances, appeals can either be academic or non-academic.

- **Academic Appeals** are requests to set aside the specific academic requirements or policies associated with a student's progression towards the completion of a degree. This may include
 - appealing a course grade due to special circumstances;
 - appealing a course grade assigned more than a year prior when both the student and instructor agree the grade should be changed;
 - exception petitions related to issues associated with program and course requirements for degree completion; and/or
 - medical/hardship withdrawals.

File an academic appeal (<https://www.columbusstate.edu/academic-affairs/appeals/appeal-process.php>)

- **Non-Academic Appeals** are intended to address non-academic matters that a student might encounter. These include:
 - Financial Aid (<https://www.columbusstate.edu/financial-aid/faqs.php>)
 - Freshman Residency Requirement (https://publicdocs.maxient.com/reportingform.php?ColumbusStateUniv&layout_id=10)
 - Intellectual Property Disputes (<https://colstate.sharepoint.com/sites/MyCSU-FacultyandStaff/SitePages/Policies-Procedures-and-Forms.aspx>) (Section VIII. Dispute Resolutions and Appeals)
 - Parking (<https://www.columbusstate.edu/student-affairs/forms.php>)
 - Readmission after non-academic disciplinary suspension (https://publicdocs.maxient.com/reportingform.php?ColumbusStateUniv&layout_id=7)
 - Rulings on General Non-Academic Misconduct Charges (e.g. disorderly conduct, assault, hazing) (https://publicdocs.maxient.com/reportingform.php?ColumbusStateUniv&layout_id=9)

External Complaint Options

If you feel you have exhausted all the available, on-campus options you have the following options:

1. If you are a student living in Georgia, and have exhausted *all* available avenues at the University, you may file a complaint with the University System of Georgia (<https://www.usg.edu/contact/>).
2. If you are a student **not** living in Georgia and have exhausted *all* available avenues at the University, please see the following information below in the "**Out-Of-State Student Complaints**" section for options.

3. If you are not satisfied with the resolution provided by the University and the State, you may file a complaint with the University's accreditation agency. Columbus State University is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) (<https://sacscoc.org/complaints-and-third-party-comments/>).

Accrediting agencies will only review issues addressing significant non-compliance with agency standards, policies, or procedures. This should be pursued only after all other avenues have been exhausted. Inquiries related to topics such as admission policies, financial aid opportunities, program information, etc. should be referred directly to Columbus State University at 706-507-8800, 1-866-264-2035, or www.columbusstate.edu (<https://www.columbusstate.edu/>).

Out-Of-State Student Complaints

Columbus State University takes student and consumer complaints very seriously. CSU works with students and consumers to resolve all complaints in an expeditious, fair, and pleasant manner.

For students located outside of Georgia, Columbus State University provides avenues for discussing academic and non-academic concerns and/or resolving complaints or grievances as a participating NC- SARA (The National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements) institution. The following steps provide insight into the out-of-state student complaints process **if you have exhausted all available avenues at the University:**

If a student/consumer feels the issue was not resolved, then students/consumers living outside of Georgia in a **SARA state** may file a complaint with the GA SARA portal agency, the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (<https://gnpec.georgia.gov/student-resources/complaints-against-institution/>).

Upon reviewing the GA-SARA Student Complaint Rules (<https://gnpec.georgia.gov/student-resources/complaints-against-institution/ga-sara-student-complaint-rules/>), students may file a complaint by using the GA-SARA Online Student Complaint Form (<https://gnpec.georgia.gov/student-resources/student-complaints/ga-sara-online-student-complaint-form/>).

How to File a SARA Student Complaint:

1. File a complaint with your institution.
2. If the complaint is not resolved, proceed by filing a complaint with the state via the institution's SARA State Portal Entity (SPE): GA-SARA. Contact CSU's SPE by using the GA-SARA contact information above or on NC-SARA Institution Directory (<https://nc-sara.org/directory/>) on the NC-SARA Website.
3. GA-SARA has final authority in SARA complaints and will notify the SPE in the student's state.
4. To check the status of complaints, please visit the complaint reports page on the NC-SARA website which are listed by state. SPEs report the status of complaints to NC-SARA quarterly.

For more information on the SARA Complaint Process, please visit NC SARA Student Complaints (<https://nc-sara.org/sara-student-complaints-0/>).

Students/consumers living in California, a non-SARA state, may file a complaint with their home state regulatory agency:

California Department of Consumer Affairs (https://www.dca.ca.gov/consumers/complaints/oos_students.shtml/)

Consumer Information Center
1625 North Market Blvd., Suite N-112
Sacramento, California 95834

Phone: (833) 942-1120

For more information onof the Out-Of-State Student Complaint process, please visit www.columbusstate.edu/academics/online/complaints/ (<http://www.columbusstate.edu/academics/online/complaints/>).

More information on NC-SARA can be found by visiting the following webpages:

[nc-sara.org](https://catalog.columbusstate.edu/complaints/nc-sara.org) (<https://catalog.columbusstate.edu/complaints/nc-sara.org>)

[nc-sara.org/about-nc-sara](https://catalog.columbusstate.edu/complaints/nc-sara.org/about-nc-sara/) (<https://catalog.columbusstate.edu/complaints/nc-sara.org/about-nc-sara/>)

Should there be any questions regarding NC-SARA or your rights as a student/consumer, please contact the State Authorization Office at **state_authorization@columbusstate.edu**.