



UNIVERSITY OF  
**NORTHERN  
COLORADO**

Office of Institutional Equity & Compliance

## **Student Complaints Process**

### **Purpose**

The University of Northern Colorado (UNC) is student ready, meets students where they are, and identifies and eliminates institutional barriers to student progress. The purpose of the Student Complaints Process (Process) is to ensure that UNC students have a venue to express concerns, submit complaints, and pursue grievance resolution procedures for issues or subjects which they deem important, without fear of retaliation or adverse consequence for doing so. This Process is intended to help the university identify any serious or systemic problems or issues affecting the quality of the educational experience, and to ensure UNC meets its accreditation obligations to receive, respond to, and track student complaints. *See* Higher Learning Commission Requirements: [FDCR.A.10.030](#); [CRRT.B.10.010](#); and [CRRT.C.10.010](#).

### **Application**

This Process applies to all individuals that meet the definition of UNC Student at the time that the complaint is filed.

### **Definitions**

***Student:*** A person is a student starting when they have applied for admission to UNC and continuing until that person is awarded a degree from UNC, withdraws from UNC, or until the expiration of any leave of absence or suspension of the person, whichever occurs last. Parents, relatives, employers, agents, and other persons acting for or on behalf of a student are not Students within the meaning of this protocol.

***Student Complaint:*** A written complaint made and signed by a student and received by the UNC Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) (see Procedures below). Concerns or complaints filed with other University offices or resources do not constitute a Student Complaint under this Process.

### **Exemptions from Process**

This process does not apply to complaints for which UNC has existing dispute or grievance resolution processes to address the complaint (see below in Other Campus Reporting

Options) or to external grievance procedures (see below in References and External Reporting Options). If an existing UNC dispute or grievance resolution process is applicable to a student complaint, the student complaint will be referred to the existing process.

## **Complaints Process**

Student Complaints not falling under the categories or other policies identified below (in Other Campus Reporting Options and External Reporting Options) should be directed to the supervisor or responsible staff member of the area/unit most directly connected with the complaint or from which the complaint originates for attempted informal resolution of the complaint. Many problems are resolved when a student makes an appointment with a faculty or staff member and calmly and honestly communicates their concerns.

If, however, an issue or problem still exists after attempting an informal resolution, or a student does not want to personally or directly contact a supervisor or responsible staff member, a student may initiate the complaint Process below\*. All Student Complaints must be put in writing\*\* and must be signed by the student (including electronic or digital facsimile signatures clearly attributable to the student--for example, the student's name in an email message received from their UNC email account). A [University Complaints Form](#) is provided as a tool for presenting a written complaint but is not required.

### ***Procedures for Filing Complaints***

1. Attempt to resolve the concern informally, as noted above.
2. Complete the [University Complaints Form](#) or send a signed email or letter to:

Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC)  
University Center 3060  
Campus Box 81  
Greeley, CO 80639  
Email: [titleix@unco.edu](mailto:titleix@unco.edu)  
Telephone: 970-351-4899  
<https://www.unco.edu/institutional-equity-compliance/>

3. Within seven (7) calendar days of receipt of the Student Complaint, OIEC will notify the student that the complaint was received and, as appropriate, reach out to the student to discuss next steps.

\*General complaints and compliance concerns may also be submitted anonymously via [UNC Safe Campus](#). While the University reviews all concerns submitted in this way, anonymous complaints are not subject to this Process.

\*\*All Student Complaints must be submitted in writing, unless UNC has granted an accommodation for a qualifying disability to file a verbal complaint, a Student Complaint

by phone or verbally will not be considered as submitted for review. Students may contact the [Disability Resource Center](#) to discuss accommodations.

### ***Process for Reviewing and Resolving Complaints***

OIEC is a neutral compliance office and does not advocate for or against any party to a dispute or complaint, but rather advocates for a fair process. Acting as a neutral third-party, OIEC (or designee) will first attempt to resolve the complaint by working with the student and the appropriate university employees and officials. OIEC may refer the matter to an appropriate university office for assistance in attempting an informal resolution. This ensures that the complaint is considered by the appropriate officials and receives an impartial review.

If the matter is not resolved informally, OIEC will forward the complaint to the appropriate university official for further review and attempt to resolve the matter. If the matter is still not resolved to the student's satisfaction, OIEC will help identify other resources that may be available to the student from agencies external to the University, including any grievance procedures or appeals that may be available through the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) and Higher Learning Commission (HLC). (See the contact information under References and External Reporting Options, below).

### ***Complaint Tracking and Sharing***

A record of the complaint and its disposition will be maintained by OIEC. The record will include, at minimum, the following:

- The date that the Student Complaint was received;
- The student(s) identified with the complaint;
- The nature of the complaint, with a copy attached, to be retained for not less than seven (7) years after its final disposition;
- The university officials who were asked to address the complaint and the steps taken to resolve it;
- The final resolution or disposition of the complaint;
- Any external actions taken by the complainant of which OIEC becomes aware.

The information tracked will be available to regulatory agencies and accrediting bodies, including the Higher Learning Commission and the Colorado Department of Higher Education, as required in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

Students retain the right to review any student education record specific to that student pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99), including that student's filed Student Complaints. The university may share Student Complaints with a school official with a legitimate educational interest in the information contained in the report. See the university's [FERPA page](#) for more information.

## **Compliance**

Failure to comply with this policy may result in no action being taken with respect to the subject matter of a complaint, or other disposition of the complaint, by OIEC. Where such failure also involves a violation of rules and policies regarding student or employee conduct, disciplinary action may result in accordance with the applicable rules and policies.

## **Good Faith Participation and Prohibition of Retaliation**

It is incumbent on the student to submit Student Complaints in good faith. Failure to submit complaints in good faith may result in OIEC referring the reporting party to the appropriate university authority for a violation of UNC's Student Code of Conduct, which prohibits initiating a false report and, if found responsible for violating university policy, may result in disciplinary action.

Retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, submits a Student Complaint, or who participates in the resolution of a Student Complaint, is strictly prohibited. UNC will take all reasonable and necessary actions to protect members of the university community who have filed, in good faith, or participated, in good faith, in Student Complaint resolution processes. Disciplinary action resulting from self-reported misconduct is not considered to be an act of retaliation. Attempting to coerce, intimidate, or tamper with a participant in the Student Complaints Process is prohibited and may be considered retaliation.

## **References and External Reporting Options**

- [\*Code of Federal Regulations, 34 CFR 602.16\(a\)\(1\)\(ix\)\*](#)
- [\*Colorado Dept. of Higher Education \(CDHE\) Student Complaints\*](#)
  - As a coordinating, not regulatory, agency, the CDHE has limited jurisdiction over institutions of higher education (IHEs) in the state of Colorado and will only consider complaints pertaining to statewide transfer and GT Pathways issues or the [Student Bill of Rights](#).
  - Prior to filing a complaint with the CDHE, students must follow the appeal procedures at UNC, as filing a complaint with the CDHE is the last resort.
  - **Contact Information:**
    - Colorado Department of Higher Education  
1600 Broadway, Suite 2200  
Denver, CO 80202  
Telephone: 303-862-3001  
<https://cdhe.colorado.gov/>
- [\*State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement \(SARA\) Policy Manual\*](#)
  - UNC's participation in SARA allows the University to offer certain distance education activities, such as online courses and experiential learning placements, to students located in other SARA member states or territories

subject to any limitations of the agreement in the SARA policy manual. As part of this participation, students located in other SARA member states or territories have additional rights for filing complaints pertaining to distance education. To begin this process, students must first exhaust the UNC Student Complaint Process. If students are not satisfied with an outcome of UNC's Student Complaint Process, they may appeal to the Colorado SARA State Portal Entity at the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE; see link to contact information below). Students located within Colorado can also file a complaint through the CDHE. Students located in a state or territory that is not a SARA member are encouraged to first exhaust the UNC Student Complaint Process. Students in non-SARA states or territories may also submit a complaint to an appropriate agency where they are located.

- The contact information for each state portal entity can be found on the NC-SARA website (<https://www.nc-sara.org/state-portal-entity-contacts>)
- The SARA complaint policy and process can be found on the NC-SARA website (<https://www.nc-sara.org/student-complaints>).
- California is the only state that is not a SARA member. Students located in California may submit a complaint through the California Department of Consumer Affairs ([https://www.dca.ca.gov/consumers/complaints/oos\\_students.shtml](https://www.dca.ca.gov/consumers/complaints/oos_students.shtml))
- **[Higher Learning Commission-Student Complaint Process](#)**
  - If all other venues provided have been exhausted, unresolved complaints may be filed with the HLC, the university's accreditor (contact information below).
  - ***Substantive Accreditation Concerns:*** Complaints or grievances regarding substantive accreditation concerns should be directed to the HLC. Examples of accreditation complaints as well as the appropriate submission forms are [available online](#).
  - ***Contact Information:***
    - Higher Learning Commission  
230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500  
Chicago, IL 60604  
Telephone: 800-621-7440  
<http://www.hlcommission.org>

## **Other Campus Reporting Options**

- ***Crime Reporting:*** [UNC Police Department](#), 970-351-2245 (24/7)
- ***Academic Appeals Procedures:*** [UNC Board Policy Manual 2-2-201](#)
- ***FERPA Complaints:*** [Reporting Form](#)
- ***Student Employment Grievances:*** [UNC Human Resources](#), 970-351-2718

- **Graduate Student Concerns:** Dr. Cindy Wesley, Associate Dean, [Graduate School, cindy.wesley@unco.edu](mailto:cindy.wesley@unco.edu)
- **Visa Status or International Student Concerns:** [UNC Office of Global Engagement](#), 970-351-2396, International Emergencies +1-970-351-9572
- **Curriculum Concerns:**
  - **Undergraduate:** Dr. Stephani Etheridge Woodson, Vice Provost for Enrollment Services and Dean of Undergraduate Studies, [stephani.etheridge-woodson@unco.edu](mailto:stephani.etheridge-woodson@unco.edu)
  - **Graduate:** Dr. Jeri-Anne Lyons, Associate Vice President of Research and Dean of the Graduate School, [jeri.lyons@unco.edu](mailto:jeri.lyons@unco.edu)
- **Graduation Requirements:** Office of the Registrar, [registrar@unco.edu](mailto:registrar@unco.edu), 970-351-4UNC (4862)
- **Discrimination, Harassment, and/or Sexual Misconduct:** [Reporting Form, Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#), 970-351-4899
- **Financial Concerns:** [Bursar's Office, bursar@unco.edu](#), 970-351-4862 ext. 3
- **Student Conduct Referrals:** [Reporting Form, Student Conduct and Accountability](#), 970-351-2001
- **Referrals for Student Support:** [Reporting Form, Student Outreach and Support](#), 970-351-2796
- **Web Access Complaints:** [Reporting Form](#), Office of Institutional Equity & Compliance, Phone: 970-351-4899, [titlex@unco.edu](mailto:titlex@unco.edu).