

Student Complaint Policy

Purpose

Alma College is committed to providing a supportive living and learning environment for our students. The purpose of this policy is to provide an appropriate framework for students to express concerns and to work with college officials to resolve complaints. The college believes engaging in this process can also provide a valuable learning experience that can help students understand how to resolve concerns in a professional and productive manner after they leave the college.

Scope

This policy applies to Alma College students. For the purposes of this policy, a student complaint is a formal written document submitted by a student alleging possible non-compliance with college policy and/or procedure.

This policy does not apply to complaints that are covered by other applicable college policies. Specifically,

- Complaints about discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct, including those related to ADA and Section 504 accommodation compliance, are handled in accordance with the **Alma College Policies and Procedures for Resolving Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct**.
- Complaints related to website accessibility are addressed through the **Web Accessibility Policy** and related procedures.
- Alma College distinguishes between a student complaint and a student appeal of college policies and decisions, such as a grade appeal or a decision made by a judicial body. There are specific procedures in place for students who wish to submit such an appeal in relevant sections of the **Academic Catalog** or the **Student Handbook**.

Policy

Informal Complaint: Student complaints not falling under the policies and procedures identified above should be made to the supervisor or responsible staff member of the area from which the complaint originates so that an informal resolution of the

complaint can be attempted. Resolution of most complaints can likely be resolved at this informal level. If you do not know where to begin an informal resolution, the Director of Human Resources or the Title IX/Civil Rights Coordinator will help you identify the appropriate office or individual.

Formal Complaint: If an informal resolution of the student's complaint cannot be accomplished, or if the complaint is about the supervisor or responsible staff member for the area, the student should then submit their grievance formally through the **on-line complaint form**. The written complaint should include, at a minimum, the student's name and contact information, a written account of the complaint, supporting documentation pertinent to the issue, information about any attempts to resolve complaints informally, and a desired outcome. This written statement and documentation becomes the basis for all further considerations of the matter.

On-line complaint forms are sent electronically to a three-person Student Complaint Review Committee consisting of the Civil Rights/Title IX Coordinator, the Director of Human Resources and a designated director-level staff member from Student Affairs. Upon receipt of a formal complaint, the Student Complaint Review Committee will review the complaint and contact the student within five (5) business days to verify receipt of the grievance and request any additional information that may be needed from the student to fully evaluate the complaint. If the committee determines that this complaint is covered by another college policy as described in the section entitled Scope, they will inform the student of the appropriate grievance policy and how to submit their concern through the designated procedure.

For complaints appropriately filed through this procedure, the Student Complaint Review Committee will forward a copy of the complaint and requested resolution to the supervisor of the individual or department about whom the complaint is filed (the "respondent"). The respondent shall submit a written response to the student regarding their findings about the complaint and a proposed resolution within 30 days. A copy of the response must also be submitted to the Student Complaint Review Committee who is responsible for tracking the progress of the resolution.

Written complaints received from students through U.S. mail or from an Alma College email address by the president or any vice president of the college that are not resolved informally in those offices should be forwarded to the Student Complaint Review Committee for inclusion in the tracking system referenced below in Administration and Analysis.

Appeal

If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome, she or he may file an appeal with the Chief Operating Officer. An appeal must be filed within 5 business days of receipt of the outcome and include an appropriate ground for the appeal. Appeals will only be considered if the complainant can demonstrate that the respondent has failed to follow approved college policy or procedure and that failure to do so significantly impacted the outcome.

The Chief Operating Officer will consider timely appeals, conduct an additional investigation (if necessary), and make a final decision within 30 business days of receipt of the appeal. If the Chief Operating Officer is a party to the complaint, the appeal should be referred to the President, following the same procedures and timelines. The decision of the Chief Operating Officer or the President is final and not subject to further appeal.

Administration and Analysis

The Student Complaint Review Committee will track student complaints submitted through this process and generate an annual report no later than June 30 of each year for review by the Cabinet of any trends or recurring concerns. The report will include a record of each complaint received (without names of participating parties) and make appropriate recommendations for areas of quality improvement to enhance the overall student experience. Areas of improvement will be assigned by the President to the appropriate Vice President for follow-up and monitoring.

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement is a voluntary agreement among member states and U.S. territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state.

In collaboration with the Midwestern Higher Education Compact (MHEC) and the National Council for State Authorization Agreements (NC-SARA), the M-SARA Regional Steering Committee establishes and disseminates criteria for state participation and amends such criteria, as appropriate, over time.

Professional Licensure

Alma College is approved to offer programs, which may lead to licensure in the state of Michigan. Alma College cannot state that our programs will lead to licensure in other states. If you are planning to enroll in a program with the intention of earning licensure in a state other than Michigan, you should contact the licensing agency in the appropriate state prior to enrollment at Alma College.

International Students

Prior to enrolling in any program at Alma College, prospective students living and/or working outside of the United States should confirm with the appropriate certifying agency whether successful completion of any degree program at Alma College will meet the credentialing requirements of the country in which they intend to seek employment, as to certain types of employment or for advanced/specialized educational programs.

Nursing Resource

<https://www.ncsbn.org/index.htm>

If a student is unable to resolve the complaint through Alma College's complaint process, a complaint can be filed with the State of Michigan, Corporations, Securities & Commercial Licensing Bureau (CSCL). If a student wishes to complete and submit a complaint, they should complete the CSCL complaint form and attach any pertinent additional documentation.

State of Michigan Contact

James R. Farhat, Specialist
Corporations, Securities & Commercial Licensing Bureau
Licensing Division
PO BOX 30018
Lansing, MI 48909

(517) 241-9221

Fax: (517) 373-2162

farhatj@michigan.gov

Policy Review and Revision

Suggested revisions to this policy should be submitted to the Policy and Planning Council at policyplanningcouncil@alma.edu. The Policy and Planning Council will review the recommendation and determine whether to submit the revision to the President's Cabinet for review and approval.

Date Revised and Approved by the Cabinet: October 27, 2021