

**Policy 3-19**

**Student Reported Complaints and Appeals**

**Responsible Executive:** Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Approving Official:** Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

**Effective Date:** TBD (upon Notice and Final Approval)

**Revision History:** New, July 1, 2013, Substantially Revised October 15, 2022,(also formerly Policy 5-1 and moved to Academic Affairs), Substantially rewritten \_\_\_\_\_

INTRODUCTION

This Policy mandates that Ad Hoc Grievances, Reported Complaints, and Appeals be addressed in a prompt, fair, consistent, and professional manner. Certain types of Reported Complaints and Appeals, which are specified in the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy, are included in the University’s Central Student Resolution Log. Records of these specific types of Reported Complaints and Appeals will be maintained by distinct Resolution Authorities in accordance with the requirements herein and compiled annually by the Student Ombuds Office, which is responsible for producing the University’s Central Student Resolution Log and the Student Ombuds Office Annual Report.

I. POLICY

1. **Definitions:** For purposes of this Policy, the following definitions apply:

- a. **Ad Hoc Grievance:** An oral or written statement of dissatisfaction or disapproval made by a current applicant, by an admitted student, or by a current student. These are matters of concern but do not involve established rights or procedures that apply to a Reported Complaint or an Appeal. Examples of Ad Hoc Grievances include, but are not limited to the following:
  - i. A student is unhappy with course availability and contacts academic advisors or college leadership to find alternatives or adjust their academic map.
  - ii. A student contacts the Division of Student Affairs because they are unhappy with a newly installed sculpture on campus.
  - iii. A student grieves that an instructor, academic advisor, or the Dean’s Office has not responded to an email in a timely fashion.

Further examples may be found in the Policy 3-19 Resource Document posted on the [Student Ombuds Office website](#).

- b. **Reported Complaint:** A perceived violation, either oral or written, of applicable federal or state law, University or Board of Governors' regulation or policy, or published college/division/department/school/unit policy, course syllabus, or department/program handbook, reported by a current applicant, by an admitted student, or by a current student who requests resolution via official University action. Examples of Reported Complaints include, but are not limited to the following:
- i. A student breaks a door in an on-campus residence hall. The student's roommate reports the student's actions to Student Conduct and Community Standards for review in accordance with the Student Conduct Code and University Housing Community Standards. After a Formal Conduct Hearing, the student is found responsible for a violation of the Student Conduct Code and University Housing Community Standards. This case is not reportable in the Central Student Resolution Log in accordance with the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy.
  - ii. A student submits documentation to their instructor requesting a final course grade change, alleging their instructor has not followed grading practices as outlined in the course syllabus. The instructor and the student schedule a meeting to discuss a potential final course grade change. After reviewing the materials and having a conversation with the student, the instructor decides to update the student's final course grade. This case is not reportable in the Central Student Resolution Log in accordance with the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy.
  - iii. A student submits documentation to their Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) Accessibility Specialist, asserting their instructor has not followed the accommodations outlined by OAS, which were previously provided to the instructor by the student during the relevant semester. The Accessibility Specialist discusses the situation with the student, reviews the student's OAS-approved accommodations, evaluates the instructor's actions, and explains to the student that the instructor administered their OAS-approved accommodations correctly. This case is not reportable in the Central Student Resolution Log in accordance with the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy.

Further examples may be found in the Policy 3-19 Resource Document posted on the [Student Ombuds Office website](#).

- c. **Appeal:** A formal, written request asking for review, modification, or reversal of an official University action, which was based on applicable federal or state law, University or Board of Governors' regulation or policy, or published

college/division/department/school/unit policy, course syllabus, or department/program handbook. A formal, written request must be submitted by a current applicant, by an admitted student, or by a current student. Examples of Appeals include, but are not limited to the following:

- i. A student is found responsible, through a Formal Conduct Hearing, for violating the Student Conduct Code and University Housing Community Standards after breaking a door in an on-campus residence hall. The student submits an Appeal Request Form, initiating a Process Review (e.g., student asserts that the Formal Conduct Hearing was not conducted in accordance with established procedural standards, thus substantially affecting the outcome). This case is reportable in the Central Student Resolution Log in accordance with the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy.
- ii. A student meets with their instructor to discuss their final course grade, but the instructor declines to make any changes to the student's final course grade. The student then emails the Department Chair/School Director (or equivalent) submitting evidence that is the basis of their grade appeal along with documentation of their attempt to resolve the issue with the instructor. The Department Chair/School Director (or equivalent) convenes a Screening Committee to review the materials submitted by both the student and the instructor. This case is reportable in the Central Student Resolution Log in accordance with the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy.
- iii. During the middle of a semester, a student misses a Friday morning exam after developing flu-like symptoms Thursday night. Upon waking up Friday afternoon, the student emails the instructor and visits a doctor, who provides a note explaining the student should be excused from class on the date of the exam. The student shares the note and discusses the situation with the instructor, who declines the student's request to make up the exam. The student then Appeals the decision by writing to the Department Chair/School Director (or equivalent), requesting that the instructor's decision be reversed to allow the student to make up the exam. After considering both the instructor's and the student's statements, the Department Chair/School Director (or equivalent) reverses the instructor's decision, allowing the student to make up the exam. This case is reportable in the Central Student Resolution Log in accordance with the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy.

Further examples may be found in the Policy 3-19 Resource Document posted on the [Student Ombuds Office website](#).

- d. **Current Student**: Any person listed in any active status within the student information system. An active status allows for the possibility of registering, enrolling, or attending classes at Florida State University for a given semester.
  - e. **Current Applicant**: Any person who has submitted an admissions application to either the Tallahassee, Panama City (FL), or Republic of Panama campus, but who has not yet received an admissions decision. This includes any person who is deferred or waitlisted.
  - f. **Admitted Student**: Any person who has received an offer of admission to either the Tallahassee, Panama City (FL), or Republic of Panama campus.
  - g. **Resolution Authority**: An office responsible for intake and processing of those Reported Complaints or Appeals, as specified in the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy.
  - h. **Central Student Resolution Log**: The official institutional record, which is compiled and produced by the Student Ombuds Office annually, that captures and consolidates data elements on those Reported Complaints and Appeals specified in the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy.
  - i. **Conflict of Interest**: A situation in which a person involved in reviewing a Reported Complaint or Appeal has a personal or financial interest, prior involvement, or a bias or prejudice that could reasonably be perceived to compromise, or appear to compromise, their objectivity, professional judgment, or ability to act in the best interests of the University. This includes, but is not limited to:
    - i. **Personal Relationship**: The person has a familial relationship (or the practical equivalent of a familial relationship), friendship, or close association with a person involved in the Reported Complaint or Appeal.
    - ii. **Financial Interest**: The person stands to gain or lose financially based on the outcome of the Reported Complaint or Appeal.
    - iii. **Prior Involvement**: The person participated in or influenced the decision that is the subject of the Reported Complaint or Appeal.
    - iv. **Bias or Prejudice**: The Office of Compliance and Ethics has determined the person has demonstrated bias or prejudice toward the student or the subject matter of the Reported Complaint or Appeal.
2. **Scope**: This Policy applies to Florida State University, regardless of campus location or method of instruction, each of the postsecondary programs and activities under University control, and all property owned, leased, used, or controlled by the University, including all campuses, study centers, facilities, and University International Programs' locations and property. This Policy also applies to University operations, where

applicable, and to affiliated Direct Support Organizations (DSOs) only to the extent that they are acting on behalf of the University in programs involving students.

This Policy addresses Ad Hoc Grievances, Reported Complaints, and Appeals. Further, this Policy identifies the specific types of Reported Complaints and Appeals that must be tracked and reported by Resolution Authorities to the Student Ombuds Office for inclusion in the Central Student Resolution Log. Regardless of whether a type of Reported Complaint or Appeal is subject to tracking and reporting by Resolution Authorities to the Student Ombuds Office for inclusion in the Central Student Resolution Log, the principles and procedural safeguards enumerated in this Policy apply universally to all Ad Hoc Grievances, Reported Complaints, and Appeals. The Student Ombuds Office will assist in referring a person to the appropriate office if a question exists as to whether a matter is an Ad Hoc Grievance, a Reported Complaint, or an Appeal.

The data elements specified in [Section 4 \(a\)–\(g\)](#) of this Policy, which make up the data elements included in the Central Student Resolution Log, must be tracked and reported by Resolution Authorities to the Student Ombuds Office only for those Reported Complaints and Appeals listed in the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy.

3. **Requirements Regarding Ad Hoc Grievances:** Ad Hoc Grievances are resolved outside of any formal University process, communicated through a conversation, an email, a phone call, a text, or via Canvas, by the person or office where the concern arises. Ad Hoc Grievances are not tracked and are not reported to the Student Ombuds Office. Further, Ad Hoc Grievances are not included in the Central Student Resolution Log.
4. **Requirements Regarding Reported Complaints and Appeals:** All Reported Complaint and Appeal policies and any associated procedures used must be clearly documented in writing. Reported Complaint and Appeal policies and any supplemental procedures must be published online by each college/division/department/school/unit that processes Reported Complaints or Appeals. In addition, Reported Complaint and Appeal policies and any supplemental procedures should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Reported Complaint and Appeal policies and any supplemental procedures must provide defined timelines for prompt resolution of Reported Complaints and Appeals. Reported Complaints and Appeals will be processed in accordance with applicable University regulations, University policies, published college/division/department/school/unit policies or supplemental processes or procedures. Appeals may only be initiated after official University action has been taken and communicated to the student.

The types of Reported Complaints and Appeals that are required to be tracked and reported by Resolution Authorities to the Student Ombuds Office for inclusion in the Central Student Resolution Log are specified in the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy.

Reported Complaints or Appeals wherein the complainant is party to an ongoing lawsuit filed against the University must be included in the Central Student Resolution Log if the type of Reported Complaint or Appeal is specified in the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy. The Office of the General Counsel should be consulted about how and whether to proceed with processing such Reported Complaints or Appeals.

Applicable responsibilities of each Resolution Authority include administering the Reported Complaint or Appeal process in accordance with this Policy and the controlling University regulation, University policy, or published college/division/department/school/unit policy, communicating outcomes in writing, and maintaining all related records. In addition, an office serving in this capacity is responsible for tracking and reporting the data elements enumerated below for the Reported Complaint and Appeal types that are specified in the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy. Such data elements will be included in the Central Student Resolution Log. The Central Student Resolution Log is compiled and produced by the Student Ombuds Office annually or upon request.

Required Data Elements:

- a. Date that the student filed the Reported Complaint/Appeal
- b. Name of student (or “Anonymous” if applicable) who filed the Reported Complaint/Appeal
- c. A brief synopsis of the facts associated with the Reported Complaint/Appeal
- d. The formal process used to resolve the Reported Complaint/Appeal
- e. Outcome of the Reported Complaint/Appeal
- f. Date each required notification associated with the Reported Complaint/Appeal was communicated to the student
- g. The physical location of the records related to the Reported Complaint/Appeal

These data elements comprise the information included in the Central Student Resolution Log. The log ensures consistent documentation, promotes transparency and accountability, and supports institutional compliance, reporting, and continuous improvement.

5. **Required Notifications:** Once a student has filed a Reported Complaint or an Appeal, that student must be notified in writing of every official decision related to the Reported Complaint or Appeal. Each notification must also explain the next steps available to the student in the specified Reported Complaint or Appeal process.

The final resolution of a Reported Complaint or Appeal must be in writing and be addressed to the student and explain that the student has exhausted the specific University process that is the subject of the Reported Complaint or Appeal. Such written notice may be by email, written document, or equivalent as long as it contains all required elements included herein and is sent to the student's point of notice for the Reported Complaint or Appeal.

6. **Records:** All documents, files, and required notifications associated with a Reported Complaint or Appeal must be maintained as required by this Policy and in accordance with federal law, state law, and University policy.

In addition, a record of those Reported Complaints and Appeals specified in the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy shall be maintained by each Resolution Authority. The record must contain all information and supporting documentation required by this Policy.

The Central Student Resolution Log and all documents, files, and required notifications associated with a Reported Complaint or Appeal will be available at any time for inspection by the President (or designee), the Provost (or designee), and the Vice President for Student Affairs (or designee).

Reporting required by this Policy will be consistent with FERPA and other legal confidentiality requirements but only to the extent required and will not eliminate reporting of other information otherwise possible for each type of Reported Complaint or Appeal specified in the [table](#) in Section 11 of this Policy.

7. **The Student Ombuds Office:** The Student Ombuds Office, within the Office of Compliance and Ethics, is available to assist students in identifying prospective resolution options in accordance with this Policy. Specifically, the Student Ombuds Office provides confidential services, including informal assistance and impartial advice, to students regarding concerns related to University regulations/University policies and any other University-related policies, processes, or procedures. Communication with the Student Ombuds Office does not constitute notice to the University, does not constitute a Reported Complaint, and does not constitute an Appeal.

The Student Ombuds Office reviews the reports produced by the Resolution Authorities and compiles and produces the Central Student Resolution Log on an annual basis or upon request. The Student Ombuds Office analyzes the Central Student Resolution Log for emerging patterns or trends, which are summarized in the Student Ombuds Office Annual Report. The Annual Report may include recommendations for University leadership aimed at addressing emerging patterns or trends. The Student Ombuds Office monitors the effectiveness of previously implemented recommendations through subsequent Annual Reports to support continuous institutional improvement.

8. **Retaliation:**

- a. In the absence of a controlling provision provided in University regulation, University policy, or college/division/department/school/unit policy, retaliation against a person or someone who assists a person, who in good faith files an Ad Hoc Grievance, a Reported Complaint, or an Appeal, participates in the process, or engages in other activities required by this Policy, is expressly prohibited. The filing of an Ad Hoc Grievance, Reported Complaint, or Appeal in good faith is not in and of itself, retaliation.
- b. Unless otherwise required, any claim of retaliation may be investigated by the Office of Human Resources and/or the Office of Compliance and Ethics in accordance with applicable University regulations and policies.

9. **Conflict of Interest:** Any potential Conflicts of Interest must be disclosed to the Office of Compliance and Ethics for review prior to participation in a Reported Complaint or Appeal process. If a conflict is identified by the Office of Compliance and Ethics, the person must recuse themselves to preserve the integrity of the Reported Complaint or Appeal process.

10. **Required Review:** This Policy shall be reviewed, at a minimum, every three years.

11. **Reported Complaints and Appeals Table:** The types of Reported Complaints and Appeals included below will appear in the Central Student Resolution Log.

**Note:** The Table Begins On The Next Page.

| Types of Student Reported Complaints Included in the Central Student Resolution Log  |                           |   |
|--|---------------------------|---|
| Type of Student Reported Complaint   | Resolution Authority      | Published Location of the Reported Complaint Process  |
| <p>Alleged FERPA Violation</p> <p><i>Note: Limited to Reported Complaints submitted by students alleging their individual FERPA rights have been violated.</i></p> | University Registrar      | <p>The published location of these Reported Complaint processes can be accessed at:</p> <p><a href="https://studentombuds.fsu.edu/student-complaints-and-appeals">https://studentombuds.fsu.edu/student-complaints-and-appeals</a>.</p> |
| Alleged Violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act by Faculty, Staff, or Visitors  | Office of Human Resources |   |
| Alleged Title IX Violation Pertaining to Faculty, Staff, or Department   | Office of Human Resources |   |
| Alleged Discrimination or Retaliation by Faculty, Staff, or Department   | Office of Human Resources |   |

**Note:** The Table Continues On The Next Page.

| Types of Student Appeals Included in the Central Student Resolution Log   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Type of Student Appeal  | Resolution Authority                                  | Published Location of the Appeal Process   |
| Grade Appeal  | Academic Dean's Office or Designee                    | <p>The published location of these Appeal processes can be accessed at: <a href="https://studentombuds.fsu.edu/student-complaints-and-appeals">https://studentombuds.fsu.edu/student-complaints-and-appeals</a>.</p> |
| Academic Honor Policy Appeal  | Office of Faculty Development and Advancement         |  |
| General Academic Appeals for Student Grievances   | Academic Dean's Office or Designee                    |  |
| Residency for Tuition Purposes Appeal   | Office of Admissions & University Registrar           |  |
| Medical/Mental Health Course Drop & Term/Semester Withdrawal Appeal   | University Health Services                            |  |
| Personal Hardship Course Drop & Term/Semester Withdrawal Appeal   | Academic Dean's Office                                |  |
| Student Conduct Appellate Process Appeal & University Housing Community Standards Appeal  | Department of Student Conduct and Community Standards |  |
| University Housing<br><i>Note: Limited to Appeals of an Initially Denied Request to be Released from a Housing Contract.</i>      | University Housing                                    |  |
| Tuition and Fees Appeal   | University Registrar                                  |  |
| Appeal for Partial Refunds/Release of Liability   | FSU International Programs                            |  |
| Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal   | Office of Financial Aid                               |  |
| Appeal the Initial Denial of any OAS-Related Accommodations Request   | Office of Accessibility Services                      |  |
| Student Gov't - Elected or Appointed Officer Appeal of Disciplinary Action, Suspension, or Removal from Office                    | Department of Student Engagement                      |  |
| First-Year Undergraduate Admissions Appeal  | Office of Admissions                                  |  |
| Transfer Undergraduate Admissions Appeal  | Office of Admissions                                  |  |
| Graduate Admissions Appeal  | The Graduate School                                   |  |
| Judicial Committee Admissions Appeal<br><i>Note: Includes appeals submitted by First-Year, Transfer, and Graduate Applicants.</i> | Office of Admissions                                  |  |

**II. LEGAL SUPPORT, JUSTIFICATION, AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY**

Article IX, Section 7, Florida Constitution, BOG Regulation 1.001(4), Delegations of Authority from BOT to President and from President.