

Student Complaints Guidelines Sam Houston State University

Sam Houston State University (SHSU) is committed to fostering an educational environment that promotes the highest level of learning and personal development of its students. To support this commitment, SHSU strives to ensure all students are treated equitably and in accordance with university policies. Should an instance arise in which a student believes that SHSU has not acted in accordance with the goal stated above, the student should first seek to resolve the issue informally with the respective individuals. If these informal procedures prove unsatisfactory, the student may file a formal complaint to seek resolution.

Definition

A formal student complaint at SHSU may be filed when a student can demonstrate that SHSU has not followed university policies. Many policies at SHSU contain formal appeal and/or grievance procedures. As such, formal complaint procedures are not intended to circumvent these established, official appeal processes (e.g., admission decisions, grade appeals, conduct sanctions). Formal complaints should be used as the final option when Stage I Informal Resolution strategies have been unsuccessful. Formal complaints must be filed in a timely manner, submitted in writing, through designated communication channels, and in accordance with university policies and procedures.

For a student complaint, grievance, or appeal to be considered a formal student complaint, it must meet the following thresholds:

- The complaint, grievance, or appeal alleges a violation of official SHSU policy **OR**
- The complaint, grievance, or appeal is governed by an official SHSU policy
AND
- The complaint, grievance, or appeal has been unsuccessfully resolved through informal resolution strategies
AND
- The complaint, grievance, or appeal has been communicated in writing and asserts a formal complaint is being filed (e.g., letter, memo, email).

The following outlines complaint procedures at SHSU.

Procedures

Complaints Based on an Official SHSU Policy

Most student complaints are governed by official University policies. Students filing a complaint related to an official University policy should refer to the procedures and expectations as outlined within the relevant policy statement for appeal and/or grievance procedures.

For complaints relating to SHSU policies in which appeal and/or grievance procedures are not prescribed, the following guidelines must be followed.

Stage I – Informal Resolution

Any student who can demonstrate that he or she has been subject to adverse treatment due to a lack of adherence to University policy or procedure by university personnel may express dissatisfaction and seek resolution. As a first step, the student must seek to resolve the issue directly with the aggrieved University representative (e.g., staff member, faculty member, administrator).

If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached between the student and university representative, or if extenuating circumstances prevent direct communication between the student and university representative, the student should contact the university representative's direct supervisor (e.g., office supervisor, department chair, college dean). For academic matters, it may be necessary to follow the chain of command from instructor to department chair to academic dean. For issues dealing with staff, it may be necessary to discuss the matter with the staff member, then progress to coordinator, director, and ultimately divisional vice president as appropriate. If, after diligent communication through the chain of command, a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, a formal complaint may be filed following the procedures as outlined in Stage II below.

Stage II – Formal Complaint

Students may file a formal, written complaint only after informal resolution strategies have been pursued (see Stage I procedures above). Formal complaints must be filed within 30 university business days of the university action creating the student's concern. Upon submission, the formal, written complaint will be routed to the appropriate divisional administrator for review. Upon receipt of the complaint, the administrator has 20 university business days to respond. For complaints filed between semesters, additional response time may be necessary to allow for availability of the relevant parties. When additional time is necessary, students will be advised in writing of the estimated time for response within 20 university business days of receipt of the complaint.

**Departments/Offices Responsible for
Maintaining Records of Formal Student Complaints**

Division of Academic Affairs

- Provost's Office
- Office of Graduate Studies
- Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
- Honor's College
- College of Business Administration
- College of Criminal Justice
- College of Education
- College of Fine Arts and Mass Communication
- College of Health Sciences
- College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- College of Sciences

Division of Enrollment Management

- Vice President for Enrollment Management
- Office of Undergraduate Admissions
- Office of Graduate Admissions
- Office of Financial Aid
- Office of the Registrar

Division of Finance and Operations

- Office of the Controller
- Human Resources & Risk Management
- University Police Department/Parking

Division of Student Services

- Dean of Students Office
- Bearkat OneCard Services
- Counseling Center
- Health Center
- Recreational Sports
- Residence Life