

Slippery Rock University



Academic Complaint Resolution

At Slippery Rock, we foster a positive experience for all students. From time to time, however, students may have an academic complaint, and this document has been designed to make you aware of the steps leading to resolution.

Contents

*Our commitment to
complaint resolution* *Page 2*

*Our process for complaint
resolution* *Page 3*

*Student complaint
flowchart* *Page 5*

Our commitment to complaint resolution...

At Slippery Rock, we foster a positive experience for all students. From time to time, however, students may have an academic complaint, and this document has been designed to make you aware of the steps leading to resolution. Students with complaints regarding student conduct, Title IX, compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, misrepresentation, FERPA, and related areas should follow the procedures found at <https://www.sru.edu/students/student-consumer-information>.

SRU makes every effort to handle student complaints internally using policies and procedures outlined here. We encourage you to utilize institutional procedures to address concerns and complaints in a timely manner, in accordance with our Vision, Mission, and Non-Discrimination statements.

OUR VISION: Slippery Rock University will excel as a caring community of lifelong learners connecting with the world.

OUR MISSION: The fundamental educational mission of Slippery Rock University (SRU) is to transform the intellectual, social, physical, and leadership capacities of students in order to prepare them for life and career success. Complementary missions are to engage in scholarly activity and professional service.

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION: Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religion, age, disability, or veteran status in its programs or activities in accordance with Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other applicable statutes and University policies.

The following statements guide the academic complaint process:

Non-Reprisal: No retaliatory action is to be taken against any person seeking advice, filing a complaint or serving as a witness or otherwise cooperating in an investigation. Any person found to have engaged in retaliatory action may be subject to discipline by the university.

Informal Complaints are resolved through mediation to the agreement of the complainant and respondent. No investigation, formal findings or discipline will result from an informal procedure.

Formal Complaints are initiated in writing and require an investigation. Formal investigations are documented and reviewed by the appropriate offices and may result in disciplinary action.

A NOTE ABOUT FERPA: The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), which addresses student educational records privacy, rights to access, and rights of amendment (correcting errors), views students as having control of their records at age 18. Slippery Rock further believes that an important outcome of the college experience is for students to learn to advocate for themselves. Although parents can be a significant resource in developing an effective approach to a complaint or issue, we expect students to handle the complaint process personally and to use the steps described in this brochure.

Our process for complaint resolution...

The procedures below outline Slippery Rock's academic complaint process. We believe that issues should be addressed at the lowest level possible, starting with your Faculty Member, and students will be expected to follow this process.

Academic complaint about a project, paper, test/assignment grade or classroom practice:

Students who want to file an appeal concerning any academic matter should first contact their instructor. Barring resolution there, students should contact the appropriate departmental chairperson, then the appropriate dean. Further appeal will be completed by a Grade Appeal Board.

Action One: Contact your faculty member

- Resolved: No further action
- Not resolved: Contact Department Chair for course subject area. Note that for final grade appeals, the student should complete the Final Grade Appeal Form. The form has sections to be completed by the student, the Department Chair, and the Academic Dean, and which align with these three Action Steps. There are strict deadlines associated with each action which are explained in the appeal policy linked below or by clicking <https://catalog.sru.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/grade-appeal-policy/>. The grade appeal process is the same for undergraduate and graduate students.

Action Two: Contact the Department Chair for the course subject area

- Resolved: No further action
- Not resolved: Contact Academic Dean for course subject area

Action Three: Contact the Academic Dean for the course subject area

- For complaints about a project, paper, test/assignment grade, or classroom practice, the Academic Dean is the final decision point.
- For final grade appeals only: Final appeal to Grade Appeal Board.
 - If your complaint involves your final course grade and is not resolved in actions one through three, the Office of the Provost will appoint a Grade Appeal Board chair who will coordinate a hearing date acceptable to all parties. The Grade Appeal Board will be comprised of faculty, administrators, and a senior student appointed by the Student Government Association.

Keep in mind that you must follow the steps as listed and you'll be advised to follow the steps if you jump ahead.

Additional information is available at the following links:

- Undergraduate final grade appeal: <https://catalog.sru.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/grade-appeal-policy/>
- Graduate final grade appeal: <https://catalog.sru.edu/graduate/academic-policies/grade-appeal-policy/>
- Undergraduate grade system: <https://catalog.sru.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/grade-information/>
- Graduate grade system: <https://catalog.sru.edu/graduate/academic-policies/grading-system/>

- Graduate Student Handbook for your program

Academic complaint about a final grade or distance education matter:

Final grade appeals and distance education complaints have additional considerations beyond those listed above:

1. **Final Grade Appeal** The purpose of the following procedure is to provide students with a system by which to grieve complaints of alleged academic injustice(s) relating to a final grade and/or professional responsibilities.

Academic Integrity refers to adherence to agreed-upon moral and ethical principles when engaging in academic and scholarly pursuits. A course grade certifies both your knowledge of that particular material and a standard of academic integrity. The SRU degree certifies to society both the educational achievement and the fulfillment of our standards, which include ethical and moral behavior. This process preserves the value and reputation of the degrees conferred by SRU.

Students who believe that their final course grade reflects unsubstantiated academic evaluation may initiate and pursue a grade change appeal in accordance with provisions of this document. At the same time, all academic rights and privileges of faculty members are to be honored in this process, which includes careful review of the course syllabus. Changes in final course grades will occur only when, as a result of this grade appeal process, there is clear evidence of unsubstantiated academic evaluation. Because the grade process involves the instructor's judgment of the academic performance of a student the only issue under consideration in the grade appeal process is whether or not the student can present clear evidence that the assignment of the grade was based on factors other than the academic judgment of the instructor.

2. **Distance Education (Online)** – Students who are engaged in distance education courses at SRU while in a state other than Pennsylvania should attempt to resolve issues and complaints internally following the same processes listed above as face-to-face students.

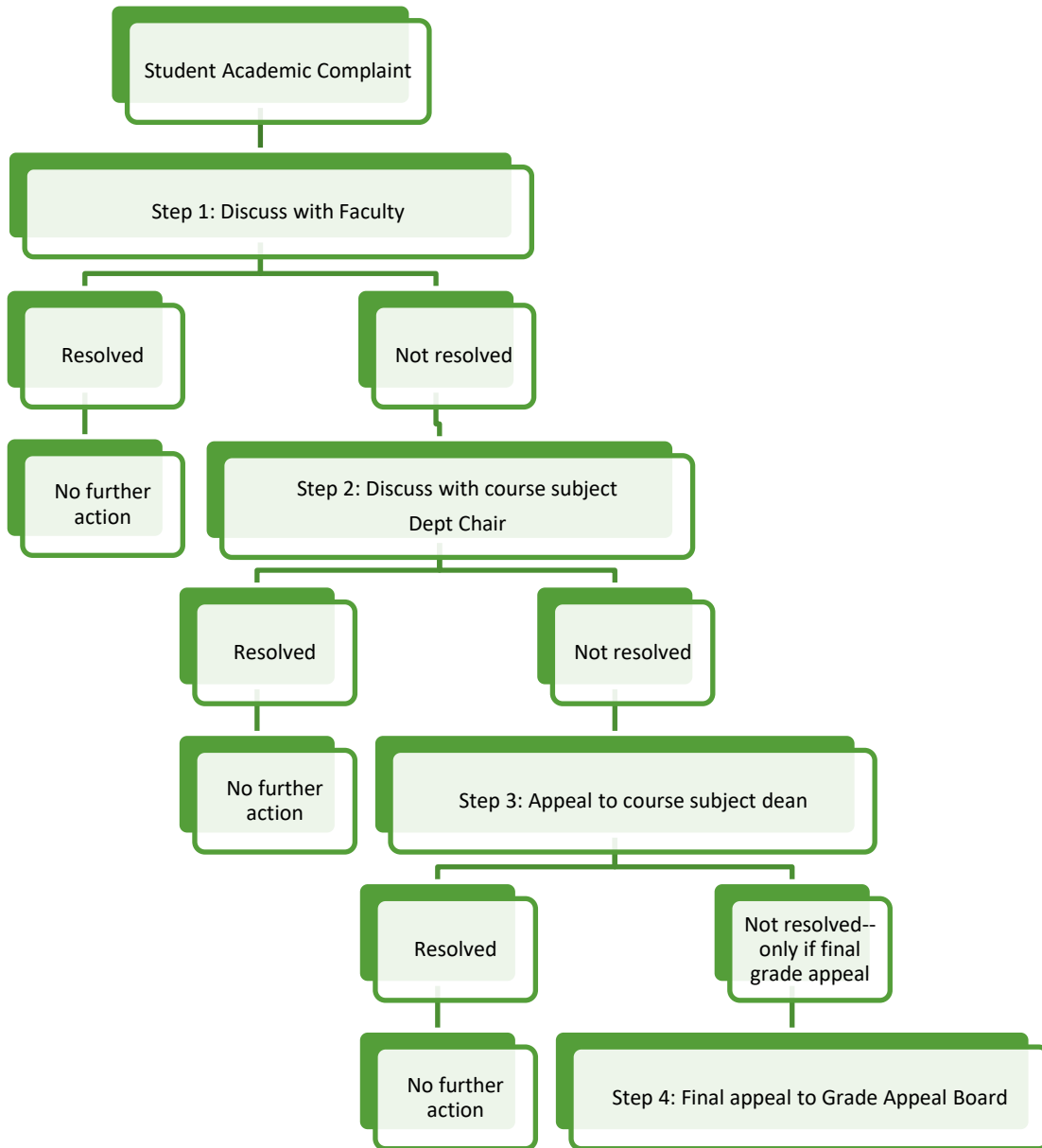
As a State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA)-participating institution, Slippery Rock University has also agreed to abide by the [SARA student complaint process](#) for complaints not related to grades or conduct. Additional information related to state authorization can be found at the following links:

State Authorization

<https://www.sru.edu/academics/online-learning/state-authorization>

If the student is unable to resolve the issue internally, please contact the SARA portal agency in [Pennsylvania](#). The PA portal agency will notify and collaborate with NCSARA as well as the [portal agency](#) in the state where the student is located. Currently, California is the only non-SARA state. A student taking online classes while located in California, should contact the agency specified in the ["Student Complaint Information by State and Agency"](#).

Student Complaint Process Flowchart



The Academic Complaint Brochure was developed by the Office of the Provost in cooperation with APSCUF, the faculty union. July 2021.