Student Complaint Resolution at Slippery Rock University

SRU participates in Federal student aid programs that are authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Participating institutions must be legally authorized to operate with the state in which it is located. Title 34 CFR §600.9 requires states to have a “process to review and appropriately act on complaints concerning the institution including enforcing applicable State laws.” Title 34 CFR§668.43(b) requires that institutions:

“make available for review to any enrolled or prospective student upon request, a copy of the documents describing the institution’s accreditation and its State, Federal, or tribal approval or licensing. The institution must also provide its students or prospective students with contact information for filing complaints with its accreditor and with its State approval or licensing entity and any other relevant State official or agency that would appropriately handle a student’s complaint.”

To comply with this regulation, SRU provides the following information to our prospective and current students.

SRU makes every effort to handle student complaints internally using policies and procedures outlined on the SRU website – www.SRU.edu. It is the expectation that students will utilize any and all institutional procedures to address concerns and complaints in a timely manner.

Complaints can be both formal and informal.

**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.

If a question or problem should arise concerning a course, a grade, a course of study, an academic requirement, or any other academic issue, the student should first consult the appropriate University or program document. If the student then believes it is necessary to seek a personal resolution of a problem from a University official, he or she should follow these guidelines:

- **STEP 1:** The student discusses the problem with the relevant professor or with his or her academic adviser.
• **STEP 2:** If there is no resolution at Step 1, the student discusses the problem with the appropriate department chairperson.

• **STEP 3:** If there is no resolution at Step 2, the student discusses the problem with the appropriate college dean. The dean has final authority on college academic policies and procedures.

• **STEP 4:** If the academic problem involves a University-wide policy or procedure, and if there is no resolution at Step 3, the undergraduate student may bring the problem to the registrar. The graduate student may bring the problem to the dean.

Complaints at SRU are categorized into academic, conduct, and bias.

**Academic Complaints**

- **Academic Complaints/Grade Appeal** – Students who 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 is to be directed to the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. [http://catalog.sru.edu/content.php?catoid=24&navoid=468&hl=title+IX&returnto=search#proc_f or fili grad appe](http://catalog.sru.edu/content.php?catoid=24&navoid=468&hl=title+IX&returnto=search#proc_f or fili grad appe)

- **Academic Integrity** – Refers to the adherence to agreed upon moral and ethical principles when engaging in academic and scholarly pursuits. Mastery of a subject matter should be demonstrated in an honorable and straightforward manner. Traditionally, the instructor adjudicates the first academic integrity instance with information sent to the Office of Student Conduct who can track cases across departments and colleges. Student Conduct will hand additional cases of academic integrity involving the same student. [http://catalog.sru.edu/content.php?catoid=24&navoid=468#acad_inte](http://catalog.sru.edu/content.php?catoid=24&navoid=468#acad_inte)

- **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. As a SARA participating institution, Slippery Rock University has agreed to abide by the SARA student complaint process for complaints not related to grades or conduct.

Students should attempt to resolve the issue internally. Please refer to the Academic Policies websites (undergraduate and graduate) for resolving issues and complaints internally. 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 NC-SARA as well as the portal agency in the state where the student is located to resolve the issue. Currently, California and Massachusetts are non-SARA states. A student taking online classes while located in those states, should register their complaint with the appropriate agency.

**Conduct Complaints**

- **Student Conduct** – SRU students attending functions on or off campus are subject to disciplinary sanctions for violations of the Student Code of Conduct. Students and organizations are expected to comply with the statutes of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, federal laws, and Slippery Rock Borough ordinances and may be charged under the Student Code of Conduct for violations of local, state, federal law and/or ordinances wherever those offenses occur. [http://www.sru.edu/offices/student-conduct/code-of-conduct](http://www.sru.edu/offices/student-conduct/code-of-conduct). Members of the SRU community
are able to refer a student who they believe has violated the Student Code of Conduct at https://sru-advocate.symplicity.com/public_report/index.php/pid202826.

Bias Complaints

- **Americans with Disabilities Act** – Services for Students with Disabilities are available to enrolled students with a documented disability. [http://www.sru.edu/academics/academic-services/services-for-students-with-disabilities/policies](http://www.sru.edu/academics/academic-services/services-for-students-with-disabilities/policies)
  If you feel you have been discriminated against because of a disability, please refer to [http://www.sru.edu/offices/diversity-and-equal-opportunity/policies-procedures-samples-and-forms](http://www.sru.edu/offices/diversity-and-equal-opportunity/policies-procedures-samples-and-forms)

- **Title IX/Harassment/Discrimination/Affirmative Action** – SRU is committed to the policy of affirmative action. SRU assures an equal opportunity to all persons without regard to race, color, religion, creed, disability, ancestry, national origin, age, gender or veteran’s status in accordance with the state and federal laws including Title VI, of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. [http://www.sru.edu/offices/diversity-and-equal-opportunity/policies-procedures-samples-and-forms](http://www.sru.edu/offices/diversity-and-equal-opportunity/policies-procedures-samples-and-forms)

- **Family Education Rights Privacy Act (FERPA)** – Provides certain rights to students with respect to their educational records. An applicant is considered an “SRU student” on the first day of the first term/semester in which the student is registered at SRU. [http://www.sru.edu/academics/academic-services/academic-records/policies-regulations-and-catalogs](http://www.sru.edu/academics/academic-services/academic-records/policies-regulations-and-catalogs)

- **Student Health Services (SHS)** is committed to resolving complaints or grievances in a timely manner. Students or community members (parents, staff or faculty) who have a concern or complaint regarding care and/or services received, that cannot be resolved by the SHS staff, will be offered an appointment with the Director.

**Procedure**

SHS staff is encouraged to resolve concerns and/or complaints as they are brought forward by students or community members. In the event that the staff member is unable to resolve the concern, the student or community member will be offered an appointment with the Director. The appointment will be made by SHS staff at a time convenient to the student or community member. The appointment should occur within seven working days from the time the concern was brought forward. Every effort will be made to remedy the situation in a timely fashion. In the absence of the Director, or if the situation cannot be resolved after meeting with the Director, the student will be referred to the office of the Associate Provost (previously Assistant Vice President) for Student Success.

In the unlikely event that an issue cannot be resolved by the University, students may file a complaint with their respective State Licensing Authority. For residential students taking courses on campus, the Pennsylvania Department of Education – Postsecondary and Adult Education would be the applicable agency. For online students, the state agency would generally correspond with the student’s state of residence. These agencies should be contacted only after the student has registered a complaint with the University and has not received a response to the request for resolution. Contact information for all fifty

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Unresolved complaints may also be filed with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the University’s regional accrediting agency, once all other avenues have been exhausted. Information on the complaint policies and procedures is available at [http://www.msche.org/](http://www.msche.org/).

Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
3624 Market Street, 2nd Floor West  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
Main number: 267-284-5000  
E-mail: [info@msche.org](mailto:info@msche.org) Spanish: [espanolinfo@msche.org](mailto:espanolinfo@msche.org)  
General Link: [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org)  

### Tracking, Resolution, and Review of Complaints

The Deans of each academic college; the Assistant Vice President of Diversity and Equal Opportunity, the Associate Provost for Student Success, and the Associate Provost for Transformational Experiences track complaints. The timeline and resolution processes are defined in the procedure outlined in the procedure for each type of complaint. Each office/administrator responsible to track complaints provides a report to the Student Complaint Review Committee for review and to ensure that policies and procedures are being followed and are in compliance with all institutional policies and external regulations. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the Student Complaint Review Committee to identify patterns and provide recommendations to solve systemic issues to the appropriate divisional leadership. The reports and the recommendations of the Student Complaint Review Committee will be stored inside a password protected shell inside of TracDat.