

## **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 students, current students, and the community.

SRU makes every effort to handle student complaints internally using policies and procedures outlined on the SRU website consumer information page – <https://www.sru.edu/students/student-consumer-information>. It is the expectation that students will utilize any and all institutional procedures to address concerns and complaints in a timely manner.

**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.

Complaints and the processes for filing and resolution at SRU are categorized by type. Categories, their definitions, and procedures to file the complaints are included in the following pages of this document.

### **Academic Complaints**

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 is to be directed to the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. Additional information is available at the following links:

*Undergraduate Catalog 2020-2021*

[Academic Complaints < Slippery Rock University \(sru.edu\)](#)

[Grade Information < Slippery Rock University \(sru.edu\)](#)

*Graduate Catalog 2020-2021*

[Academic Complaints < Slippery Rock University \(sru.edu\)](#)

<https://catalog.sru.edu/graduate/academic-policies/grade-information/>

- **Grade Appeal/Professional Responsibilities**

Academic Due Process Procedures 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.

Students who believe that their final course grade reflect 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.

Additional information and the complete explanation of this process is available at the following links:

*Undergraduate Catalog 2020-2021*

[Grade Information < Slippery Rock University \(sru.edu\)](#)

*Graduate Catalog 2020-2021*

[http://catalog.sru.edu/content.php?catoid=29&navoid=556#grad\\_info](http://catalog.sru.edu/content.php?catoid=29&navoid=556#grad_info)

- **Academic Integrity** – Refers to the 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.

Inherent in the learning process is a commitment to discipline. Discipline is a specific form of training that looks to the future where one learns lessons and makes better choices. The instructor will guide the learning process by identifying unacceptable

behavior and work with students to define the problem and guide them to make better choices.

This process preserves the value and reputation of the degrees conferred by SRU. There are two types of discipline: pre-emptive and corrective discipline.

Additional information and the complete explanation of this process is available at the following links:

*Undergraduate Catalog 2020-2021*

<https://catalog.sru.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/academic-integrity/>

*Graduate Catalog 2020-2021*

<https://catalog.sru.edu/graduate/academic-policies/academic-integrity/>

- **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 as face-to-face students. Students should attempt to resolve issues internally following university policies; refer to the processes for academic and other complaints contained in this document.
- 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. 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 NC-SARA 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 Conduct**

**Student Conduct** – The Student Code of Conduct outlines the rights and responsibilities of all students, and it provides a fair process to evaluate and respond to allegations of misconduct. All students are expected to read and be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct. The conduct process on campus runs parallel to the criminal justice process through the court system. It is possible to be in violation of the law and dealing with criminal court and be in violation of the

Student Code of Conduct and going through the conduct process on campus at the same time. The Office of Student Conduct at Slippery Rock University is located at 005 Patterson Hall.

Additional information related to student conduct expectations, due process, violations, appeal, sanctions, and complaints are available at the following links:

*Office of Student Conduct*

<https://www.sru.edu/offices/student-conduct>

*Slippery Rock University Code of Conduct (updated 8.12.2020)*

<https://www.sru.edu/offices/student-conduct/code-of-conduct>

*Members of the SRU community are able to submit a referral of a student believed to have violated the Student Code of Conduct at the following link:*

[https://sru-advocate.symplicity.com/public\\_report](https://sru-advocate.symplicity.com/public_report)

**Misrepresentation**

Slippery Rock University is committed to truthful representation in all communications including communications with students, prospective students and their families regarding academic programs financial charges, and employability of its graduates. The [Code of Federal Regulations Title 34 section 668.71-74](#) provides the following definitions that outline the scope of these guidelines.

**Misrepresentation: A misleading statement includes any statement that has the likelihood or tendency to deceive or confuse.** A statement is any communication made in writing, visually, orally, or through other means. Misrepresentation includes the dissemination of a student endorsement or testimonial that a student gives either under duress or because the institution required the student to make such an endorsement or testimonial to participate in a program.

The Code of Federal Regulations designates misrepresentation to include: the nature of the educational program (§ 668.72), the nature of financial charges (§ 668.73), and the employability of graduates (§ 668.74)

**Reporting:** Concerns regarding institutional misrepresentation should be reported to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Abbey Zink, at [abbey.zink@sru.edu](mailto:abbey.zink@sru.edu). The office of Academic Affairs can be reached at 724.738.2001.

Additional information is available at the following link: <https://www.sru.edu/students/student-consumer-information>

## **Respect for Individuals in the Community**

*Slippery Rock University provides an environment that respects, encourages, and promotes the talents and contributions of all. Slippery Rock University values a community with a shared sense of purpose, where people demonstrate mutual respect and appreciation. Slippery Rock University values diversity that honors and includes all persons regardless of age, creed, disability, ethnic heritage, gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status in academic and extracurricular endeavor, in the working environment, and in the daily life of the university community.*

## **Americans with Disabilities Act**

Services for Students with Disabilities are available to enrolled students with a documented disability. The Office of Disability Services provides students with reasonable accommodations and services to ensure equal access to education as intended by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008. The Office of Disability Services is located 105 University Union.

Additional information regarding services, grievance and complaint procedures at the following links:

*Office of Disability Services (Student Responsibilities – Grievance Process)*

<https://www.sru.edu/academics/academic-services/services-for-students-with-disabilities>

*Policies – Services for Students with Disabilities*

<https://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 the following link for additional information from the Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity:*

<http://www.sru.edu/offices/diversity-and-equal-opportunity/policies-procedures-samples-and-forms>.

## **Title IX/Harassment/Discrimination/Affirmative Action**

Slippery Rock University is committed to a policy of affirmative action. Slippery Rock University 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 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.

Additional information regarding resources, policies, and complaint procedures can be found at the following links:

*Notice of Non-Discrimination*

[https://www.sru.edu/offices/diversity-and-equal-opportunity/notice-of-non-discrimination](http://www.sru.edu/offices/diversity-and-equal-opportunity/notice-of-non-discrimination)

*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*

<https://www.sru.edu/offices/diversity-and-equal-opportunity/contact-us>

[https://www.sru.edu/documents/offices/diversity/Title\\_IX\\_Coordinator.pdf?1600921501485](https://www.sru.edu/documents/offices/diversity/Title_IX_Coordinator.pdf?1600921501485)

**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. Questions regarding SRU’s FERPA policy should be directed to the Office of Academic Records & Registration 107 Old Main.

Additional information regarding FERPA can be found at the following links:

*Academic Records & Registration: Policies, Regulations, & Catalogs*

<https://www.sru.edu/academics/academic-services/academic-records/policies-regulations-and-catalogs>

*Academic Records & Registration: Policies, Regulations, & Catalogs – SRU’s Detailed FERPA Guide*

[https://www.sru.edu/documents/academics/academic-services/academic-records/SRU\\_Detailed\\_FERPA\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.sru.edu/documents/academics/academic-services/academic-records/SRU_Detailed_FERPA_Guide.pdf)

*Academic Records & Registration: Policies, Regulations, & Catalogs – Student’s Rights Under FERPA*

[https://www.sru.edu/documents/academics/academic-services/academic-records/Students\\_Rights\\_Under\\_FERPA.pdf?1600921947879](https://www.sru.edu/documents/academics/academic-services/academic-records/Students_Rights_Under_FERPA.pdf?1600921947879)

\*In the unlikely event that a complaint cannot be resolved internally a complaint can be filed with the USDE concerning SRU’s failure to comply with the requirements of FERPA with the Family Policy Compliance Office US. Dept. of Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW Washington DC, 20202-4605

### **Misrepresentation**

Slippery Rock University is committed to truthful representation in all communications including communications with students, prospective students and their families regarding academic programs financial charges, and employability of its graduates. The [Code of Federal Regulations Title 34 section 668.71-74](#) provides the following definitions that outline the scope of these guidelines:

Scope and special definitions (§ 668.71)

Misrepresentation: Any false, erroneous or misleading statement an eligible institution, one of its representatives, or any ineligible institution, organization, or person with whom the eligible institution has an agreement to provide educational programs, or to provide marketing, advertising, recruiting or admissions services makes directly or indirectly to a student,

prospective student or any member of the public, or to an accrediting agency, to a State agency, or to the Secretary. **A misleading statement includes any statement that has the likelihood or tendency to deceive or confuse.** A statement is any communication made in writing, visually, orally, or through other means. Misrepresentation includes the dissemination of a student endorsement or testimonial that a student gives either under duress or because the institution required the student to make such an endorsement or testimonial to participate in a program.

**Prospective student:** Any individual who has contacted an eligible institution for the purpose of requesting information about enrolling at the institution or who has been contacted directly by the institution or indirectly through advertising about enrolling at the institution.

**Substantial misrepresentation:** Any misrepresentation on which the person to whom it was made could reasonably be expected to rely, or has reasonably relied, to that person's detriment.

The Code of Federal Regulations designates misrepresentation to include:

- The nature of the educational program (§ 668.72)
- The nature of financial charges (§ 668.73)
- The employability of graduates (§ 668.74)

**Reporting:** Concerns regarding institutional misrepresentation should be reported to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Abbey Zink, at [abbey.zink@sru.edu](mailto:abbey.zink@sru.edu). The office of Academic Affairs can be reached at 724.738.2001.

## **Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education**

In the unlikely event that an issue cannot be resolved by the University, students may file a complaint with the Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education (State System). The student may file a complaint ([Procedure 2016-29](#)) with the State System's Office of the Chancellor, using the [System's official complaint form](#). Additional information regarding the State System's complaint process can be found at the following link:  
<https://www.pashe.edu/StudentComplaints/Pages/default.aspx>

## **Middle States Commission on Higher Education**

Unresolved complaints may also be filed with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the University's institutional accrediting agency, once all other avenues have been exhausted.

Contact and additional information on the complaint policies and procedures are provided below:

*Middle States (MSCHE) - Complaints*

<https://www.msche.org/complaints/>

*Middle States Commission on Higher Education*

*3624 Market Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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)*

*[complaints@msche.org](mailto:complaints@msche.org)*

*General Link: [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org)*

## **Tracking, Resolution, and Review of Complaints**

Tracking| Appropriate offices in the following institutional divisions track student complaints: Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, Human Resources, and Student Affairs.

Resolution| The timeline and resolution processes are defined in the procedure outlined in the procedure for each type of complaint.

Review| Each office/administrator responsible to track complaints provides a report to the Office of Assessment & Accreditation. Reports are aggregated and securely stored in Improve (TraDat). When patterns identified at the institutional level, a report is provided to Cabinet for review to ensure that policies and procedures are being followed, comply with institutional policies/external regulations, and to provide leadership and recommendations to address the root cause of systemic complaint concerns.