

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON STATE AUTHORIZATION AND RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS (SARA)

STUDENT COMPLAINT(S)

In receiving a student complaint covered by licensure, consumer protection, or educational services (quality), the Alabama State Portal Agency (ASPA) will respond in the following manner. If the student wishes to file a complaint, the initial screening will first, determine if the institution is operating under the SARA agreement, second, if the student is properly enrolled, third, the nature of the complaint, and fourth, if the student has exhausted all efforts to resolve the issue under institutional guidelines (published) and procedures provided all students.

Please note that SARA Guideline 4.5a states, “Complaints against an institution operating under SARA go first through the institution’s own procedures for resolution of grievances”. The SARA Manual can be found here: <https://www.nc-sara.org/content/sara-manual>.

Thus, if the out-of-state student has not utilized all available administrative procedures allowed by the institution, as outlined in the institution’s Catalog or Student Handbook, she/he will be referred back to the institution to complete the process. However, an incident report will be filed by the Portal agent to document the initial contact.

If all institutional administrative procedures have been completed and the situation is not resolved, the student must complete a formal written complaint (see form below) that includes the following: student name, institution, course/program involved, confirmation that all procedures provided by the institution have been met (including contact points, date of hearing/findings, and outcome), and what recourse is the student asking as settlement. It must be noted that student complaints dealing with grades and/or student conduct will not be considered by the Portal agency. At this point, all pertinent parties will be notified, including the State Portal Coordinator in the student’s home state.

Typically, the decision regarding a student complaint made by the Portal agency is the final determination. However, a complaint may be submitted to the SARA Regional Compact, if the complainant has evidence the portal agency acted outside NC-SARA Rules and Procedures in its review and decision making. All materials identified through the initial process must be filed with the National Council-SARA within thirty (30) days of the outcome from the Portal review

STUDENT COMPLAINT FORM

This form must be completed and on file with the Portal Agency (ASPA) before any student complaint will be reviewed. Telephone and/or electronic delivered complaints may be considered under emergency circumstances, but in all complaints, the institution’s administrative procedures in dealing with student complaints must be completed or documented as to the student’s efforts to resolve a complaint. The following must be completed and submitted within thirty (30) days of the grievance.

Name of Complainant: _____

Home Address: _____

(street)

(city)

(ZIP code)

Contact Phone Number: _____

(home)

(cell)

Email Address: _____

Date of Submission: _____

Affiliation with institution – check one –

_____ Currently enrolled

_____ Former student

_____ Parent or guardian of student as identified and authorized under the Family Educational Right

to Privacy Act (FERPA) and provided for by the student’s signature: _____.

Student Signature

_____ Other, (e.g. VA Counselor, Social Worker, etc.) Identify by name and authority.

Institution Name: _____

Have you completed the institution's formal grievance/appeal process? _____ Yes _____ No
(Check One)

Date completed: _____

If No, provide a complete explanation why you did not complete the process.

If Yes, submit all pertinent documents to include minutes of hearings, correspondence, and findings to establish your having met all institutional procedures for complaints.

Course and/or Program of Study: _____

Instructor(s) Name: _____

Date of Attendance: _____
From/Month-day-year To/Month-day-year

Complaint Description (additional pages may be used, but ensure all responses are complete):

1. Describe your complaint in full detail, including all names of faculty, administrators, and college personnel contacted about the complaint.
2. Provide all contact information, e.g. phone number, email addresses, etc., for institutional staff you have contacted.
3. State for the record what recourse (result) you are seeking in filing this complaint with the Alabama Commission on Higher Education's Portal (ASPA).

By submitting this form, I affirm that I have met all requirements for filing a student complaint as provided for under this agreement. I agree to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education functioning as the designated "Portal" for administering educational activities under the NC-SARA/ASPA membership. I further authorize the institution to transmit all pertinent student records related to me under this complaint to this portal in the course of this review. The information provided under this complaint is complete, true, and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature

Print Name

Date

Mail this form and all pertinent documents to:

Alabama Commission On Higher Education
C/O Alabama State Portal Agency
100 N. Union Street
Montgomery, Al. 36104