



Student Complaint Guidelines and Contact Information

The University of South Alabama has written policies and procedures governing student complaints. The following information details internal procedures for filing different types of complaints. Students are encouraged to follow these procedures. In the event that a student complaint cannot be resolved internally, contact information is provided for the Alabama Commission on Higher Education and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

General Complaints

If a student has a complaint, they must provide a written description of the complaint, including the date and time of the event, the person or group with whom the student has the complaint, and the names of any witnesses. The written complaint must be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students within 30 days of the event. Complaints about academic matters also may be submitted to the deans and department chairs.

The Dean of Students or his designee will then meet with the grievant to review the complaint, after which the Dean of Students will determine if the complaint can be handled by that office or referred to other university officials. Examples of grievances that will be referred to other officials include academic and non-academic complaints, such as discrimination or sexual harassment, against faculty, which are referred to the Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs or Vice President of Health Sciences, as appropriate, and complaints against University staff, including but not limited to discrimination or sexual harassment, which are referred to Human Resources.

For those complaints related to violations of the Code of Student Conduct which are taken to the Dean of Students, please refer to the policy in The Lowdown <http://www.southalabama.edu/lowdown/codeofconduct.shtml> for procedural steps that will be followed. If such a violation is not the basis of the complaint, the Dean of Students will work with the complainant toward resolution of the complainant's issue which may include referral of the complainant to the proper office for that issue, such as the Office of Financial Aid, the Office of Special Student Services, etc.

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Complaints

Students are protected by the University of South Alabama's Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Policy. Students may submit a written complaint to the compliance officer as described above or to the Dean of Students. Again, please refer to the procedures outlined in The Lowdown, <http://www.southalabama.edu/lowdown/sexualoffensepolicy.shtml> , The

Faculty Handbook, <http://www.southalabama.edu/academicaffairs/facultyhandbook.pdf> and the Staff Employee Handbook, <http://www.southalabama.edu/hr/staffemployeehandbook.html> for complaints regarding sexual harassment or sexual violence.

Final Grade Grievances

A final grade grievance is defined as a student complaint regarding an academic action taken by instructional personnel in assigning a final grade for a course, qualifying exam or comprehensive exam. Complaints may be filed against an individual instructor or a committee. The complaint must be based on arithmetical or clerical error, arbitrary or capricious evaluation on the part of the instructor, substantial failure on the part of the instructor to follow the course syllabus or other announced grading policies, or extraordinary mitigating circumstances beyond the student's control. The complaint may not be filed until the final course grade is received and cannot relate to an academic misconduct procedure. The Final Course Grade Grievance must be filed within 20 class days into the succeeding semester.

The Final Grade Grievance Form must be filed and submitted to the department chair offering the course in question. If the department chair is the instructor, the form must be filed with the dean. The student must first attempt to resolve the complaint with the instructor. If it cannot be resolved, the department chair will arrange a conference with the student and the instructor to attempt resolution within 10 days of receipt of the Final Grade Grievance Form. If a successful resolution is not achieved at the conference, the student may request a hearing before the College Grade Grievance Committee or the course grade will stand.

Each dean annually appoints an Undergraduate and a Graduate Grade Grievance Committee consisting of a minimum of five faculty and two students. The hearing will be conducted within ten class days of receipt of the request. The parties involved will be notified of the decision in writing within three class days of conclusion of the hearing. The only grounds for an appeal to the Dean are violation of due process or rendering a decision in conflict with university policy. Additional details are noted in the published policy.

Institutional Accreditation and Licensing

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Commission on Colleges is the recognized regional accrediting body in the eleven U.S. Southern states (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia) and in Latin America for those institutions of higher education that award associate, baccalaureate, master's or doctoral degrees. The University of South Alabama was initially accredited in 1968 with the most recent Reaffirmation of Accreditation in 2003. The next Reaffirmation is scheduled for December 2013. See <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/webmemlist.pdf>

Contact information for SACS is:

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033
Phone: (404)679-4500 • Fax: (404)679-4558

Authority and oversight of Alabama's public institutions of higher education is vested in each institution's Board of Trustees, as referenced in the Alabama Constitution and legislative acts as cited in the Code of Alabama of 1975. Complaints to the University of South Alabama Board of Trustees should be addressed to:

The University of South Alabama Board of Trustees
c/o Ms. Monica Curtis
307 University Blvd. Room 122
Mobile, Alabama 36688

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) is the coordinating board for higher education in this state. The Commission exercises no governing and limited regulatory authority over Alabama's public institutions. Ala. Code §16-5-1 et seq. (1975).

Contact information for ACHE is:

Alabama Commission on Higher Education
P.O. Box 30200
Montgomery, Alabama 36130-2000
Telephone: (334) 242-1998 • Fax: (334) 242-0268