

4.5

Student complaints

The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. (*See the Commission policy "Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions."*)

Judgment

Compliance Partial Compliance Non-Compliance Not Applicable

Narrative

The Tennessee Technological University (TTU) Student Complaint Policy is based on the principle of respect for all members of the University community and the goal of a successful educational experience for all students. It is intended to make sure that the concerns and complaints of undergraduate or graduate students are addressed fairly and resolved promptly. The TTU Student Complaint Policy (see description below) and specific complaint/appeal procedures are applicable to both on-campus and distance learning students. Complaints covered under the general policy may stem from behavior or conditions that the student feels are unjust or inequitable, or create hardship, but are not governed by other TTU complaint, grievance, or appeal procedures. Whenever a student files a complaint or appeal, he or she is directed toward the most appropriate means of receiving an expedient resolution.

Complaint Procedure

To make a complaint or appeal, including any issue not specifically covered by a procedure already in place, students can go to the "Student Complaint" website maintained by the Office of Student Affairs to find a copy of the policy and the online form [1]. If a student files a complaint that is covered by another process, the complaint will be governed by that process and will be referred to the appropriate school official for disposition. If a matter has been referred to another process for resolution, the student may not present the same complaint through this process.

Other processes for resolving concerns, complaint, and appeal procedures include, but are not limited to:

- Apply for Fresh Start [2a][2b][2c]
- Appeal a course grade [3a] [3b]
- Appeal campus traffic or parking ticket [4a][4b]
- Appeal a finding of student misconduct (Student Disciplinary Procedures) [5a][5b]
- File a complaint related to discrimination or harassment based on a protected category (see note below) [6a][6b][7a][7b][8]
- Report a criminal incident [9a][9b]
- Request refund of course fees and tuition, or General Access Fees [10a][10b]
- Request reinstatement of the Tennessee Lottery Scholarship (after interruption) [11a][11b]
- Request release from or cancellation of campus housing agreement [12a][12b]

Note: A protected category includes race, color, religion, creed, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, age (as applicable), status as a covered veteran, genetic information, and any other category protected by federal or state civil rights law related to the institution.

The Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs will offer guidance on which procedure may apply to a particular complaint. The general procedure that applies to student complaints is outlined in section IV of the TTU Student Complaint Policy [13]:

- Whenever possible, students are encouraged to seek an informal resolution of the matter directly with the faculty or other individual(s) involved. However, if an informal approach is neither successful nor advisable, the student may file a formal written complaint.
- A student complaint form should be submitted online to the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs. It should contain (at a minimum) the student's name and official TTU email address, the date of the alleged conflict or action, a summary of the complaint, a list of other persons who may provide information, and any appropriate documentation. The student must also include the resolution or outcome he or she is seeking. The complaint must be submitted within 10 business days of the event giving rise to the complaint.
- Within five business days of receiving the complaint, absent good cause, a conference will take place with the student and a staff member from the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs.
- The student must submit all relevant documentation within 10 business days of the date the student files the complaint. The staff member will notify appropriate persons and request any information or further documentation needed to resolve the complaint.
- The staff member may attempt to resolve the complaint by encouraging discussion between the student(s) and other students or third party members of the TTU community, or by taking the appropriate action to resolve the complaint.
- A review of the complaint with the supervisor(s) or others in the line of supervision of third parties, if applicable, may be used when deemed appropriate and beneficial to the process.
- Absent good cause, the staff member assigned to the complaint will file a final written resolution or a finding of "unresolved" in the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs within 15 business days of the date the student submits the relevant documentation. If there are circumstances requiring an extension of this deadline, the staff member assigned to the complaint will notify the parties involved.
- If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, the student may appeal the outcome within five business days of receiving the final written resolution or finding of "unresolved." The student must file with the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs a written request for an appeal committee review.
- The appeal committee will consist of five representatives who will serve a one-year term. These representatives will comprise: two student members appointed by the SGA president; one member appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs; one member appointed by the Vice President for Student Affairs; one member appointed by the Vice President for Planning and Finance.
- Absent good cause, the appeal committee will issue a final written decision within 20 business days of the date the student submits an appeal. If there are circumstances requiring an extension of this deadline, the chair of the committee will notify the parties involved. The committee's decision will be final.

A record of all complaints and their resolution is maintained in the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs, Roaden University Center, Room 339. Records of complaints and their resolutions for procedures managed by specific units such as Residential Life or an academic department (e.g., for grade appeals) are maintained in those units, as described in the response to Comprehensive Standard 3.13.3.

Conclusion

TTU provides, implements, and maintains records for a full range of student complaint procedures as well as a general complaint policy that helps ensure that TTU students can seek a prompt, fair, and thorough resolution of any problem they may encounter, and can seek reasonable exceptions through an established appeal process to University rules and policies. Therefore, TTU is in compliance with Federal Requirement 4.5.

Sources

-  [01] TTU Student Complaint Form
-  [02a] TTU Policy 252 Undergraduate Academic Fresh Start
-  [02b] TTU Policy 275 Graduate Academic Fresh Start
-  [02c] Example of Fresh Start Application
-  [03a] TTU Policy 218 Grade Appeals Policy
-  [03b] Example of Grade Appeal
-  [04a] Parking and Traffic
-  [04b] Examples of Parking Ticket Appeal
-  [05a] TTU Policy 302 Student_Disciplinary_Policies
-  [05b] Example of Student Misconduct Appeal
-  [06a] TTU Policy 141 Discrimination and Harrassment_Complaint and Investigation Procedure
-  [06b] Example of Harassment Complaint
-  [07a] TTU Policy 142 Process for Filling Title VI Complaints
-  [07b] Examples of Disability Services Complaint
-  [08] TTU Policy 143 Sexual Misconduct
-  [09a] Crime Incidence Procedures
-  [09b] Examples of Student Criminal Incident Reports
-  [10a] TTU Policy 511.1 Student Fee Adjustments Refunds and Appeals
-  [10b] Example of Student Fee Refund Request
-  [11a] Lottery Scholarship Appeal Process
-  [11b] Example of Lottery Scholarship Appeal
-  [12a] Request for Release or Cancellation Campus Housing
-  [12b] Example of Request for Release or Cancellation Campus Housing
-  [13] TTU Policy 301 TTU Student Complaint