

Purpose: To outline the options that students of Pennsylvania College of Health Sciences have to resolve an issue, complaint, or other situation where they believe their student rights have been violated.

Scope

This policy applies to all student complaints and grievances not otherwise covered by another College policy or process.

Definition

Complainant

A student who brings forward a complaint or grievance as covered by this policy.

Respondent

A party accused of a Policy violation or responsible for a situation as covered by this policy.

Policy Detail

PA College is committed to fostering a community of respect and civility among all of its members. The Student Complaint and Grievance Policy may be used to address any concern regarding an alleged violation of a student's rights. Instances in which the Student Complaint and Grievance Policy may be used include, but are not limited to, complaints regarding PA College faculty, staff or other members of the College Community.

Complaints regarding discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct shall not proceed under the Student Complaint and Grievance Policy. Please see PA College's [Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#) and/or [Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) on how to report a complaint regarding discrimination, harassment or sexual misconduct.

Complaints regarding a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy shall not proceed under the Student Complaint and Grievance Policy. Please see PA College's [Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy](#) for more information on how to report a violation of the code.

Complaints regarding a violation of the Academic Integrity Policy shall not proceed under the Student Complaint and Grievance Policy. Please see PA College's [Academic Integrity Policy](#) for more information.

Complaints regarding final course grades or grades on course work shall not proceed under the Student Complaint and Grievance Policy. Please see PA College's [Grading Policy](#) for more information.

Failure by a student to comply with this policy during the course of a complaint shall result in the waiving of the student's rights under the Student Complaint and Grievance Policy.

Informal Complaint Procedure

Any student may submit a complaint electronically by using their PA College email to a College official or department following the procedure outlined below.

- The person who receives the complaint will review it and, if necessary, refer the student to a more appropriate person or department.

- The person who considers the complaint will be responsible for communication with the student about the disposition of the complaint. An electronic copy of the complaint and all correspondences will be retained.

PA College desires to resolve student complaints and concerns in a fair and amicable manner within a reasonable time frame in accordance with College policies. If the complaint cannot be resolved through typical channels, the student may proceed to the Formal Grievance Procedure.

Formal Grievance Procedure

A student may invoke formal grievance procedures only after making a reasonable effort to resolve the issues or concerns amicably by communicating directly with the individual(s) involved, as outlined in the informal complaint procedure outlined in this policy. When attempts to resolve complaints through open dialogue are unsuccessful, the formal grievance procedure may be invoked.

If an issue is not resolved directly and informally by the student, the student may file a written grievance request for review (referred to as the “grievance”). The grievance must be filed within ten (10) calendar days from the last attempt to resolve the matter directly with the interested parties. All grievances shall be filed electronically with the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs using the student’s PA College Email and include the information listed below (to the best of the student’s ability).

The Grievance must include the following information:

- Name, Address, and contact information (email, phone number, etc.) of the student making the grievance;
- Information regarding the individual(s) the grievance is about, including their name and title;
- Detailed statement outlining all facts relating to the incident(s), including: date, time, and location;
- Names of any individual(s) who witnessed the incident or who may have pertinent information regarding the incident(s), if applicable;
- Details regarding all steps taken to resolve the grievance;
- Statement of the requested action sought by the complainant; and
- List of all documents supporting the grievance, which shall be attached to the correspondence.

Upon receipt of a grievance, one of the following shall serve in the role of Investigator: the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs shall review the grievance and either handle it directly, forward it to the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs (if it is of an academic nature), or forward to an appropriate neutral administrator as applicable for handling. The Investigator, as appropriate, shall request an electronic response from the individual(s) involved and immediately begin a full, fair and impartial investigation into the grievance. If needed, meetings will be scheduled individually or jointly with the complainant and the respondent that is the subject of the complaint. Witnesses may be asked to provide an electronic statement or meet during the investigation. The investigation will be kept confidential to the extent possible. Upon completion of the investigation, the Investigator will issue a decision regarding the grievance. Both the complainant and respondent will be notified electronically regarding the decision.

A student may withdraw a Grievance at any time by filing a withdrawal via email with the Associate Vice President for Student Affairs.

Appeal of Grievance Decision

Grounds for Appeal

The Complainant or Respondent may appeal the determination of a grievance only on the following grounds:

1. There is a substantial likelihood that newly discovered information, not available at the time evidence was presented to the Investigator, would result in a different decision
2. There was a procedural error significant enough to call the outcome into question

Method of Appeal

Appeals must be filed with the Compliance Officer (“Appeals Officer”) within five (5) business days of receipt of the written report determining the outcome of the grievance, whichever is later. The appeal must be submitted using a PA College email address and contain the following:

- Name of the Complainant;
- Name of the Respondent;
- Statement of the determination of the complaint, including corrective action if any;
- Detailed statement of the basis for the appeal including the specific facts, circumstances, and argument in support of it; and
- Requested action, if any.

When an appeal has been filed, the non-appealing party will be notified of such via email. The appealing party may request a meeting with the Appeals Officer, but the decision to grant a meeting is within the Appeals Officer’s discretion. If a meeting is granted, then the other party will be granted a similar opportunity.

Resolution of the Appeal

The Appeals Officer will resolve the appeal within ten (10) days of receiving it and may take any and all actions that he/she determines to be in the interest of a fair and just decision. The parties will be notified in writing if the Appeals Officer’s decision will take longer than ten (10) days. The decision of the Appeals Officer is final.

The Appeals Officer shall issue a short and plain, written statement of the resolution of the appeal, including any changes made to the Investigator’s previous written determination and/or the remedial measures imposed. The written statement shall be simultaneously provided to the complainant and respondent within three (3) days of the resolution.

Appeals are not re-hearings of the initial grievance. Appeals are confined to a review of the documentation or record of the Investigator and other pertinent information regarding the grounds for the appeal. The Appeals Officer may remand the case back to the original investigator for further consideration in the event that new information is discovered, not originally available to the Investigator and which may result in a different decision.

Retaliation

It is a violation of this policy to retaliate against any member of the College Community who reports or assists in making a grievance or who participates in an investigation in any way. Persons who believe they have been retaliated against in violation of this policy should make their concerns known to the Investigator that handled the original grievance.

What if a solution is still not reached?

Complaints or grievances that remain unresolved after working through the College's chain of command may be filed with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, PA College's regional accrediting agency, once all other avenues provided by the College have been exhausted. The link below provides information on the Commission's complaint policies and procedures.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education
3624 Market Street, 2nd Floor West, Philadelphia, PA 19104
267-284-5000
info@msche.org
<http://www.msche.org>

Audience:	All Students
Date Issued:	11/26/2018
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Owner:	Associate Vice President for Student Affairs