

Revision Date(s):

Procedure F-13**STUDENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURE****A. Purpose:**

The purpose of this procedure is to explain the appropriate use of the student complaint form and the process that is used to resolve student complaints. The college provides the right to a fair hearing for each student complaint arising during his/her enrollment as a student at Prairie State College (PSC).

The Student Complaint Form is designed to address complaints regarding any department or service including, but not limited to:

- Dissatisfaction expressed by a student because he/she believes that a policy, procedure or practice has occurred that adversely affects the student
- Allegations of discrimination by reason of race, sex, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, religion or other areas covered by federal or state laws, guidelines and regulations, and college policies and procedures
- Sexual harassment

PSC provides a board policy, F-6 Grade Change on its website. **Grade Appeals** are **not** considered complaints and are not addressed by this procedure. Students seeking a grade appeal or needing to discuss academic issues should see the appropriate dean for resolution. The procedure for grade appeals can be found at prairiestate.edu/academics/procedure-for-grade-appeal/index-review.aspx.

B. Administrative Rules:

Prairie State College promotes an open educational environment. In that spirit, the college encourages all students to first direct their complaints and concerns to the faculty, staff, or administrator specifically involved. Many complaints can be resolved through an open, honest dialogue

between the persons involved. In cases where that may not be possible, mediation facilitated by a trained Prairie State arbitrator is also an option.

For disputes and concerns that cannot be informally mitigated the Student Complaint Procedure can assist in facilitating a resolution. Other than grade appeal or claim of sexual harassment, a complaint that challenges the decisions or actions of other students and college personnel will be considered under this procedure.

Students may submit a formal written complaint through the dean, student development and campus life. The dean will act as or appoint a hearing officer who will determine if the charges warrant an investigation. If the complaint is not found to warrant an investigation, it will be dismissed.

A formal written Student Complaint Form is available at the Counseling and Academic Advising Center (CAAC), or may be printed from the website at prairiestate.edu, by clicking on the Current Students tab. The written Student Complaint must be submitted to the CAAC, to be recorded in the receipt database. A copy will be provided to the student upon receipt.

A written complaint filed with the CAAC must contain the following information (see the form attached to this policy):

- a. Student name and student ID number;
- b. Description and date of the problem or concern;
- c. Names of persons, department or policy responsible for the complaint (if known);
- d. Description of any actions taken informally to resolve the problem or concern;
- e. Recommendation as to what could be possible resolution(s) of the complaint; and
- f. Signature and date of the student filing the complaint.

Timeframe

Any student who believes that his/her rights as a student have been infringed upon should initiate a written Student Complaint with the CAAC within fifteen (15) working days of the incident, unless extenuating circumstances necessitate additional time. The student filing the complaint will be informed of the action taken or progress accomplished within fifteen (15) working days of the filing date of the complaint, unless extenuating circumstances necessitate additional time. Moreover, the student shall be informed, along with the nature of the extenuating circumstance, if more than fifteen (15) days is required. Student's PSC email address will be used for communications regarding a complaint.

Formal Office of Counseling and Academic Advising Center (CAAC) Complaint Process.

The process that is followed by the CAAC in responding to a student complaint has eight steps:

Step #1: The student completes the "Written Student Complaint Form," which is included with this procedure or found at prairiestate.edu/current-students/student-complaint-form.aspx, and submits the written complaint to the CAAC.

The CAAC representative will immediately:

- a. Return a signed and dated copy of the complaint to the student;
- b. Record receipt of the complaint in an automated database, noting all appropriate details; and
- c. Submit the original written complaint to the dean, student development and campus life.

Step #2: The dean, student development and campus life will:

- a. Create a folder in the electronic complaint log;
- b. Respond to the student in writing at the student's PSC email address to acknowledge the complaint has been received and logged;
- c. Collect all pertinent information; and
- d. Direct the complaint to the institutional officer who is responsible for the area in which the complaint is made and convene all parties involved, as appropriate.

An "institutional officer" may be anyone in the position of director or above at any PSC campus or site.

Step #3: The institutional officer to whom the student complaint has been referred is expected to respond within 10 working days to the dean, student development and campus life regarding the recommended action or explanation as appropriate.

Step #4: The dean, student development and campus life will:

- a. Collect copies of all communication and other supporting documents for inclusion in the complaint file;
- b. Document any other external actions initiated by the student to resolve the complaint, if known to PSC (e.g. lawsuit, EEOC investigation, etc.);
- c. Document in the electronic file all steps taken to resolve the complaint; and
- d. Present the recommended resolution of the complaint to the vice president, student affairs, for review and approval.

Step #5: The dean, student development and campus life informs the student, again at the student's PSC email address, of the recommended resolution, action or explanation regarding the formal written complaint.

Step #6: If the complaint is not resolved to the student's satisfaction, the student may first follow the Grievance Procedures, which are published on the college website, to appeal the decision.

Step #7: Following receipt of a written response from the appropriate vice president, and if still dissatisfied, the student may submit a written appeal and related correspondence/records to the college president for consideration.

Step #8: As a final college recourse, the student may appeal the decision of the president by submitting the matter in writing to the Board of Trustees.

Any student who has completed the full complaint resolution process, but believes that the complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved, has the right to contact The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association at www.ncahlc.org and/or the higher education regulatory agency in his or her home state. Illinois residents may contact the Illinois Board of Higher Education at www.ibje.state.il.us. Indiana residents may contact the Indiana Board of Proprietary Education at www.in.go/bpe.

The student can also visit the Department of Education at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/landing.ihtml?src=pn> for information on their Laws and Guidance page.

Retaliation

Any retaliatory action taken by a member of PSC (student or employee) against any student or employee of the college as a result of a student seeking a resolution of a written complaint under this policy, or cooperating in an investigation, is prohibited and shall be regarded as a separate and distinct matter under these procedures.

Student Complaint Log

The information in the electronic log of student complaints, which is maintained by the CAAC, includes the following confidential information on each complaint:

1. Date the complaint was submitted;
2. Nature of the complaint;
3. Steps taken to resolve the complaint, and all documentation associated with those steps;
4. Date and the final resolution, action or explanation regarding the complaint, including referral to outside agencies; and
5. Any other external actions initiated by the student to resolve the complaint, if known by PSC (e.g. lawsuit, EEOC investigation, etc.)
6. Any actions taken by PSC to improve/change policies, procedures or practices based on the resolution of the complaint

Information on all student complaints may be made available for outside review by the Department of Education, the Higher Learning Commission and any other official legally entitled to such review; however, steps will be taken to insure the anonymity of any student who files a complaint.

The purpose of an outside review can include, but is limited to:

1. Establish that PSC processes complaints in a timely manner;
2. Demonstrate fairness and attention to student concerns; and
3. Identify any pattern in the complaints that suggests problems with institutional quality.