

Ave Maria University

Student Complaint Procedure

The Ave Maria University Student Complaint Policy is designed to assist students in resolving complaints regarding a violation, interpretation, or application of a university policy or procedure. Ave Maria University is committed to maintaining a learning environment which promotes student academic excellence and personal development. To facilitate this learning environment, the university provides informal and formal processes to resolve complaints. Please note that the University maintains a separate set of procedures to address complaints related to alleged violations or issues involving discrimination, harassment, Title IX, the Honor Code, and the Code of Student Conduct, as detailed below under "Exclusions."

Informal Process

The student should first attempt to resolve complaints informally by requesting the opportunity to meet with the staff or faculty member who is alleged to have caused the complaint. If the complaint cannot be resolved at this level, then the student is encouraged to continue to pursue informal resolution by presenting the complaint orally or through email correspondence through appropriate administrative channels up to the Office of the Vice President in whose area the complaint originated. If an informal resolution cannot be reached, then the student may initiate the formal complaint process.

Formal Process

A complaint must be filed in a timely fashion. Formal written complaints must involve a specific event or incident occurring within thirty (30) days of filing. The student should attempt resolution of the matter in the Informal Process before filing a formal written complaint. University officials shall make reasonable efforts to respond to complaints within fifteen (15) business days of when initially submitted. Formal complaints must:

1. Be in writing and must be dated and signed by the student making the complaint.
2. Clearly identify the department(s) and issue(s) involved.
3. Indicate (and describe as appropriate) how the student has attempted to resolve the issue with the involved staff/faculty member prior to the submission of the formal complaint.

Formal Complaint Procedure

The formal written complaint should be submitted to the appropriate Vice President:

- the Vice President for Academic Affairs (for complaints regarding grading, classroom issues, advising, and similar academic matters);
- the Vice President for Student Affairs (for complaints regarding residential life, athletics, food services, security, and similar student life issues); and,
- the Vice President for Enrollment Management (for complaints regarding admissions, financial aid, bursar, registrar, and facilities).

Complaints in areas not clearly under the administration of a particular Vice President should be directed to the Vice President for Student Affairs.

After receiving the complaint, the Vice President shall attempt to respond to and resolve the complaint. The Vice President may, at his or her discretion, also choose to initiate the following process:

1. The Vice President may route the complaint to the director/chair of the appropriate department where the issue originated or to an ad hoc committee of faculty or staff established for this purpose. The director/chair or committee shall review the complaint and investigate the issues identified.
2. Upon completion of its review, the director/chair or committee shall provide the student with a written response to the complaint.
3. If the student feels the response provided by the director or committee does not address the complaint properly, the student may appeal the decision to the Vice President. Such appeal must be made within five (5) business days of the receipt of the decision of the director or committee.
4. Upon receipt of the appeal request, the Vice President shall review the institutional decision and the student's appeal request. The Vice President then shall either render a decision or elect to convene an ad hoc appeals committee consisting of the Vice President and other University faculty and/or administrators. If constituted, the committee shall investigate the issue and render a decision on the complaint appeal. In either case, the decision is final and shall be reported to the student in writing.

However, the complaint is resolved (i.e., whether by director, by committee, or the vice president), documentation of the resolution of the formal complaint shall be maintained by the Vice President for Student Affairs.

Complaints to Outside Agencies

If the formal complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved by the University, students may file a complaint with the following agencies:

- For complaints pertaining to AMU's compliance with academic program quality and accrediting standards, students may contact the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges: 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097
- For all other complaints, students may contact the Florida Department of Education.
 - To file a complaint, send a letter to:

Equitable Services Ombudsman
850-245-9349
EquitableServices@fldoe.org

If the Ombudsman is unable to assist you, contact Office of Articulation within the Department of Education.

- The letter should include:
 1. Name of Student (or Complainant)
 2. Complainant Address
 3. Phone Number
 4. Name of Institution
 5. Location of the Institution (City)
 6. Dates of Attendance
 7. A full description of the problem and any other documentation that will support your claim such as enrollment agreements,

correspondence, etc.

- The complaint process of the Ombudsman involves contacting the institution to obtain their response to your complaint. If you do not want the Ombudsman to contact the institution you are attending, you must state so in your complaint; however, doing so will greatly hinder the Ombudsman's ability to assist you with your complaint.
- Distance Education students who have completed the internal institutional grievance process and the applicable state grievance process may appeal non-instructional complaints to the FL-SARA PRDEC Council. For additional information on the complaint process, please visit the FL-SARA Complaint Process page, <http://www.fldoe.org/sara/complaint-process.stml>