

ADMINISTRATORS' HANDLING OF STUDENT COMPLAINTS

ABOUT FACULTY MEMBERS

Procedures

Florida Gulf Coast University and its Colleges have a variety of policies and procedures for resolving student related issues, including grade appeals, academic integrity violations, student discipline, disclosure of student records, sexual harassment complaints, disability accommodations, and discrimination. One area not generally covered is student complaints about faculty member conduct in the classroom or in other formal academic settings. Of particular importance is how the faculty member's supervisor handles a student complaint.

The supervisor who receives the complaint must assure both the faculty member and student of a transparent and fair process, one in which the dispute can be resolved in such a manner that fosters mutual respect and maintains a constructive educational environment. To that end, the following procedures must be adhered to:

1. When a faculty member's supervisor (e.g., department chair) receives a complaint from a student or her/his representative regarding an issue that is not covered by existing university policies and agencies, the faculty member will be the first person the supervisor notifies about the complaint.
 - a. The faculty member will be contacted by the supervisor no later than five business days after the complaint is received.
 - b. At that time, the supervisor should meet with the faculty member and should solicit their recollection of events related to the complaint.
2. The faculty member should have the opportunity to meet with the student and/or their representative (i.e., ombuds) prior to any action taken by a supervisor.
3. If the problem cannot be resolved informally between the faculty member and the student or their representative, then the supervisor will meet with the faculty member to discuss the pending issue and how to resolve it.
4. The supervisor will schedule a meeting with the student and/or their representative and the faculty member and should attempt to mediate a satisfactory resolution.
5. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, then the supervisor, faculty member, and student (or their representative) will document in writing and independently the problem and the steps taken up to that point. Each party will receive a copy of all the documentation.
6. If the event or behavior cited in the complaint is considered sufficiently concerning to the supervisor, all documentation will be shared with the dean.
7. The student will follow university policy regarding what next steps s/he may take.

Deleted: On the one hand, the University respects the academic freedom of faculty members and will not interfere with it regarding the content or style of teaching activities. Indeed, academic freedom is and should be of paramount importance. On the other hand, the University recognizes its responsibility to provide students with a procedure for addressing complaints about a faculty member's treatment of students that is not protected by academic freedom and that is not covered by other procedures. Examples might include incompetent or inefficient service, neglect of duty, physical or mental incapacity, and conduct unbecoming a member of the University staff.¶

If a student has a complaint against a faculty member,

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8. The faculty member may proceed per the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) in force at the time or contact the faculty ombuds.
9. Under no circumstances may the faculty member's direct supervisor or dean incorporate the complaint into the faculty member's annual review or proceed with disciplinary action if the faculty member has not been apprised of the problem, has not had the opportunity to be heard on the matter, and has not had the opportunity to resolve the issue prior to more formal action.