



General Policy Title: Grievance Policy

HC Area: Compliance

Responsible Administrator: Vice President of Education Operations and Compliance

Revised: December 8, 2025

I. Purpose

Helms College is committed to maintaining an educational environment where concerns, complaints, and grievances are addressed promptly, fairly, and respectfully. This policy establishes clear procedures for resolving student concerns at the lowest possible level, while also ensuring due process and documentation at each stage. This grievance process is intended for individual grievances. Helms College does not accept or process group or class grievances, as doing so could compromise the privacy and confidentiality of the individuals involved. Each concern must be submitted and addressed on an individual basis.

II. Definitions

A. Concern:

An initial expression of dissatisfaction or inquiry about a situation, decision, or policy that a student wishes to discuss informally. Many concerns can be resolved by an open discussion between the student and the faculty member. If a student has a concern, the student needs to meet with the faculty member to discuss the concern, when reasonably possible.

Examples:

- Clarification about a classroom policy, assignment, or grading rubric.
- Questions regarding attendance, make-up work, or class participation expectations.
- Difficulty understanding course content or needing additional academic support.
- Concern about classroom temperature, seating arrangements, or noise levels.

B. Complaint:

A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction regarding a service, policy, instructor, staff member, or institutional process that does not involve an alleged violation of a right or policy. Complaints are typically administrative or instructional in nature and can often be resolved through discussion, mediation, or clarification.

Examples:

- Dissatisfaction with course materials or delivery.
- Issues with classroom environment or scheduling.
- Concerns about communication or customer service.

C. Grievance:

A grievance is a formal allegation that an action, decision, condition, or practice has violated a student's rights under institutional policy, accreditation standards, or applicable law. Grievances often involve claims of unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, or violation of institutional procedures. Grade appeals are not considered grievances under this policy.

Examples:

- Violations of published policies or student rights.
- Discrimination based on protected characteristics.
- Sexual harassment or sexual misconduct (see Title IX reference below).

III. Title IX Grievances

For grievances or complaints involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, gender discrimination, or retaliation related to sex or gender, please refer to the Helms College Title IX Policy. Such reports are handled in accordance with federal Title IX regulations and Helms College's internal Title IX grievance procedures.

Contact:

Title IX Coordinator – William Dindy, Vice President of Education Operations and Compliance

IV. General Principles

- Grievances and complaints will be handled confidentially to the extent possible.
- Retaliation against any individual who raises a complaint or grievance in good faith is strictly prohibited.
- Anonymous complaints will be reviewed to the extent practicable but may limit the College's ability to investigate.
- Documentation will be maintained at each stage of the process.

V. Internal Grievance Resolution Procedure

Students are encouraged to resolve complaints as informally as possible before filing a formal grievance.

Step 1: Informal Resolution

Students should first attempt to resolve the issue directly with the instructor, staff member, or department involved. If resolution is not achieved, the student may proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: Program Manager/Student Services Review

If the student-instructor discussion does not resolve the issue or if such a discussion is not reasonably possible, the student should contact the Program Manager, as appropriate, to seek a solution. If the issue can be resolved at this level, the case is then closed. If the issue cannot be resolved to the student's satisfaction, the student may file a written grievance using the Grievance Form provided by the Student Retention and Engagement Specialist.

Step 3: Grievance Committee Review

Once a grievance has been submitted, a Grievance Committee is convened within Five (5) business days. The Grievance Committee will consist of:

- Student Retention and Engagement Specialist
- A Program Manager from another program
- Vice President of Education Operations and Compliance
- Program faculty member
- At large staff member

The Grievance Committee's responsibilities are to interview all involved parties, review the documentation, develop recommendations in writing with a supporting rationale and submit its recommendations to the Senior Vice President of Education, who will make determinations. When the student is interviewed, he or she may not be accompanied by legal counsel or family members unless the case relates to a Title IX complaint or disability matter. Committee members commit to discuss the grievance only in the context of committee deliberations. If a conflict of interest exists at any level, an alternate qualified staff or faculty member will be appointed by the Senior Vice President of Education (SVP) (or Vice President of Education Operations and Compliance when the SVP is conflicted) to ensure an impartial review.

The Committee will submit a written report of their review of the findings to the Senior Vice President of Education within ten (10) business days of receipt of the initial grievance form.

The College's internal grievance process must be fully completed before filing with any external agency.

VI. External Complaint Procedures

Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (GNPEC)

If the student is still dissatisfied with the solution, they may contact the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (GNPEC) by submitting an Authorized School Complaint Form, which will then be referred to the appropriate Regulatory Specialist. The form can be found by visiting <https://gnpec.georgia.gov/student-resources/complaints-against-institution> and selecting "Consumer Resources." The information below outlines the GNPEC Complaint Procedure:

GNPEC Authorized School Complaint Procedure—Authority: O.C.G.A. § 20-3-250 et al.

Any student who feels that an institution for which GNPEC is the complaint agent has not adequately addressed a complaint, or who feels that the institution is not in compliance with the Commission's Minimum Standards, may file a formal complaint. In order to be considered, a formal complaint must be submitted in accordance with the Commission's Complaint Procedures by using its online complaint form. The complaint **must** include documentation of the basis of the complaint and of the final determination from the institution indicating no further institutional review is available. If preliminary findings indicate a violation of GNPEC regulations by the institution or a failure to follow its procedures, the Commission shall attempt to resolve the complaint through mediation. All parties will be notified in writing of the outcome of the investigation.

In order to be reviewed by the Commission, the complaint must be filed within 90 calendar days of the final resolution from the institution, and it must include the following:

- Basis for any allegation of noncompliance with GNPEC standards or requirements.
- All relevant names and dates and a brief description of the actions forming the basis of the complaint.
- Copies of all documents or materials related to the allegations, including institutional responses documentation and/or analysis.
- Proof of completion of the institutional complaint or grievance process; and
- Desired resolution.

The Commission will not review a complaint that fails to provide complete information or does not address an issue that can be reviewed. In no instance will a complaint be accepted for review that has not completed the process published by the institution.

Upon receipt of a complaint filed in accordance with the aforementioned format, the Commission will forward a copy of the complaint to the school for a response.

GNPEC can also be reached at:

Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission

2082 East Exchange Place, Suite 220

Tucker, Georgia 30084

770.414.3300

Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training (ACCET)

ACCET Complaint Procedure

Helms College is recognized by the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education & Training (ACCET) as meeting and maintaining certain standards of quality. It is the mutual goal of ACCET and the institution to ensure that quality educational training programs are provided. When issues or problems arise, students should make every attempt to find a fair and reasonable solution through the institution's internal complaint procedure, which is required of ACCET-accredited institutions and frequently requires the submission of a written complaint. Refer to the institution's written complaint procedure, which is published in the institution's catalog or otherwise available from the institution, upon request. Note that ACCET will process complaints that involve ACCET standards and policies and, therefore, are within the scope of the accrediting agency.

If a student has used the institution's formal student complaint procedure, and the issue has not been resolved, the student has the right and is encouraged to submit a complaint to ACCET in writing via the online form on the ACCET website (<https://accet.org/about-us/contact-us>). The online form will require the following information:

1. Name and location of the ACCET institution
2. A detailed description of the alleged problem(s)
3. The approximate date(s) that the problem(s) occurred
4. The names and titles/positions of all persons involved in the problem(s), including faculty, staff,

and/or other students

5. What was previously done to resolve the complaint, along with evidence demonstrating that the institution's complaint procedure was followed prior to contacting ACCET.
6. The name, email address, telephone number, and mailing address of the complainant. If the complainant specifically requests that anonymity be maintained, ACCET will not reveal his or her name to the institution involved.
7. The status of the complainant with the institution (e.g., current student, former student)

Please include copies of any relevant supporting documentation (e.g., student enrollment agreement, syllabus or course outline, correspondence between the student and the institution).

Note: Complainants will receive an acknowledgment of receipt within 15 business days.



Interactive Distance Learning Student Complaint Procedure

Students should begin the complaint process with the institution, following the Grievance Policy above. If resolution is not found, the student should contact the institution's home state SARA Portal Entity—GA-SARA at the link below:

<https://gnpec.georgia.gov/student-resources/student-complaints/ga-sara-online-student-complaint-form>

Interactive Distance Learning student complaints relating to consumer protection laws offered under the terms and conditions of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), must first be filed with the institution to seek resolution. The full policy can be found here: <https://nc-sara.org/sara-student-complaints-0/>