

PROCEDURE:

2.3.2p1. Public Complaint

Revised: November 20, 2013; November 18, 2014; November 18, 2015; November 16, 2016; November 15, 2017; November 20, 2019; November 18, 2020; November 16, 2022

Last Reviewed: November 20, 2013; November 18, 2014; November 18, 2015; November 16, 2016; November 15, 2017; November 28, 2018; November 20, 2019; November 18, 2020; November 17, 2021; November 16, 2022; November 15, 2023
Adopted: May 15, 2013

I. **PURPOSE**

The College recognizes that disagreements with the general public may sometimes arise and encourages the parties involved to resolve the conflict informally whenever possible. If a resolution cannot be reached, a formal process provides an impartial and equitable way to resolve those conflicts.

The intent of this process is to provide a systematic way in which to express and resolve misunderstandings, complaints, or grievances about dissatisfaction with College services.

II. **RELATED AUTHORITY**

State Board Policy 2.3.2. Responsibilities and Authority of Technical College Presidents
TCSG Procedure 2.3.2p. Presidential Responsibilities

III. **APPLICABILITY**

This procedure applies to members of the public.

This procedure does not apply to the following appeals or grievances. Policy and procedures for these are contained in other policy statements:

- a. Academic Appeals;
- b. TCSG Employee Complaint policy;
- c. Any formal appeal or grievance covered by another College policy (e.g., Student Conduct Codes, Financial Aid, Satisfactory Academic Progress, etc.);
- d. All other appeal and grievance policies and procedures explicitly described in the State Board Policies and TCSG Procedures Manual (or in local Ogeechee Technical College Procedures).

IV. **DEFINITIONS**

Verbal Complaints: Verbal complaints are considered informal and the procedure for informal complaints (below) is to be followed.

Written Complaints: Written complaints received from the General Public Complaint Form are considered formal and the procedure for formal complaints (below) is to be followed.

V. ATTACHMENTS

General Public Complaint Form

VI. PROCEDURE

The following procedure outlines the rights of members of the public to file formal and informal complaints against Ogeechee Technical College. It furthermore delineates College procedures for responding to these complaints.

Procedure for Informal Complaints (verbal):

- a. Members of the public are to be dealt with through a face-to-face discussion between the complainant and the responsible college administrator supervising the area. If through this process a mutually satisfactory resolution of the complaint cannot be reached, the complainant may put the complaint in writing using the General Public Complaint Form available from the College and move to the Procedure for Formal Complaints or the complaint will be considered inactive.
- b. It is the responsibility of the administrator involved in an informal complaint to write a memorandum for the record detailing the nature of the complaint and the resolution. The administrator is to retain such memoranda in a file accessible to his/her supervisor upon request.

Procedure for Formal Complaints (written):

- a. The complainant obtains a General Public Complaint Form from the Office of Student Affairs.
- b. The complainant completes the form and returns it to the Office of Student Affairs.
- c. The Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs will review the form and assign it to the appropriate division for response.
- d. Formal complaints by members of the public are to be dealt with by the responsible college administrator supervising a division.
- e. The administrator handling the complaint is to gather information as necessary. Information must be gathered from the complainant.
- f. A written response is to be sent to the complainant within 15 working days of receiving the General Public Complaint Form from the Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs.
- g. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, he/she may file a written appeal to the President within 10 calendar days of receiving the response. In such cases, the President will gather information and provide a final written response to the complainant within 30 working days of receiving the appeal.
- h. The decision of the College President is final.
- i. The Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs will maintain a file of all public formal complaints and responses.

Procedure for Third Party Complaints:

Complaints made by students, faculty, staff, or the public to third parties (e.g., Governor's Office, Congressional Office, Technical College System of Georgia, accreditors) will be addressed using the procedures set forth by the third party.

Ogeechee Technical College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award associate degrees, diplomas, and technical certificates of credit. Questions about the accreditation of Ogeechee Technical College may be directed in writing to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097, by calling (404) 679-4500, or by using information available on SACSCOC's website (www.sacscoc.org).

Because SACSCOC's complaint process is for the purpose of addressing any significant non-compliance with SACSCOC's accreditation standards or policies, this process is not intended to be used to involve SACSCOC in disputes between individuals and member institutions, or cause SACSCOC to interpose itself as a reviewing authority in individual matters of admission, grades, granting or transferability of credits, application of academic policies, fees or other financial matters, disciplinary matters, or contractual rights and obligations. Nor does SACSCOC seek redress on an individual's behalf. Under no circumstances does SACSCOC respond to – or take action on – any complaint or any allegation that contains defamatory or threatening statements. Further, SACSCOC will not serve as a grievance panel when the outcome of institutional grievance or appeal processes is unsatisfactory to the complainant.

SACSCOC expects individuals to attempt to resolve the issue through all means available to the complainant, including following the institution's own published grievance procedures, before submitting a complaint to SACSCOC. SACSCOC is under no obligation to consider additional information submitted by the complainant subsequent to the receipt of the formal complaint. SACSCOC's usual practice is not to consider a complaint currently in administrative proceedings, including institutional proceedings, or litigation. However, if there is substantial, credible evidence that indicates systemic problems with an accredited institution, SACSCOC may, at its discretion, choose to proceed with the review while these proceedings are being pursued or after they are concluded.

VII. RECORD RETENTION

Documents relating to both formal and informal complaints shall be held for 5 years.