

Louisiana SARA Student Complaint Process

Applicability

This policy applies to student complaints filed against public, independent non-profit and proprietary institutions of higher education in Louisiana and approved by the Louisiana Board of Regents to participate in the National State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) (“Louisiana- approved SARA institutions”) concerning interstate distance education (pursuant to the terms of the State of Louisiana’s Reciprocity Agreement) offered by such institutions in other states participating in SARA. This policy does not apply to any courses, online or otherwise, offered by Louisiana-approved SARA institutions within Louisiana or in any non-SARA states.

This policy governs conduct or behavior on the part of any Louisiana-approved SARA institution or any of its agents, representatives or employees that constitutes:

- Dishonest or fraudulent behavior, including giving false or misleading information to a student. Examples may include, but are not limited to:
 - o Veracity of recruitment and marketing materials
 - o Accuracy of job placement data
 - o Accuracy of information about tuition, fees and financial aid
 - o Complete and correct admission requirements for courses and programs
 - o Accuracy of information about whether course work meets professional licensing requirements
- Operating a course or program contrary to standard practices set forth in the [Interregional Guidelines for the Evaluation of Distance Education Programs](#) (Online Learning) in such a way that harms a student
- Operation of distance education programs contrary to practices expected by institutional and, if applicable, programmatic accreditors.

This policy does not apply to complaints related to course grades, academic sanctions or discipline/conduct matters.

The Louisiana Board of Regents’ Staff Role

As the SARA State Portal Agency (SPA) for Louisiana, the Louisiana Board of Regents’ staff is responsible for responding to formal complaints against Louisiana-approved SARA institutions, brought by students who are enrolled in interstate distance education courses or programs (pursuant to the terms of the State of Louisiana’s Reciprocity Agreement) offered by such institutions in other states participating in the SARA.

While Louisiana Board of Regents’ staff cannot offer legal advice to or initiate civil court cases on behalf of students, staff will review submitted complaints and work with student complainants and Louisiana-approved SARA institutions to:

- Ensure compliance with published institutional complaint processes by both the Louisiana-approved SARA institution and the student; and

- Serve as a final arbitrator in disputes between Louisiana-approved SARA institutions and students enrolled in interstate distance education courses or programs (pursuant to the terms of the State of Louisiana's Reciprocity Agreement) offered by such institutions in other states participating in SARA.

Consistent with the scope of this policy and SARA guidelines, the Louisiana Board of Regents' staff cannot review complaints related to course grades, academic sanctions or discipline/conduct matters.

Student Complaint Process

STEP 1

If a student has concerns related to academic or administrative actions, he/she should contact the faculty or staff member(s) with whom he/she has a conflict. It may be possible to resolve the concerns without the need for formal institutional action. However, if the student's complaint is not resolved satisfactorily, or if the complaint cannot be resolved by contacting the faculty or staff member(s), the student should proceed to STEP 2.

Within two years from the date of the incident about which the student is complaining:

STEP 2

The student should file a complaint through his/her institution of higher education's established complaint process. Information on the process can usually be found in the institution's academic catalog, student handbook or website. If the student is unable to resolve the complaint in this manner, or feels that not all issues were resolved with the final disposition of the institution, he/she should proceed to STEP 3 to utilize the Louisiana Board of Regents' SARA Student Complaint Process.

STEP 3

The student must file a formal complaint with the Louisiana Board of Regents' staff using the complaint form (see attached).

After receiving a complaint through the complaint form, Louisiana Board of Regents' staff will, within 30 days of receipt of the complaint:

- Review the submitted materials and contact the complainant for any required additional information or clarifications;
- Send a copy of the complaint to the Louisiana-approved SARA institution against which the complaint has been filed and request a response;
- Forward the institution's response to the complainant

STEP 4

Within 30 days of the conclusion of STEP 3, a committee consisting of three Louisiana Board of Regents' staff members will review all materials related to the complaint in order to:

- Determine whether the Louisiana-approved SARA institution's student complaint process has been followed by both the institution and the student, and exhausted;
- Make a final, binding decision on the matter; and
- Inform both parties involved in the complaint of the Louisiana Board of Regents' final disposition

In the event that the facts cannot be sufficiently determined based on documents submitted and by separately corresponding with the Louisiana-approved SARA institution and the complainant, the Louisiana Board of Regents' staff may request both parties to participate in a telephone conference or meeting so that the facts can be sufficiently ascertained and a final determination can be made.