

J-100 GENERAL STUDENT COMPLAINTS

POLICY

In order to provide students with the opportunity to have any complaint or concern they encounter at Gateway heard and addressed, the college maintains informal and formal channels for student complaints. The college requires that students first use informal channels to seek resolutions by working directly with the parties involved. If resolution cannot be reached, formal channels are provided to reach prompt and fair resolution of complaints.

The college will not tolerate retaliation against any individual for filing a complaint in good faith in order to seek a resolution to a problem with the college or its employees or students.

DEFINITIONS

1. For the purpose of this policy, a **student** is defined as an individual who is currently or has been enrolled in any Gateway course within a 12-month period prior to filing a complaint.
2. A **complaint** is a request for specific action to resolve a problem caused by the action or inaction of the college or its employees.
3. Expressions of dissatisfaction with the college's action or inaction, facilities, or services that do not include a request for action will be labeled as **concerns** and considered feedback. Concerns may or may not require follow-up by the college.
4. **Retaliation** is any adverse action or threat of adverse action against an individual because of the individual's good faith report of a complaint. **Good faith** means the individual has an honest and reasonable belief that college action is required to resolve a problem.

PROCESSES

Several categories of student complaint have separate processes outside this policy with their own timelines and requirements:

1. [Academic concerns](#) (grades, classroom policies, etc.)
2. [Discrimination, harassment, and Title IX complaints](#)
3. Student account appeals - contact a Student Services Student Finance Specialist
4. [Behaviors of Concern](#)

All other student complaints follow this policy.

PROCEDURE

1. **Informal complaint.** Students are required to make every effort to resolve their complaint informally by working directly with the employee or department involved. Students should communicate specifically what problem they are experiencing and what action they are requesting to resolve their issue. Students are encouraged to seek resolution as soon as possible after the unsatisfactory situation occurred. If the complaint is not resolved in a reasonable amount of time to the student's satisfaction, the student may move on to the formal complaint process. Students may not skip this step since most complaints can be resolved at this level.
2. **Formal complaint.** All formal student complaints are submitted electronically on the [Student Complaint form](#), which is located on the college website. Formal complaints must be filed within 12 months of the situation prompting the complaint. The following information is required:
 - a. **Identification of complaining party.** Students are asked to provide their name and Gateway ID number. Anonymous complaints will be considered; however, the college's

ability to investigate and resolve the complaint may be limited. For complaints on behalf of a group of students, all individuals seeking a specific action must be named.

- b. Category of complaint.** To assist in resolving complaints promptly, student should indicate the general nature of their issue: facilities/equipment, customer service, administration, employee conduct, student conduct, college services, or general/other.
- c. Description of problem.** Student should describe in detail the action or inaction of the college or its employees with which they are dissatisfied and the negative impact of the situation on the student. Names of parties involved, dates, and locations should be included whenever possible.
- d. Prior attempts to resolve.** Students must explain the prior attempts to resolve the problem at the informal level and why those attempts were unsuccessful.
- e. Outcome desired.** Students must state specifically the action they are requesting from the college that they consider an acceptable resolution of the problem.

Students will receive an acknowledgment of submission of the form and details of next steps. Students with disabilities may contact [Gateway's Disability Support Services](#) department for assistance with the complaint form.

- 3. Review and Resolution.** Formal complaints will be directed to the supervisor of the person or department involved unless the issue has already been addressed unsuccessfully at that level. In those cases, the complaint will be directed to the next higher supervisor. Supervisors will investigate complaint and respond promptly based on circumstances of the situation.
- 4. Appeal.** Students who are dissatisfied with the response to their formal complaint may appeal to the vice president of the division involved by submitting a student complaint appeal form within five working days of receiving the response. If the vice president was party to the unsatisfactory resolution of the formal complaint, the appeal may go to the president or his/her designee. The decision of the vice president or president/designee is final.
- 5. Complaint records.** Gateway has a federal obligation to maintain records of all student complaints including the name of the complaining party, the nature of the complaint, the resolution, any other related actions (appeals to outside agencies, etc.), and any institutional learning resulting from individual complaints or patterns of complaints. Records are retained for a minimum of ten years. Release of complaint records is subject to appropriate privacy laws. A summary of these records will be shared with the college's accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission, with names and personally identifiable information removed. Gateway requires only complaints that reach the formal written level to be included in these records. Supervisors may enter verbal complaints into the college's student complaint database at their discretion.