

## Bemidji State University Policies

<b>Policy Name:</b> Student Complaints and Grievances Policy	<b>Effective Date:</b> 4/1/2018
<b>Policy Owner:</b> Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs/Executive Director of Enrollment Management	Last Review: 4/1/2018
	Next Review: 9/1/2021

### Policy Statement

Bemidji State University policy states that students have the right to seek a remedy for issues of institutional or program quality such as Bemidji State University's compliance with the standards of our accrediting body, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), or a claim of consumer fraud or deceptive trade practices. No retaliation of any kind shall be taken against a student for participation in a complaint or grievance.

### Scope and Purpose of Policy

The scope of this policy applies to all university students, faculty and staff. Bemidji State University is committed to a respectful learning environment for all members of the campus community.

### Definitions

Grievance - A written claim raised by a student alleging improper, unfair, arbitrary, or discriminatory action by an employee involving the application of a specific provision of a university rule/regulation or a Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (Minnesota State) Board policy or procedure. A grievance may also be about issues of institutional or program quality such as Bemidji State University's compliance with HLC standards, or a claim of consumer fraud or deceptive trade practices.

Complaint – A claim by a student alleging improper, unfair or arbitrary treatment. A complaint may also be about issues of institutional or program quality such as Bemidji State University's compliance with HLC standards, or a claim of consumer fraud or deceptive trade practices.

Appeal – A request for reconsideration of a grievance application of a policy or procedure.

Retaliation – Retribution of any kind taken against a student for participating in a complaint or grievance.

Student – An individual student, a group of students, or the student government.

### Procedures

For certain types of policies such as discrimination/harassment, student conduct, grade challenges, and parking specific procedures are in place and must be followed. These procedures are found in the Bemidji State University Student Handbook.

The procedures for all other types of complaints or grievances follow.

1. When a student has a complaint or grievance, she or he shall first meet on an informal basis with the faculty member, staff member, or university administrator directly involved in the dispute in an attempt to resolve the complaint or grievance. For full consideration, the complaint or grievance should be filed in the semester in which the concern arises, or within the first two weeks of the subsequent term.
2. When a student has a complaint or grievance which remains unresolved after consultation with the faculty member, staff member, or university administrator directly involved in the dispute, she or he should contact the chair of the appropriate academic department in cases where the dispute involves teaching faculty, or the appropriate supervisor in cases where the dispute involves other university employees.
3. When a student has a complaint or grievance which remains unresolved after consultation with the appropriate department chair or supervisor the student should fill out a Student Complaint Form and include a statement of the complaint and the relief requested. It will be routed to the appropriate academic dean or area vice president. The dean or area vice president shall respond to the student(s) within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the complaint.
4. If the grievance is not satisfied with the response of an academic dean, the student(s) may appeal to the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. The Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs shall consider the appeal and make a decision. The Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs shall respond in writing to the student within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the written, signed notice of appeal. If the supervisor consulted in #2 above is also the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs, the student may appeal to the President as described below.
5. If the grievance is not resolved after consultation with the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs or the area vice president, the student(s) may appeal to the President, who will consider the appeal and make a decision. The President shall respond in writing to the student within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the written, signed notice of appeal. The decision of the President is final and binding.
6. If the grievance involves a Minnesota State Colleges and Universities Board Policy, the actions of the Bemidji State University President, an issue of institutional or program quality such as BSU's compliance with the standards of HLC or other licensing agency standards, or a claim of consumer fraud or deceptive trade practice, a student may further appeal the university decision to the Minnesota State Chancellor. The decision of the chancellor is final and binding.

### **Record Keeping**

The Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs will maintain a complaint file. On a yearly basis, a summary of the complaints will be reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team and cabinet for possible actions. Summary information regarding student complaints to these administrative offices is provided to the Higher Learning Commission, upon their request, and in compliance with data privacy policy, as a part of the university's periodic accreditation

review. Questions regarding student complaint/grievance procedures should be directed to the Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs.

### **Rationale**

Bemidji State University is committed to a respectful learning environment for all members of the campus community. Students have the right to seek a remedy for a dispute or disagreement when they believe they have been treated in an improper, unfair or arbitrary manner.

### **Supporting References**

Minnesota State Board Policy Procedure 3.8.1

<http://www.bemidjistate.edu/students/handbook/policies/campus/harassment.cfm>

Higher Learning Commission <http://policy.hlcommission.org/Federal-Regulation/institutional-records-of-student-complaints.html>

Bemidji State University Student Handbook

<http://www.bemidjistate.edu/students/handbook/policies/>