

- Are there any differences for students based on location or mode of delivery (e.g., dual-enrollment students)?
- How are alleged violations and grievances regarding student rights and responsibilities handled?
- Who is responsible for formulating these rights and responsibilities, approving them, and keeping them updated?

Sample Documentation

- Statement or statements of student rights and responsibilities.
- Details on publication, dissemination, and access for various levels and types of students, including off-campus and distance education students.
- Information regarding channels for approval and review.
- Examples of implementation/enforcement (can be redacted if appropriate).

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

SACSCOC policy: [Distance and Correspondence Education](#)

Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

Standard 10.1 (*Academic policies*)

Standard 12.4 (*Student complaints*)

12.4 The institution (a) publishes appropriate and clear procedures for addressing written student complaints, (b) demonstrates that it follows the procedures when resolving them, and (c) maintains a record of student complaints that can be accessed upon request by SACSCOC.
(*Student complaints*)

Rationale and Notes

Institutional policies and procedures governing written student complaints need to be well publicized and provide clear and consistent guidelines for their resolution. Furthermore, the institution must abide by its own policies, ensuring that student complaints are addressed in a prompt, fair, and consistent manner.

The SACSCOC policy on [Complaint Procedures Against SACSCOC or Its Accredited Institutions](#) states:

[E]ach institution is required to have in place student complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well publicized. SACSCOC also requires, in

accord with federal regulations, that each institution maintains a record of complaints received by the institution. This record is made available to SACSCOC upon request. This record will be reviewed and evaluated by SACSCOC as part of the institution's decennial evaluation.

When addressing this part of Standard 12.4, the institution should provide information in its Compliance Certification or Fifth-Year Interim Report describing how the institution maintains its record of written student complaints and also include the following:

- The individuals/offices responsible for maintenance of the record(s).
- Elements of a complaint review that are included in the record(s).
- Where the record(s) is located if centralized, or how records are maintained if decentralized.

One of the main purposes for requiring a record of written student complaints is so that the institution and SACSCOC can review the record to see if there are patterns. If a pattern of student complaints is found when reviewing the record, and if those complaints are related to SACSCOC accreditation standards, then SACSCOC will expand its review to include those issues if the complaints point to an unresolved problem. Thus the record of student complaints should be maintained in a manner consistent with this intended purpose of the standard.

It is expected that institutions will provide at least one redacted example of a written complaint and documentation of its resolution in its response.

Questions to Consider

- How does the institution define a “written student complaint”?
- What are the policies and procedures governing written student complaints, and are they adequate to meet the needs of the students?
- How are the policies and procedures governing student complaints disseminated?
- Are there any differences in policies based on location or on mode of delivery?
- How was the policy approved and how is it revised if necessary?
- Are the publicized policies and procedures consistently followed when resolving student complaints?
- Where and how does the institution retain a record of student complaints?
- Is this record kept in a way to be able to discern if there are patterns in the complaints received?

Sample Documentation

- Policies and procedures for addressing written student complaints.
- Details on where the policies and procedures are published and efforts taken to ensure students, faculty, and staff are aware of the policies.
- An example of a written student complaint resolution (with sensitive information redacted).

- A description of how the institution maintains a record or records of written student complaints that includes :
 - The individuals/offices responsible for maintenance of the record(s).
 - Elements of a complaint review that are included in the record(s).
 - Where the record(s) is located if centralized, or how records are maintained if decentralized.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

SACSCOC policies: [Complaint Procedures Against SACSCOC or Its Accredited Institutions](#)
[Distance and Correspondence Education](#)

This standard requires a policy or procedure; see Appendix A of this document for implications. See also:

SACSCOC Good Practices: [Developing Policy and Procedures Documents](#)

Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

Standard 14.5 (*Policy compliance*)

12.5 The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records and maintains security measures to protect and back up data. The institution also ensures that independent contractors or agents that have access to or maintain student records are governed by the same principles and policies as institutional employees. (*Student records*)

Rationale and Notes

The security and confidentiality of student records is critical to the integrity of the institution. This standard acknowledges the institution’s responsibility to oversee the release and use of all student records and institutional data with personally identified information and identifies four key aspects of that responsibility: security, confidentiality, integrity, and data protection and backup. As applied to this standard, integrity means to ensure that the records are not changed without appropriate oversight and sufficient security measures. Special security measures emphasize the imperative for the institution to protect confidentiality, preserve the integrity of its students’ academic records and data, and oversee the release of records in accord with state and federal mandates and commonly accepted standards and practices among institutions of higher learning. For institutions contracting with outside entities, it is important to have in place adequate mechanisms to protect student information. If the institution does not use independent contractors or agents, it should make that clear in the narrative. Additionally, the institution is responsible for identifying and making a case for how it defines student records.