

# Academic Conduct Complaints Policy

**Approved:** December 4, 2020 Senate Meeting

## 1. Introduction

Algoma University strives to provide students with a learning environment where criteria for academic success are transparent. Expectations and assessments should be clearly communicated, and interactions with Faculty Members should be reasonably fair and equitable. Algoma University believes that all students have the right to freely seek and receive clarification and timely feedback from Faculty Members in a respectful manner. This Procedure exists to support students in the high-quality learning environment that Algoma University works to maintain, as well as to assist students in finding timely resolutions to concerns.

## 2. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this procedure is to establish a process and an opportunity for students, without fear of reprisal, to raise concerns about a program, a Faculty Member, and/or their learning experience, where a university policy or procedure specific to their concern is not already in place. A list of policies and procedures that address specific academic or non-academic concerns or complaints is listed at the end of this procedure. Where no obvious policy or procedure exists, this policy should be followed. If students experience sexual violence, harassment, inequality, or any form of discrimination in their academic environment or elsewhere at Algoma University or an Academic University sanctioned event, by any member of the Algoma University community, they should follow the respective policy. Please see a list of linked policies below in section 5.

This procedure applies to students' complaints against Faculty Members (see definition in Section 3) of Algoma University. This procedure can be followed in response to incidents of concern that occur at all Algoma University locations, including but not limited to:

- All three campuses: Brampton, Sault Ste. Marie and Timmins (Northern College Site)
- Algoma University courses held Online through Distance Education (e.g. synchronous classes, communications posted on Learning Management System or elsewhere, etc.)
- Algoma U-related social functions (including virtual)
- All buildings under the jurisdiction of Algoma U
- Algoma Conservatory
- In the course of work-related assignments on and off Algoma University campuses
- At work-related conferences or training sessions
- During work-related travel (e.g. field trips)
- By video conference, telephone or other means of electronic (e.g. e-mail, voice mail, etc.) or written communication in the course of Algoma University related business

Students are permitted to bring one person who may act in a supportive or advisory capacity during the complaint process. Student union representatives would ideally act in this role. No Algoma University employees, except student employees, may act in this capacity.

## 3. Definitions

### 3.1 Complaint

Complaint refers to the expression, verbal or written, of a student's concern or dissatisfaction with a Faculty member in their learning experience.

### **3.2 Faculty Member**

Faculty Member refers to full- and part-time persons employed to teach academic credit courses, as well as those in supportive academic roles, including:

- Full-Time academic employees appointed through tenured, probationary or limited-term appointments
- Part-Time Contract Faculty
- Laboratory Instructors
- Writing Lab Instructors
- Math Lab Instructors

### **3.3 Student**

Student refers to full-time, part-time, and non-degree students who are currently registered at Algoma University; and former students registered at the time the incident, which is giving rise to the complaint.

### **3.4 Department Chair/Program Director**

Department Chairs/Program Directors are responsible for providing academic leadership in their Departments.

They serve as the official spokesperson for their department.

### **3.5 Faculty Chair**

Faculty Chairs are academic officers of the University, under the supervision of the Academic Dean. Their role is to ensure the smooth operation of the academic programs of their Faculty.

### **3.6 Academic Dean**

A senior member of the University's administration, who is selected by the Senate and provides oversight of the academic programming, promotes faculty, provides leadership in education, leadership to faculty and leadership in the University Community.

### **3.7 Office of the Academic Dean**

Refers to those administrative members who support the mandates of the Academic Dean.

## **4. Procedure**

### **4.1 Step One**

**4.1.1** The student will contact the relevant Algoma University Faculty Member to discuss the complaint or concern within fifteen (15) business days of the incident(s) giving rise to the complaint, except in extenuating circumstances, which, in the opinion of the University, would

justify an extension. In communicating their concern, the students will state their complaint clearly, preferably in writing to the faculty member via email. The student should retain a copy of their written complaint. Anonymous or unsigned complaints will not be accepted.

**4.1.2** The student and the Faculty Member will explore ways to resolve the concerns and record them for action/distribution as appropriate. If the student and the Faculty Member are unable to resolve the issue, the student may choose to proceed to Step Two.

## **4.2 Step Two**

**4.2.1** If concerns have not been resolved with the relevant Faculty Member as described in Step One, or proceeding through Step One is deemed inappropriate by the student because of the nature of the complaint, the student may choose to contact the Department Chair; this individual is the chair of the department through which the course is taught (e.g. if a student's concern is about a History course, the student would make arrangements to speak with the Department Chair for English and History even if the student is majoring in Biology, for example.) If students are unsure who the appropriate Department Chair is, or how to contact this person, they should seek assistance from an Academic Success Advisor or an AUSU representative such as the Ombudsperson. The student would initiate contact with the Department Chair within seven (7) days of expressing concern to the Faculty Member. If the student has an academic concern related to the Departmental Chair (i.e. in a course taught by the Departmental Chair) they may choose to contact at step two another Departmental Chair serving within the same Faculty (for a list of Departmental Chairs, please refer to this [link](#)).

The student will provide a signed written complaint to the Department Chair providing the following information:

- a) Description of the complaint, including time and date;
- b) Faculty Member involved;
- c) Action taken to date, including the details of Step One if applicable; and
- d) Resolution sought.

**4.2.2** The Department Chair will communicate the steps and scope of this procedure with the student and provide a copy of this policy to the student. Particular attention will be drawn to section 4.4.6 of this document. Once given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification, the procedure may end at this step with all matters resolved. If, however, the student's complaint is not resolved, the student may initiate Step Three. The Department Chair will provide the name and contact information for the appropriate Faculty Chair so that the student can proceed. The student would initiate contact with the Faculty Chair within seven (7) days of meeting with the Department Chair.

## **4.3 Step Three**

**4.3.1** The student will provide a signed written complaint to the Faculty Chair providing the following information:

- a) Description of the complaint, including time and date;

- b) Faculty Member involved;
- c) Action taken to date, including the details of Steps One and Two; and
- d) Resolution sought.

**4.3.2** The Faculty Chair will investigate the merits of the complaint, seeking clarification from the student, the Faculty Member, and Department Chair, as necessary.

**4.3.3** The Faculty Chair should try to resolve the dispute in any way that they feel is fair and appropriate to the satisfaction of both parties. This will normally involve a meeting with both the student and the Faculty Member, unless such a meeting is unacceptable to either of the parties. It is recommended that the student, the Faculty Member, and the Faculty Chair keep records of this meeting.

**4.3.4** If the Faculty Chair, the student and the Faculty Member are unable to resolve the issue, the student may choose to initiate Step Four, elevating the concern to the Office of the Academic Dean, within seven (7) days of meeting with the Faculty Chair.

#### **4.4 Step Four**

**4.4.1** The student should email [dean@algomau.ca](mailto:dean@algomau.ca) to initiate Step Four and include supporting documentation indicating that Steps One, Two, and Three were followed as required. The Office of the Academic Dean may also reach out to the student, the Faculty Chair, Department Chair, and/or the Faculty member for further documentation.

**4.4.2** As necessary and deemed appropriate, the Academic Dean will bring the Faculty Member and student together, or meet with each separately, to discuss the situation, clarify the complaint, and develop a strategy to resolve the complaint. If such a meeting is considered unacceptable or futile by either party, written reasons must be given to the Dean by the party in question.

**4.4.3** If the complaint is deemed to have merit, the Academic Dean will identify a resolution and advise the student(s) and other relevant individuals, in writing.

**4.4.4** If the complaint lacks merit, the Academic Dean will inform the student(s), and Faculty Member (as relevant) in writing and provide reasons no further action will be taken.

**4.4.6** If the complaint is deemed to be false, frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith, the Academic Dean will meet with the student (complainant) to discuss the motivation for the complaint and may refer the matter for review under the Student Code of Conduct (Non-Academic).

**4.4.7** Reprisals, retaliation or threats of reprisals against anyone pursuing their rights under this policy; those having participated, co-operated in or for having been associated with someone who has pursued rights or participated in the procedures; or

someone in any other role or capacity under this policy, are prohibited and may be subject to sanctions under the relevant Algoma University policies and procedures.

#### **5. Related Policies, Procedures, and Directives.**

Please note that, as stated in Section 2, where no obvious policy or procedure exists here below, the Student Academic Complaint Procedure should be followed.

[Algoma University Grade Appeals Policy](#)

[Disciplinary Regulations on Academic Dishonesty](#)

[Algoma University Multi-Year Accessibility Plan](#)

[Algoma University Accessibility Policy and Procedure](#)

[Algoma University Sexual Violence Policy](#)

[Algoma University Student Code of Conduct \(Non Academic\)](#)

[Algoma University Procedures for the Code of Student Conduct \(Non-Academic\) Policy](#)

[Algoma University Human Rights Policy and Procedure](#)

[Algoma University Conduct Complaint Form](#)

**Algoma University gives credit to the [Durham College Student Complaints Procedure](#) for many of the steps and structure of the above procedure.**