



## ACADEMIC COMPLAINTS POLICY

Category: Students

Number: ST-09-02

Responsible Officer: Academic Dean of the relevant Faculty

Responsible Office: Office of the Academic Dean of the relevant Faculty

Approval date: Algoma University Senate, December 2020

Last Updated: June 2023

Next Review Date: June 2025

Review Period: Every two years, or as determined by the Chair in consultation with the committee

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy 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.

### SCOPE

This procedure applies to Students' complaints against Faculty Members 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.

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asynchronous classes, communications posted on Learning Management System or elsewhere, etc.)

- Algoma University related social functions (including virtual)
- All buildings under the jurisdiction of Algoma University
- 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

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.

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

Please note that where no policy or procedure exists here below, the Student Academic Complaint Procedure should be followed.

[Algoma University Grade Appeals Policy](#)

[Procedure for Disciplinary Regulations on Academic Integrity](#)

[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](#)

Students are permitted to bring one person who may act in a supportive or advisory capacity during an appeal. Student union representatives or the AUSU Ombudsperson may act in this role. No Algoma University employees (including staff, faculty or administrators), except Student employees, may act in this capacity.

## DEFINITIONS

**Complaint**

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

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**Faculty Member**

Any and all instructors delivering instruction whether it be credit, non-credit, professional and personal interest courses, seminars, tutorials etc. to Algonquin University Students.

**Student**

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

**Faculty Deans**

Senior members of the University’s administration, who are selected by the Senate and provide oversight of the academic programming, promotes faculty, provides leadership in education, leadership to faculty within a given Faculty and leadership in the University Community.

**Office of the Faculty Dean**

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

**POLICY**

The University is a community that values and promotes respect, integrity, inclusion, diversity and accountability among all members of the university. These values can only be achieved in an environment that supports its members and matters of concern are dealt with in a manner that is fair, inclusive, open and effective.

Algonquin 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. Algonquin 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 policy and the associated complaint procedure exists to support students in the high-quality learning environment that Algonquin University works to maintain, as well as to assist students in finding timely resolutions to concerns. All steps of this process shall be kept confidential between the parties who participate in it. Any personal information disclosed by any of the parties, including the Student, shall be considered as private and confidential. Should any information be shared with an outside party, it would only be done so with the express written consent of the affected

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parties.

### **Grounds for an academic complaint**

Acceptable grounds for an academic complaint include, but are not limited to, lack of feedback on assignments, lack of clarity in terms of course or program requirements or expectations, lack of response to valid student course related questions and requests, noted/alleged violations of existing academic policies and practices (e.g. Early Feedback policy). Matters related to marking errors, grade appeals, academic integrity violations or appeals related to academic integrity violations are the subject of the grade appeals policy and the procedure on disciplinary regulations on academic integrity policy. Please see related examples and these policies on this [Algoma University webpage](#).

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.

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## PROCEDURES

Table 1. An overview of the steps for the Academic Conduct Complaints Policy. Please refer to corresponding steps for further instructions.

	Step One	Step Two
Is the complaint under consideration regarding an academic concern other than grade errors or academic integrity violations? If yes, move to Step One.	Please write a formal complaint about one or a few concerns and email it to the relevant faculty member, <b>within fifteen (15) days</b> of the incident(s) giving rise to the complaint. The student and the Faculty Member will explore ways to resolve the concerns and record them for action/distribution as appropriate.	If concerns have not been resolved in Step One, the student would contact the corresponding Faculty Dean <b>within ten (10) days</b> with a signed written complaint 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. As necessary and deemed appropriate, the Faculty 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.

### Step One

The student will contact the relevant Algoma University Faculty Member to discuss the complaint or concern within fifteen (15) 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.

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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 within 10 days after the meeting with the faculty member or when it is clear that the issue cannot be resolved by discussion with the Faculty member.

Either party has a right to choose not to participate in the initial meeting (Step One), or have a meeting set up so that they do not have to face the other party either virtually or in person (Step One).

Additionally, in the event that written reasons are required for a student’s decision to not attend the meeting, these reasons will be considered highly confidential.

**Step Two**

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 relevant Faculty Dean. The Student would initiate contact with the Faculty Dean within ten days of expressing concern to the Faculty Member, at one of the email aliases listed below:

- [Dean.hss-ccs@algonau.ca](mailto:Dean.hss-ccs@algonau.ca) (Humanities and Social Sciences and Cross Cultural Studies)
- [Dean.fbe@algonau.ca](mailto:Dean.fbe@algonau.ca) (Business and Economics)
- [Dean.science@algonau.ca](mailto:Dean.science@algonau.ca) (Sciences)

The student will provide a signed written complaint to the Faculty Dean providing the following information:

- 1) Description of the complaint, including time and date;
- 2) Faculty Member involved;
- 3) Action taken to date, including the details of Step One if applicable; and
- 4) Resolution sought.

The Office of the relevant Faculty Dean may also reach out to the student, the AUSU Ombudsperson, and/or the Faculty member for further documentation.

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As necessary and deemed appropriate, the Faculty Dean will bring the Faculty Member, the student and the AUSU Ombudsperson 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 Faculty Dean by the party in question.

Either party has a right to choose not to participate in the meeting (Step Two), or have a meeting set up so that they do not have to face the other party either virtually or in person (Step Two).

Additionally, in the event that written reasons are required for a student’s decision to not attend the meeting, these reasons will be considered highly confidential.

If the complaint is deemed to have merit, the Faculty Dean will follow the process as required by the Full Time or Part Time Collective Agreement and discuss the matter with the faculty member under article 24:02 of the FTCA or article 17:08 of the PTCA, identify a resolution and advise the student(s) and other relevant individuals, in writing.

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

If the complaint is deemed to be false, frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith, the Faculty 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).

***Algoma University Senate, Revised June 2, 2023***

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