

## STUDENT COMPLAINT PROCESS

Messiah University participates in federal student aid programs that are authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. A participating institution must be legally authorized to operate with the State in which it is located. Title 34 CFR §600.9 requires States to have a “process to review and appropriately act on complaints concerning the institution including enforcing applicable State laws.” Title 34 CFR §668.43(b) requires that institutions: “make available for review to any enrolled or prospective student upon request, a copy of the documents describing the institution’s accreditation and its State, Federal, or tribal approval or licensing. The institution must also provide its students or prospective students with contact information for filing complaints with its accreditor and with its State approval or licensing entity and any other relevant State official or agency that would appropriately handle a student’s complaint.”

To comply with this regulation, Messiah University provides the following information to our prospective and current students.

Messiah University makes every effort to resolve student complaints internally, using policies and procedures outlined in the current Undergraduate Student Handbook or School of Graduate and Professional Studies Catalog. The institutional complaint process for distance learning students is the same for all students regardless of physical location. It is expected that students will fully utilize any and all such administrative procedures to address concerns and/or complaints in as timely a manner as possible.

### Procedures for Undergraduate Students:

**Academic Grade Appeal:** see the [Student Handbook, p 187](#), or consult with a school dean or department chair.

**Academic Integrity Policy:** see the [Student Handbook, p. 177](#), or consult with a school dean or department chair.

**Non-Academic Complaints:** for incidents of unprofessional behavior by employees and other complaints that are not of an academic grade concern, students should contact the department chair or school dean for assistance.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** see the [Student Handbook, p. 202](#) or [https://www.messiah.edu/info/20112/disability\\_services](https://www.messiah.edu/info/20112/disability_services)

**Harassment or Discrimination:** see the [Student Handbook, p. 40](#) or [https://www.messiah.edu/info/20847/student\\_affairs/1282/sexual\\_assault\\_and\\_misconduct](https://www.messiah.edu/info/20847/student_affairs/1282/sexual_assault_and_misconduct)

## **Procedures for Graduate Students:**

[Grade Dispute Procedures](#)

[Academic Integrity Policy](#)

[Americans with Disabilities Act](#)

[Harassment or Discrimination](#)

### **School of Graduate and Professional Studies: General Complaint Outside Due Process**

Messiah University has established processes for graduate student complaints that fall under specific categories including, but not limited to concerns founded upon: Academic-related issues, Americans with Disabilities Act, Harassment or Discrimination, Title IX, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); which may be reviewed via the links above. These policies and procedures are also published in the School of Graduate and Professional Studies Graduate Catalog, as well as program-specific student handbooks and supplemental materials.

For complaints that fall outside of due process, such as those that may be submitted by personnel, patients, students, or other stakeholders affiliated with a clinical, fieldwork, practicum, or other setting, individuals may submit a written statement or complete a [University General Complaint Outside Due Process form](#) within 30 days of the offending incident to the respective program director. If the complaint is related to the program director or is associated with the graduate school or a specific graduate program, then it should be submitted to the Dean of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies. Likewise, if the complaint is related to the Dean, it should be submitted to the Provost. When appropriate, other University offices or personnel may be consulted when addressing the complaint.

All grievances filed in good faith will be taken seriously and reviewed with university personnel as is appropriate for addressing the matter. The University will provide an initial response to the complainant within 5 business days and consult with the proper personnel thereafter. Retaliation for filing a complaint or participating in the review of a complaint is strictly prohibited.

Documentation regarding the complaint will be maintained in the appropriate University records as designated by the University's record retention policy.

## Procedures for All Students, Undergraduate & Graduate:

Here is the link to Messiah University's [Student Consumer Information](#)

**Affirmative Action:** see the University's [Notice of Nondiscrimination Policy](#)

**Title IX:**

see [https://www.messiah.edu/info/20592/compliance/1023/title\\_ix](https://www.messiah.edu/info/20592/compliance/1023/title_ix) or [https://www.messiah.edu/download/downloads/id/1247/Title\\_IX\\_Card.pdf](https://www.messiah.edu/download/downloads/id/1247/Title_IX_Card.pdf)

**FERPA:** [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#)

**Criminal Activity:** Complaints involving matters of a criminal nature, such as assault, battery, and theft should be directed to the Department of Safety at 717-691-6005 (off campus) or ext. 6005 (on-campus). [I NEED TO REPORT](#)

### **If a resolution cannot be reached following the University's Student Complaint Resolution processes as described previous:**

Students residing in Pennsylvania: In the unlikely event that an issue cannot be resolved through the institutional complaint process, students residing in Pennsylvania should contact the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the applicable agency for oversight in resolving complaints.

Students residing outside of Pennsylvania: Messiah University is approved to participate in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) which regulates the manner in which participating institutions may offer distance learning education to students who reside in other States. If a student has a complaint that involves distance learning education offered under the terms and conditions of SARA, the student must file a complaint with the institution first to seek resolution. Complaints regarding student grades or student conduct violations are governed entirely by institutional policy and the laws of the SARA institution's home State. If a person bringing a complaint is not satisfied with the outcome of the University's internal process for resolving complaints, the complaint (except for complaints about grades or student conduct violations) may be appealed, within two years of the incident about which the complaint is made, to the home state's [SARA portal entity](#). For purposes of this process, a complaint shall be defined as a formal assertion in writing that the terms of this agreement, or of laws, standards or regulations incorporated by the SARA Policies and Standards have been violated by the institution operating under the terms of SARA.

For a list of SARA member States, please visit the NC-SARA website. Students residing in non-SARA States should consult the list of non-SARA State agencies for further instruction for filing a complaint in their respective State of residence.

Further information on SARA and the SARA complaint process:

- <http://nc-sara.org/content/sara-and-students>
- <http://nc-sara.org/content/sara-complaint-process>

Unresolved complaints may be filed with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the University's regional accrediting agency, once all other avenues provided by the University and the State agency or SARA have been exhausted. The link below provides information on the Commission's complaint policies and procedures.

Complaints: <https://www.msche.org/complaints/>

Middle States Commission on Higher Education  
1007 North Orange Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, MB #166, Wilmington, DE 19801  
Telephone: (267) 284-5000  
General Link: [www.msche.org](http://www.msche.org)