NC-SARA Student Grievance Procedure

Arkansas State University (A-State) is committed to resolving student concerns in a timely, fair, and consistent manner. Online students are encouraged to use the process below to seek resolution of a complaint.

NC-SARA and consumer protection complaints

Arkansas State University participates in the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA), which helps establish a consistent pathway for distance education students to raise consumer protection complaints. In most cases, the first responsibility for reviewing and resolving a complaint rests with the institution (A-State). If the issue cannot be resolved through the University's internal process, additional review may be available through Arkansas's SARA Portal Entity and other appropriate state agencies, as applicable.

Examples of consumer protection complaints may include (but are not limited to):

- Veracity of recruitment and marketing materials
- Accuracy of job placement data
- Accuracy of information about tuition, fees, and financial aid
- Complete and accurate admission requirements for courses and programs
- Accuracy of information about institutional accreditation and/or programmatic/specialized accreditation
- Accuracy of information about professional licensure requirements (where applicable)
- Accuracy of information about transferability of coursework
- Operation of distance education programs consistent with expectations of institutional and specialized accreditors

Student complaints, including claims that rights under law or University policy may have been violated, are typically addressed through the steps below.

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1. Informal resolution

Students should first attempt to resolve concerns informally by contacting the appropriate individual (e.g., instructor, advisor, program director, or relevant office). Many issues can be resolved quickly at this level.

If assistance is needed in identifying the appropriate contact, students may email:

astateonline@astate.edu

2. Formal institutional complaint

If the matter is not resolved informally, the student may submit a written complaint to A-State Online by emailing: astateonline@astate.edu

The written complaint should include:

- Student's full name and A-State ID number
- Program of study
- A clear description of the issue
- Relevant dates and supporting documentation
- A description of steps already taken to resolve the matter

The University will acknowledge receipt of the complaint and provide information regarding the review process and expected timeline. Complaints will be reviewed and routed to the appropriate department for resolution. Timelines may vary depending on the nature and complexity of the issue.

Note: Academic matters (e.g., grade appeals) must follow the University's established academic appeal procedures as outlined in the Student Handbook and Academic Bulletin.

3. State authorization / NC-SARA consumer protection complaint process

If a distance education consumer protection complaint cannot be resolved through the University's institutional process, and the student resides in a SARA member state, the student may file a complaint with the State of Arkansas SARA portal agency:

Arkansas Division of Higher Education

https://adhe.edu

Students must first exhaust the University's internal grievance procedures before submitting a complaint to the state portal agency. The SARA complaint process does not apply to grade appeals, student conduct matters, or complaints that fall under separate institutional policies.

Students residing in North Carolina may also review the North Carolina Postsecondary Education Complaints process for additional information regarding consumer protection complaints involving out-of-state institutions operating under SARA.

4. Accreditation complaints

Students may contact the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), A-State's institutional accreditor, regarding concerns related to institutional compliance:

Higher Learning Commission

https://www.hlcommission.org

Accrediting agencies do not review individual grade appeals or academic decisions.

5. Exclusions

This grievance procedure does not replace:

- Academic grade appeal procedures
- ADA/Section 504 accommodation procedures
- Title IX procedures
- Financial aid appeals

Students should follow the specific policies governing those matters as outlined in the Student Handbook.

Revision #2
Created 2026-03-03 17:28:52 UTC by Christopher Boothman
Updated 2026-03-03 17:50:52 UTC by Christopher Boothman