

**Federal Requirement: 4.5**

The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints.

Compliance       Non-Compliance

**Proof/Explanation:**

Tennessee Technological University maintains clear procedures for receiving and addressing written student complaints. There are various resolution options for student complaints, which often begin informally and are later submitted in writing. The range of options for resolution thus moves from informal to formal.

Informal resolution options include:

- Informal discussion and problem solving
- Conflict coaching
- Mediation
- Appeal to a higher authority (administrative decision)

More formal resolution options include:

- Shuttle Diplomacy
- Disciplinary conference
- Adjudication – informal resolution
- Adjudication – formal resolution

Records of written complaints submitted by students are kept in the Office of the Dean of Students and by administrators responsible for resolving complaints in specific areas such as academic grade appeals (departmental and dean's offices), Financial Aid, Residential Life, Disability Services, etc., as described below.

**Student Complaints, with Examples**

Records of student written complaints and appeals presented in this report are available for review. Links to specific TTU student complaint and appeal policies, along with examples, are included below.

**1. Complaints Regarding Violation of the Student Code of Conduct**

A student who files a written complaint regarding another student's conduct initiates the events outlined in the TTU Disciplinary System Manual, as well as in the TTU Student Handbook (1). A summary of the procedures is as follows:

The Disciplinary System is a policy means of implementing adjudication procedures for any student accused of violating the policies which govern the behavior of all members of the University community. The Disciplinary System permits cases of alleged student misconduct, except cases relating to academic and classroom misconduct, to be considered by the Dean of Students, the University Student Judicial Council, the University Judicial Council, or the Tennessee Uniform Administrative Procedures Act (TUAPA). Choice of hearing councils, other than the TUAPA, shall be assigned at the option of the student(s) except during periods when one council is not available, at which time the case(s) shall be

referred to the available council by the Dean of Students. During the periods when the councils are not available (usually during the Summer Academic time periods), the Dean of Students shall appoint and train a student hearing Council and a faculty/administrative staff hearing body to offer options to students.

When a student is charged with a violation of University policies, the Dean of Students or his designee conducts a pre-hearing interview called a preliminary hearing. The pre-hearing interview is a face-to-face interview with the student and shall be conducted unless the student is absent from campus. In the latter situation, the elements of the pre-hearing shall be presented both by correspondence and the telephone.

During the pre-hearing interview, the student

1. Shall receive the charges against him providing the charges were not sent by mail;
2. Shall have the charges explained, in terms of date, times, incidents, and evidence;
3. Shall have the disciplinary system of the University explained, including a complete explanation of the sanctions and the procedures for disciplinary hearings, his/her rights and privileges during hearings and the procedures for appeal or review;
4. Shall receive a copy and explanation of the University Disciplinary Policies;
5. Shall be asked to sign a statement indicating receipt of the above document ( or the receipt shall be witnessed);
6. Shall be informed in writing of his rights to have his/her case heard by a hearing body and given the opportunity to request a council hearing in writing;
7. May request, in writing, a hearing before the Dean of Students if he/she does not contest the validity of the charges made against him/her, and if he/she waives, in writing, a council or TUAPA hearing, if applicable.
8. Shall be informed of the approximate hearing date and of the method by which he or she will be contacted by the Office of the Dean of Students. (The student shall be informed that the Dean of Students shall be his/her contact for information on the status of his/her case.)
9. After the first hearing, an appellate procedure is open to the student. A student will request an appeal to the Vice President for Student Affairs from the finding and/or recommendations. Disposition of an appeal by the Vice President for Student Affairs may be further appealed to the President of the University. The President of the University will consider the first appeal from the findings and/or recommendations of a hearing as provided under the Tennessee Uniform Administrative Procedures Act (TUAPA).

## **2. Student Appeal of a TTU Traffic Ticket**

A citation received by a student may be appealed to the Student Traffic Appeals committee within fifteen (15) business days. Appeals are made if the student feels the citation was issued unfairly or without justification. Appeal forms are provided by the University Police Office. Appeals made later than fifteen (15) days following issuance will not be considered (2).

## **3. Student-Athlete Grievances**

A student athlete who wishes to appeal a decision related to his or her involvement in the TTU athletic programs, as provided for in the NCAA Bylaws and the TTU Student Athlete handbook, shall first appeal to the coach, and then proceed up the chain of command (3). If appeals through these avenues are denied or deemed unsatisfactory to the student athlete, a subsequent written appeal may be made to the

chair of the Student Athlete Appeals Committee. This is not a disciplinary hearing body, and such cases should be appealed through the established University disciplinary protocol. The student athlete should submit the request as soon as possible after receiving notification of a decision from the Office of the Director of Athletics, but no later than 15 days from the date of receipt.

#### **4. Student Request to be Released from Residence Hall Agreement**

All students living in University Housing sign a Housing Agreement that they will live on campus and pay the assigned rent for the time period on the agreement (4). Students may petition to be released from this agreement under certain circumstances.

#### **5. Student Request to Appeal Waiting Period for Readmission after Academic Suspension**

Students who have been suspended from the University for academic reasons, for example, grades below the standard semester GPA and/or below the standard cumulative GPA, and wish to be readmitted, can appeal the waiting period for the suspension (5).

#### **6. Student Written Complaint to Disability Services**

The Office of Disabilities Services has a written grievance procedure titled "Americans With Disabilities Act Student Grievance Procedures" (6). This allows clients of that office to file bona fide complaints to the Office. Frequently the complaints revolve around academic adjustments that the Office has recommended but are not being implemented in the classroom, etc.

#### **7. Student Appeal to Financial Aid**

Some students have not been able to maintain all the requirements to continue their eligibility for the Tennessee Lottery Scholarship. A procedure exists in the Office of Financial Aid to appeal decisions relative to the Tennessee Lottery Scholarship (7).

#### **8. Student Grade Appeal**

Situations occur where a student receives a grade for a class and believes he/she should have received a different (better) grade. The University has written Grade Appeals Procedures (8) that allow a student to appeal the grade that he/she received in that class. The grade appeal procedures represent the official policy for each faculty member. These procedures

- Recognize the right of each student to receive a grade assigned upon a fair and unprejudiced evaluation based on a method that is not arbitrary or capricious.
- Recognize the right of each student to review with the instructor all work used in the evaluation.
- Provide any student who has evidence that a mistake has been made in calculating or recording his or her grade or that his or her grade has been assigned based on arbitrary or

capricious deviation from the instructor's stated grading policy the opportunity to seek redress.

- Recognize the instructor's right to assign a grade based on any method that is professionally acceptable, submitted in writing to everyone in the class, and applied equally to all members of the class.

The appeal process then follows a five-step process that begins with an informal consultation between the student and the faculty member. If this step does not resolve the dispute, the student may initiate a formal written appeal as described in the policy.

## **9. Student Complaints to the Tennessee Board of Regents**

The University publishes instructions directing students to certain state-level procedures for complaints regarding accreditation; violations of state law; and fraud, waste, or abuse (9). Records of such complaints are managed at the state level.

### **Supporting Documentation:**

1. [Student Disciplinary Process](#)
2. [Student Appeal of a TTU Traffic Ticket](#)
3. [Grievance/Appeals Policy of Student-Athlete Handbook](#)
4. [Residential Hall Agreement and Policy](#)
5. [Readmission After Suspension Policy](#)
6. [Disability Services Student Grievance Policy](#)
7. [Financial Aid -- Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy](#)
8. [Student Grade Appeal Procedure](#)
9. [Student Complaint \(Accreditation, Fraud, etc.\)](#)

### **Examples:**

1. [Complaints Regarding Violation of the Student Code of Conduct](#)
2. [Student Appeal of a TTU Traffic Ticket](#)
3. [Student-Athlete Grievance](#)
4. [Student Request to Appeal Waiting Period for Readmission after Academic Suspension](#)
5. [Student Written Complaint to Disability Services](#)
6. [Student Appeal about Financial Aid](#)
7. [Student Grade Appeal – On Campus](#)
8. [Student Grade Appeal – Off Campus](#)