

Policy 272 - General Complaint and Grievance Policy

Suggestions concerning Lower Columbia College, constructive criticism of the College's policies, or reporting alleged violations of college policies is encouraged. However, individuals wishing to express formal concerns or criticisms shall be required to follow this policy to ensure their concern is heard by the appropriate party. This policy does not affect any rights an employee has under their Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA) if applicable. Concerns shall be initially communicated to persons at the lowest level of authority at which effective action can take place. If there is dissatisfaction on action taken at any level, the concern may automatically be communicated to the next higher level of authority until the grievance is resolved or final disposition has been reached.

Members of the college community, students, visitors, applicants, and employees are encouraged to report discrimination, harassment, or complaints associated with violations of college policy. Employees and students are encouraged to resolve complaints informally using current procedures for students and supervisory channels for employees (see below for further guidance). Formal complaints may be submitted through the "[Make a Report](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/students/make-a-report)" ([lowercolumbia.edu/students/make-a-report](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/students/make-a-report)) page or by contacting the Vice President of Foundation, HR, & Legal Affairs/Title IX Coordinator (title9@lowercolumbia.edu). Complaints falling under the jurisdiction of Title IX are referred to the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator will initiate the [Title IX Grievance Procedure](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/_assets/documents/235.2A_Procedure.pdf) ([lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/_assets/documents/235.2A_Procedure.pdf](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/_assets/documents/235.2A_Procedure.pdf)).

Formal complaints not falling under the jurisdiction of Title IX will be referred as follows:

- Regardless of the complainant, where a student is accused of a policy or code of conduct violation, the complaint will be referred to the Vice President of Student Services. Submitting a student concern through the [Make a Report](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/students/make-a-report) ([lowercolumbia.edu/students/make-a-report](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/students/make-a-report)) form will route the specific concern to the appropriate personnel, including the Vice President of Student Services.
- Regardless of the complainant, where an employee of the college is accused of a policy violation and the complaint is discrimination or harassment, the complaint will be referred to the [Vice President of Foundation, HR, & Legal Affairs](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/scripts/staffinfo.exe?specificid=2959) ([services4.lowercolumbia.edu/scripts/staffinfo.exe?specificid=2959](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/scripts/staffinfo.exe?specificid=2959)).
- When the complaint is from a student and the grievance is academic in nature the complaint will follow the established Academic Grievance Resolution Procedures outlined in the [Student Handbook](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/publications/student-handbook/student-academic-grievance-procedure) ([lowercolumbia.edu/publications/student-handbook/student-academic-grievance-procedure](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/publications/student-handbook/student-academic-grievance-procedure)).
- When the complaint is from a student and the complaint is associated with college policies or procedure and no one is accused of a policy violation, the complaint will be referred to the [Vice President of Student Services](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/scripts/staffinfo.exe?specificid=4037) ([services4.lowercolumbia.edu/scripts/staffinfo.exe?specificid=4037](https://www.lowercolumbia.edu/scripts/staffinfo.exe?specificid=4037)).

- When the complainant is an employee and the complaint is associated with a college policy, procedure, dispute, or other circumstance not already covered, the complaint will be referred to the Vice President of Foundation, HR, & Legal Affairs.

The college reserves the right to adjust referrals of complaints in circumstances where normal referrals would result in a conflict of interest for the parties involved. Formal complaints referred are processed under the following guidelines:

When a student is accused of a policy violation. In cases where a student is accused of a violation that includes discrimination or harassment the procedures associated with [Policy 235 Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment \(lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/200/235\)](http://lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/200/235) will be used to investigate the complaint and may be referred to the [Code of Student Conduct \(lowercolumbia.edu/publications/student-handbook/code-of-student-conduct\)](http://lowercolumbia.edu/publications/student-handbook/code-of-student-conduct) if a violation is found; in cases where a student is accused of another policy violation the Code of Student Conduct will be used to process the complaint.

When an employee is accused of a policy violation. In cases where an employee is accused of a policy violation that includes discrimination or harassment, the procedures associated with [Policy 235 Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment \(lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/200/235\)](http://lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/200/235) will be used.

When an employee is accused of a violation of a collective bargaining agreement. In cases where an employee is accused of violating a collective bargaining agreement (CBA), the process outlined in that CBA will be followed to resolve the grievance.

When a student has an academic grievance. In cases when a student believes their instructor provided an improper, arbitrary, or capricious academic evaluation as evidenced by the student's final course grade, the complainant shall follow the [Student Academic Grievance Procedures \(lowercolumbia.edu/publications/student-handbook/student-academic-grievance-procedure\)](http://lowercolumbia.edu/publications/student-handbook/student-academic-grievance-procedure).

When a student has a policy grievance. In cases when a student is the complainant and the complaint is associated with a college policy other than Title IX, discrimination, or harassment, the complaint will be processed at the discretion of the Vice President of Student Services.

When an employee has a policy or other grievance. In cases when an employee is the complainant and the complaint is associated with a college policy other than Title IX, discrimination, or harassment, the case will be processed at the discretion of the Vice President of Foundation, HR, & Legal Affairs. In no way does this process impact the rights or timelines an employee has under their applicable Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA). As a general rule, complaints should follow the process below, before escalating to the Vice President of Foundation, HR, & Legal Affairs:

1. Employee complaints are first addressed through supervisor channels beginning at the lowest level of supervision. Complaints should be addressed in a timely manner. Generally, for a complaint to be addressed and resolved in a timely

manner, the complaint should be expressed within 10 working days of the event or circumstance.

- a. Faculty employees should consult first with the Department Chair of the program followed by the program Dean and the Vice President of Instruction.
- b. Staff should address their concerns with their immediate supervisor, followed by the second level supervisor and Vice President level of the department.

OTHER DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT OPTIONS Discrimination complaints may also be filed with the following federal and state agencies:

- Washington State Human Rights Commission, <http://www.hum.wa.gov/index.html>
- US Dept of Education Office for Civil Rights, <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, <http://www.eeoc.gov/>

Historic Information

- Approved: June 26, 2024
- Reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team: June 26, 2024
- Campus Review: June 4-18, 2024
- Reviewed by the Governance Council: May 20, 2024
- Reviewed by UMCC: April 16, 2024
- Reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team: April 10, 2024

| Resource/Reference/ Procedure | Title | Unit Responsibility |
|--|---|---------------------|
| Faculty Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) | Collective Bargaining Agreement – Lower Columbia College Faculty Association of Higher Education (internal.lowercolumbia.edu/departments/human-resources/_assets/documents/2023-2026-Faculty-Contract-Official-Document-revised_05-21-2024.pdf) | Human Resources |
| Classified Staff Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) | Collective Bargaining Agreement, Washington Federation of State Employees of High Education Community | Human Resources |

| Resource/Reference/ Procedure | Title | Unit Responsibility |
|----------------------------------|--|------------------------|
| | College Coalition (ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/labor/agreements/23-25/wfs_e_he.pdf) | |
| Student Handbook | Student Academic Grievance Procedures (lowercolumbia.edu/publications/student-handbook/student-academic-grievance-procedure) | VP of Student Services |
| LCC Administrative Policies | Policy 235 Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment (lowercolumbia.edu/publications/administrative-policies/200/235) | Human Resources |
| Student Handbook | Code of Student Conduct (lowercolumbia.edu/publications/student-handbook/code-of-student-conduct) | VP of Student Services |