

ACCREDITATION STANDARD COMPLAINT POLICY

Date of Initial Approval: 5/9/2018
Category: 1.0 Academic Programs

Date Revised: 6/26/2023
Responsible Department: Institutional Effectiveness

PURPOSE & SCOPE

RVU strives to meet all institutional and specialized programmatic accreditation standards. If a student or employee finds that any accreditation standard is in non-compliance, they have the right to file a confidential complaint regarding the specific accreditation standard that is out of compliance.

POLICY STATEMENT & POLICY

RVU complies with all institutional and specialized programmatic accreditation standards. If an RVU student or employee believes the institution or an academic program to be in non-compliance with an accreditation standard, that individual may opt to file a complaint (see Appendix 1). Complaints may be submitted to RVU or directly to the accrediting agency. Complaints submitted to RVU will be resolved through a fair adjudication process (see Appendix 2) and will be treated confidentially and without retaliation.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

VP of Institutional Effectiveness	Will handle complaints filed under HLC standards
Program Director or Dean	Will handle complaints regarding academic program accreditation standards
Provost	Will handle complaints involving Program Directors, Deans, or VP of Institutional Effectiveness and accreditation standards
Compliance Manager	A record of each complaint and its resolution, including any decision on appeal, shall be retained by the Office of Compliance

RELATED PROCESSES, PROCEDURES, AND/OR DEFINITIONS

- Appendix 1: **Process for Filing an Accreditation Standard Complaint**
- Appendix 2: **Adjudication and Resolution of Complaint Procedures**
- Appendix 3: **Appeals Procedure**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Records Retention: A record of each complaint and its resolution, including any decision on appeal, shall be retained by the Office of Compliance for a period of seven years.

Non-retaliation: RVU maintains a non-retaliation policy that protects any individual making a complaint. RVU will not permit any employee or student to retaliate in any manner.

Confidentiality: *Anonymous* complaints will be reviewed; however, such complaints may prohibit the institution from gathering additional information, unless filed through Ethics Point. Complainants who submit complaints to RVU may be assured that their identity will be held *confidential* unless a potential threat of harm exists to the complainant and/or others.

Filing a Complaint with an Accrediting Agency: If the RVU complaint resolution process is not handled appropriately or if the outcome of the complaint(s) was not satisfactory, a complainant has the option to file a confidential complaint directly to the accrediting or state authorization agency. Complaints should: (1) be against an accredited educational program, a

program in candidacy status, or the institution, (2) relate to a specific accreditation standard(s), (3) include documentation that demonstrates that the institutional complaint process was completed, and (4) provide explicit reasons why the complainant found the institutional complaint process unsatisfactory.

All complaints must be submitted in writing and sent to the appropriate accrediting or state authorization agency. Names, addresses, and phone contact information for all current program and institutional accreditors are disclosed on RVU's website under "Accreditations."

Nothing in this policy precludes a complainant from filing a complaint directly to the appropriate institutional or programmatic accreditor without first filing a complaint within Rocky Vista University.

POLICY REVISION HISTORY

06/13/23	Policy revised to include processes, procedures and additional information.
05/09/18	Original policy approved.

Appendix 1: Filing an Accreditation Standard Complaint

The procedures set forth below apply only to complaints that directly implicate Rocky Vista University's educational program(s) and alleged non-compliance with relevant programmatic or institutional accreditation standards; this process does not address or preclude complaints under other Rocky Vista University policies and procedures, such as the Code of Conduct, the Policy Against Sexual Harassment and Discrimination, etc.

1. The written complaint may be submitted in person to the appropriate office, sent by U.S. Postal Service, submitted via RVU's EthicsPoint complaint system, or e-mailed from the complainant's rvu.edu e-mail account.
 - A. Formal complaints filed with the university regarding non-compliance with accreditation standards in an RVU academic program as articulated by the program accrediting agency should be submitted in writing and addressed to the Director or Dean of the program. If the complaint directly involves the Director or Dean, then the complaint may be submitted to the Provost.
 - B. Formal complaints filed with the university regarding non-compliance with institutional accreditation standards as articulated by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), should be submitted in writing and addressed to the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness. If the complaint directly involves the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness, then the complaint should be submitted to the Provost.
2. The written complaint should indicate the specific accrediting agency and the specific accreditation standard(s) with which the program or institution is alleged to be in non-compliance. It should describe in detail the circumstances of the matter and explain how the matter is relevant to specific accreditation standard(s).
3. The complainant must provide his/her name and official email address to allow further communication about the complaint. If the complaint is submitted by U.S. mail, it must also provide the complainant mailing address. If the complainant wishes for their identity to remain confidential, complaints can be filed through the EthicsPoint system, which allows two-way communication, while protecting confidentiality or anonymity.
4. A written complaint must be dated. A complaint submitted by e-mail is deemed to be signed by the complainant from whose e-mail account the complaint is submitted.

NOTE: Complaints *unrelated* to compliance with programmatic or institutional accreditation standard(s) or that are not governed by other policies as indicated above, may be filed using RVU's EthicsPoint complaint system or may be submitted in writing to:

- a) the Associate/Assistant Dean of Student Affairs if the complaint pertains to student conduct or is a matter of student support quality;
- b) the Department Chair or Vice-Chair, Program Director, or Dean if the complaint pertains to the behavior of a faculty member or is a matter of academic quality; or
- c) the appropriate supervisor if the complaint pertains to the behavior of a staff member.

For students wishing to file a complaint, the Assistant/Associate Dean of Student Affairs is available to provide counsel and direction.

For employees wishing to file a complaint, the HR department is available to provide counsel and direction.

Appendix 2: Adjudication and Resolution of Complaint Procedure

1. The RVU official to whom the complaint is submitted will acknowledge receipt via email, or the EthicsPoint system, within five (5) business days of receipt of the written complaint.
2. The RVU official to whom the complaint is submitted may delegate responsibility for investigating the complaint, responding to the complaint, or resolving the matter to another administrator, faculty member, or staff member.
3. Once the complaint has been acknowledged, the RVU official or designee will respond to the complainant no later than ten (10) business days after acknowledged receipt of the complaint. The written response will either be a substantive response to the complaint or information about what steps are being taken to address the complaint or to further investigate the complaint.
4. If further investigation is needed, the complainant will be informed of the steps being taken. Upon completion of the investigation, a response will be provided to the complainant within ten (10) business days.

Appendix 3: Appeals Procedure

1. The individual filing the complaint may appeal the decision of the RVU official or designee within ten (10) business days of issuance of the response. The appeal shall be to the President of RVU. The appeal must be in writing, addressed to the President, signed by the individual, and must thoroughly explain the basis for the appeal. Complaints filed through the EthicsPoint system may be anonymous, confidential, or not, based on the preference of the appellant. All evidentiary documents should be provided.
2. The President or designee will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within five (5) business days via email.
3. The President will adjudicate the appeal and send a response within fifteen (15) business days after acknowledged receipt of the appeal. The President may request additional information and/or interview which must be provided within (5) business days.
4. The decision of the President is final.