

Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) Complaint Processes for Colleges, Universities, and Private Career Schools

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) deals with matters that are addressed in Title II of the [Education Article](#) of the Annotated Code of Maryland or Code of Maryland Regulations ([COMAR](#)) [Title 13B](#). MHEC also handles complaints relating to a higher education institution's published policies. Complaints relating to matters outside of these areas will not be addressed and will not be referred to another agency or organization.

A. College or University Complaints

Students and faculty personnel may submit a complaint to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) when it involves an alleged violation of the Education Article, COMAR, or the college's or university's published policies. Complaints must be submitted in writing and the student or faculty member must ***first have exhausted the complaint or grievance procedures established by the institution.***

Complaint process:

1. Submit your complaint through the institution's complaint or grievance process. These processes can usually be found on the institution's website
2. If you feel that your complaint has not been appropriately resolved by the institution, you may submit an official complaint to the Maryland Higher Education Commission. All complaints must be in writing.
 - a. Student complaints must be submitted through the [MHEC Student Complaint Portal](#) and should include:
 - i. Evidence that you have exhausted the grievance process at the institution. This may include correspondence from the institution, a report, or a resolution letter.
 - ii. **[A signed FERPA and third party release of information form](#). MHEC cannot process your complaint without a signed FERPA release. If you like MHEC to communicate with anyone other than yourself, you must also submit a completed third party release form.**
 - iii. Documents to support the claims made in your complaint form. This may be in the form of correspondence with the relevant parties, transcripts, etc.
 - b. [Faculty or staff complaint forms](#) may be submitted by email to: collegiatecomplaint.mhec@maryland.gov and should include:
 - i. Evidence that you have exhausted the grievance process at the institution. This may include correspondence, a report, or a resolution letter.
 - ii. **[A signed release of information form](#). MHEC cannot process your complaint without these signed forms.**

- iii. Documents to support the claims made in your complaint form. This may be in the form of correspondence with the relevant parties or other relevant materials.
 - iv. *Please note: the faculty complaint form is not used to make a complaint against a professor or faculty personnel.*
3. MHEC will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 10 business days. We may ask for additional information before we begin our investigation into whether there has been a violation of the Education Article, COMAR, or school policy.
4. A copy of the complaint and supporting documents will be provided to the college or university President. MHEC will require the President to look into the matter and provide a written report back to MHEC within 30 business days (approximately six weeks).
5. MHEC staff may interview the institution employees, students, or the complainant as part of its investigation.
6. MHEC may take regulatory action based on its investigation and in accordance with the Education Article and COMAR Title 13B, and the manner for which the institution is approved to operate.
7. MHEC will inform the student or faculty/staff complainant and the college or university President of its determination(s) in writing.
8. *CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE. Student complaints are treated as confidential to the extent permitted under the Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Faculty complaints are generally NOT protected from disclosure under MPIA or FERPA. MHEC cannot assure the confidentiality of your faculty complaint.*

B. Private Career School Complaints

For Private Career Schools, complaints involving alleged violations of the Education Article or the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) Title 13B Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), or a Private Career School's own written institutional policies, may be submitted to MHEC in the following manner:

1. A student may submit a complaint in writing to MHEC when it involves an alleged violation of the Education Article, COMAR, or school policy, but only after the student has first exhausted the complaint/grievance procedures established by the institution.
2. A signed [PCS Student Complaint Form](#) (click on link to download) must be submitted to MHEC with copies of supporting documentation included. The complaint documents are to be submitted to:

Associate Director of Career and Workforce Education
Maryland Higher Education Commission
6 N. Liberty Street, 10th Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201
FAX: 410-332-0270
Email: PCS.MHEC@maryland.gov

3. Within 5 business days of receipt of a complaint, MHEC will acknowledge its receipt and begin investigating for evidence of violation of the Education Article, COMAR, or school policy.
4. A copy of the student complaint and documents will be provided to the institution's Director. MHEC will require the Director to look into the matter and report back to MHEC within 10 business days of receipt of MHEC notification.
5. Any requests by MHEC to the school or the student complainant for information or documents necessary for MHEC to achieve a determination of the complaint must be answered by the school or the student complainant within 10 business days following receipt of MHEC's request.
6. MHEC staff may interview the institution employees, students, or the student complainant as part of its investigation.
7. MHEC may take regulatory action based on its review and in accordance with the Education Article and COMAR Title 13B, and the manner for which the institution is approved to operate.
8. MHEC will inform the student complainant and the school Director in writing of its determination(s).

C. Specific types of complaints are handled by different agencies or organizations. A student may submit a complaint to the appropriate agency or organization as described below:

- a. A complaint pertaining to occupational licensure requirements is to be submitted to the appropriate licensing board or entity. Licensing board contact information is found in the institution's catalog.
- b. A complaint concerning compliance with the standards of accreditation is to be submitted to the institution's accrediting body. Accrediting body contact information is found in the institution's catalog and website.
- c. A complaint pertaining to potential violations of consumer protection is to be submitted to:
Consumer Protection Division Office of the Attorney General
200 Saint Paul Place
Baltimore MD 21202
Telephone: 410-528-8662
More information is available at:
<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Pages/CPD/Complaint.aspx>
- d. A complaint concerning discrimination is to be submitted to:
Office for Civil Rights, Philadelphia Office
U.S. Department of Education
100 Penn Square East, Suite 515
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3323
Telephone: 215-656-8541

More information is available at:

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/howto.html>