

Maryland Higher Education Commission State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) Complaint Process

The Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) Department of Program Review and Compliance (Department) oversees the quality, integrity, and diversity of postsecondary programs in Maryland for the benefit of students and consumers. The MHEC is also responsible for the academic integrity of higher education in Maryland, including ensuring that complaint processes are available for students enrolled in institutions overseen by the Department. The MHEC serves as the “State Portal Agency” responsible for implementing the [SARA](#), which includes ensuring that the complaint procedures for SARA institutions are available and implemented for students, as needed.

The resolution of complaints, apply to interstate distance education programs offered by participating SARA institutions to students in other SARA states. Only those complaints resulting from distance education courses offered by participating institutions to students in other SARA states come under the terms of the agreement.

The MHEC will investigate and resolve allegations of dishonest or fraudulent activity by a provider, including the provision of false or misleading information. In addition to dealing with alleged fraudulent activity, MHEC shall also investigate and resolve complaints that an institution is operating a course or program contrary to practices set forth in the C-RAC Guidelines (<https://www.msche.org/publications/Guidelines-for-the-Evaluation-of-Distance-Education-Programs.pdf>) in such a way that a student is harmed.

Complaints about a SARA institution’s **in-state operations** are to be resolved under the state’s provisions for handling complaints.

SARA Complaint Process

If a student is enrolled in an online degree-program from a Maryland-based institution that is approved to operate under SARA, the following complaint process can be used to submit a student complaint.

Student Inquiry



If the institutional complaint process is not exhausted, then the complaint is referred to the institution.



If the institutional complaint process has been exhausted, MHEC asks students to submit a written complaint form, additional information and release.



Institution submits additional information and suggests an appropriate resolution.



If the resolution acceptable, STOP HERE.

If not resolved, continue to next step.



MHEC and the institution negotiate in good faith to resolve the complaint.



MHEC issues letter to student informing student of outcome of complaint process.



Click here (<http://mhec.maryland.gov/HigherEd/acadAff/programreview.asp>) to go to the Department of Program Review and Compliance within the MHEC.