



Policy Title:	Student Complaint Resolution Policy
Policy Number:	2001

1. Purpose

This policy provides the principles and procedures for the making, investigation, and resolution of complaints by students about instruction, services, University policy, or concerns regarding alleged violations of the Student Handbook or other University rules, policies, or standards.

The procedures described in this policy are to be used by students or their expressly authorized representatives who wish to bring a complaint. Authority to bring a complaint on behalf of a student would normally be expressed in an authorizing letter signed by the student that names the designated representative.

This policy also outlines the process the University will follow where there is a reasonable basis to believe that a student may have violated one or more provisions of the Student Handbook or another University rule, policy, or standard.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all members of the St. Matthew's University (SMU) community, in particular SMU students who are currently enrolled or were enrolled 30 days prior to initiating the Complaint Resolution process.

The procedures described in this policy are to be used by students or their expressly authorized representatives who wish to bring a complaint regarding instruction, services, University policy, or other University-related matters.

Where a concern relates to alleged academic dishonesty, student misconduct, or a potential violation of the Student Handbook or another University rule, policy, or standard, the matter will be reviewed in accordance with the investigation and resolution process set out in this policy.

3. Policy Statement

SMU strives to provide quality education and service experiences for students. Should a situation arise that prompts concerns for students, such concerns should be addressed appropriately, respectfully, and in a timely manner.

SMU adheres to principles of administrative law and natural justice. All parties involved in reviewing and responding to complaints, concerns, or alleged violations will listen and respond objectively and will act fairly.

Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic experiences both in and outside the classroom. Any student found to have engaged in dishonesty in any phase of academic work may be subject to disciplinary action. The University does not accept, nor will it address, anonymous complaints or complaints from third parties that do not contain a written statement from a student giving express authority to make the complaint on the student's behalf. A student will not be liable to disciplinary action, retaliation in any form, or any other adverse action as a result of filing a legitimate complaint.

4. Complaint Resolution

Where a person receives a complaint from a student, they are responsible for making reasonable and appropriate efforts to resolve that complaint in an expeditious manner and in accordance with this policy.

If a person who receives a complaint is unable to resolve it because it is outside the scope of their role or authority, they must refer it to the appropriate SMU institutional body for resolution. They must advise the student that it has been referred and identify the authority to which it has been referred.

For the guidance of students, complaints may be directed to the relevant functional area, including:

- Information Technology Services – complaints about email accounts, computers, and technology generally;
- Library Services – complaints about library access, services, and library holdings;
- Registrar's Office – complaints about registration and admission;
- Operations Department – complaints about hazards, theft, vandalism, threats, violence, or emergency issues;
- Academic Department – complaints about faculty, courses, schedules, examinations, or academic services;
- Student Services – complaints about student services generally; and
- Finance Department – complaints about financial aid, tuition, and refunds.

Students may call upon Student Services or members of the student's program for assistance in making and resolving complaints.

A complaint may be withdrawn at any time by the student or their representative advising the person to whom the complaint was made. In the case of a formal complaint, a notice withdrawing the complaint should be directed to the Executive Dean.

5. Investigation of Alleged Violations

Whenever there is a reasonable basis to believe that a student may have violated one or more provisions of the Student Handbook or any other rule, policy, or standard of the University, the matter should be reported to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.

The Dean, or designee, will conduct an investigation. The nature and extent of the investigation will be determined at the discretion of the Dean, or designee.

The Dean, or designee, may, but is not required to, convene a disciplinary committee comprising faculty, administrators, and/or students to assist the Dean, or designee, in resolving the matter. The composition of any such committee, and the role it plays in the process, will be determined at the discretion of the Dean, or designee.

Before any disciplinary action is taken, the student will be given notice of the alleged violation and an opportunity to respond. This includes an opportunity to identify any witness, document, or other evidence that the student believes is relevant.

The Dean, or designee, will determine what evidence is relevant to consider and what weight it should be given.

The Dean, or designee, will determine whether a violation has occurred based upon a preponderance of the evidence, meaning whether it is more likely than not that a violation has occurred.

6. Determination and Sanctions

If the Dean, or designee, determines that a violation has occurred, the Dean, or designee, will determine one or more appropriate sanctions.

Sanctions may include, but are not limited to:

- Disciplinary counselling;
- Fines;
- Probation;
- Suspension;
- Dismissal; and/or
- Any other sanction that the Dean, or designee, determines is appropriate in light of all the circumstances, including but not limited to the nature of the offence and any history of misconduct by the student.

The Dean, or designee, will inform the student of the determination, including whether a violation has occurred and, if so, the sanction or sanctions that will be imposed as a result.

7. Appeals

A student who is found to have committed a violation may appeal the finding and/or the sanction imposed if the student believes the finding and/or sanction was the result of bias or some other fundamental unfairness in the process.

Any appeal must be submitted in writing to the Executive Dean within seven days of the date upon which the student received notice of the decision that is being appealed.

The written appeal should identify:

- The decision being appealed;
- The finding and/or sanction being appealed;
- The reason the student believes the decision was the result of bias or fundamental unfairness; and
- The remedy or outcome the student is seeking.

The Executive Dean, or designee, will determine what steps, if any, are necessary to resolve the appeal.

The Executive Dean, or designee, may:

- Dismiss the appeal as untimely or as not stating a proper basis for appeal;
- Uphold the decision on the merits;
- Vacate some or all of the decision and remand the case to the Dean for further action;
- Vacate some or all of the decision and make new findings as to whether the student committed the alleged violation and/or the sanction to be imposed; or
- Take such other action as the Executive Dean, or designee, deems appropriate under the circumstances.

Decisions of the Executive Dean, or designee, are final.

8. Definitions

These definitions apply to terms as they are used in this policy.

Word/Term	Definition
Complaint	An expression of concern or dissatisfaction with an instructional situation, provision of a service, content of a policy, or other University-related matter.
Preponderance of the Evidence	The standard used to determine whether a violation has occurred, meaning that it is more likely than not that the violation occurred.
Sanction	A penalty or consequence imposed as a result of a finding that a student violated the Student Handbook or another University rule, policy, or standard.

9. Responsibility

Students are responsible for addressing concerns in a timely and respectful manner in accordance with this policy and any related procedure.

Students are responsible for maintaining honesty and integrity in their academic experiences both in and outside the classroom.

Instructors, service area supervisors or coordinators, department chairs, program heads, service area managers, the Dean, and the Executive Dean are responsible for addressing concerns raised by students in a timely and respectful manner and in accordance with this policy.

The Associate Dean of Academic Affairs is responsible for receiving reports where there is a reasonable basis to believe that a student may have violated the Student Handbook or another University rule, policy, or standard.

The Dean, or designee, is responsible for investigating alleged violations, determining whether a violation has occurred, and determining appropriate sanctions where required.

The Executive Dean, or designee, is responsible for reviewing appeals submitted under this policy and issuing final decisions.

All parties involved in hearing and responding to student complaints, investigations, and decisions are responsible for retaining all records and correspondence in accordance with relevant University policies.

The Registrar's Office is the depository for all records of formal complaints, investigations, decisions, appeals, and sanctions brought forward under this policy.