

# COMPLAINTS PROCESS

## Rice University's Student Complaint Process (compliant with Department of Education (DOE) "Program Integrity" Regulations)

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Texas Administrative Code (19 TAC § 1.110-1.120) require Rice University – and all other Texas universities – to provide a student complaint procedure that complies with the U.S. Department of Education's "Program Integrity" regulations as part of the university's eligibility for Title IV federal funds. For information regarding student complaints, please see Rice University Policy 701, [Written Student Complaints \(https://policy.rice.edu/701/\)](https://policy.rice.edu/701/).

The required complaint process must inform current, former, or prospective students who have exhausted Rice's own grievance, complaint, or appeal processes how to initiate a complaint outside of Rice with THECB. The THECB's procedures for such complaints are found [here \(http://www.highered.texas.gov/links/student-complaints/\)](http://www.highered.texas.gov/links/student-complaints/). Students wishing to use this outside process should ensure they have first addressed their complaint to the appropriate Rice University complaint process. If Rice is unable to resolve the matter after the student has exhausted internal complaint and appeal processes, the student may then file a complaint with THECB according to the following:

Students may pursue a complaint with the THECB by submitting the required forms along with: (i) proof of completion of Rice's complaint procedures, (ii) the ultimate outcome of the procedures, and (iii) evidence to support the complaint. The forms required by all students pursuing a complaint include: THECB Student Complaint Form, FERPA Consent and Release Form, and THECB Consent and Agreement Form. A student may also wish to consult the THECB's webpage for a listing of issues or concerns that the THECB does not investigate.

To submit a student complaint online, click [here \(https://www1.thecb.state.tx.us/Apps/CRAFT/Home/Create/\)](https://www1.thecb.state.tx.us/Apps/CRAFT/Home/Create/). Under *Contact Reason*, select *Student Complaint Against a Higher Education Institution*. Once you click *Submit*, wait for an online student complaint form to appear. Note that complaints regarding students with disabilities must also submit a signed Authorization to Disclose Medical Record Information form.

Alternatively, students can send the required forms and supporting documentation in a PDF by email to [studentcomplaints@thecb.state.tx.us](mailto:studentcomplaints@thecb.state.tx.us), or by regular mail to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Office of General Counsel, P.O. Box 12788, Austin, TX 78711-2788. Original documents should not be submitted, as the THECB cannot return documents received.

1. Complainants should understand that the THECB does not handle, investigate, or attempt to resolve complaints concerning actions that occurred more than two years prior to the filing of a student complaint form with the THECB (unless the delay in filing the THECB complaint was caused by the complainant exhausting Rice's grievance procedures). The THECB also does not handle the various types of complaints listed in 19 TAC § 1.113.
2. Former students must file a complaint with the THECB no later than one year after the student's last date of attendance at Rice, or within 6 months of discovering the grounds for complaint, unless the

delay in filing the THECB complaint was caused by the complainant exhausting Rice's grievance procedures.

3. The THECB may refer complaints alleging that Rice has violated state consumer protection laws to the Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General of Texas for investigation and resolution. If THECB determines that a complaint is appropriate for investigation and resolution by Rice's accrediting agency (SACSCOC – the Southern Associations of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges) or an educational association such as ICUT (Independent Colleges & Universities of Texas), the THECB may refer the complaint to the appropriate entity and may terminate the referral of the complaint to those entities at any time and proceed to investigate and adjudicate the complaint.
4. If a person wishes to file a complaint against Rice through the university's accrediting agency, SACSCOC, that agency's complaint process can be found [here \(https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/01/ComplaintPolicy-1.pdf\)](https://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2020/01/ComplaintPolicy-1.pdf). A complainant should complete SACSCOC's Complaint Form and send two signed copies to the President, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097. The details of the agency's complaint process explain that it is intended to address significant, documented, alleged non-compliance with SACSCOC accreditation standards, policies, or procedures. Complainants are expected to have attempted to resolve the issue through Rice's complaint processes before filing a complaint with SACSCOC.
5. If the complaint concerns compliance with statutes or regulations administered by the THECB and the complaint has not been referred to another entity, the THECB will initiate an investigation. The student must provide documentation that all Rice grievance, complaint, or appeal procedures have been exhausted.
6. The THECB, as part of its investigation, will request a Rice response, and may also contact other persons or entities named in the complaint or in Rice's response, in order to ascertain relevant facts. The THECB will also, where appropriate, attempt to facilitate an informal resolution acceptable to both the student and Rice. When this is not feasible, the THECB will evaluate investigation results and recommend action by the Commissioner of the THECB, who after considering any recommendations will render a written determination dismissing the complaint or requiring Rice to take specific actions to remedy the complaint. The Commissioner may also request the THECB to review and decide issues regarding institutional integrity.