

# Student Complaints

## Filing a Student Complaint Against a Texas Higher Education Institution

### Role and Authority of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)

The role of the THECB is to represent the State of Texas and enforce laws that fall under the scope of the THECB's authority. The THECB cannot offer legal advice to complainants and does not act as a student's agent or attorney. Any information provided by the THECB staff is not to be interpreted as legal advice or representation.

The authority of the THECB is limited to that expressly granted by law and stipulated in THECB rules. For example, a student's eligibility for financial aid is determined by the student's institution and the THECB generally does not have the authority to override the school's determination.

### Non-Exhaustive List of Student Complaints Not Reviewed by the THECB

- Complaints concerning actions that occurred more than two years prior to filing a student complaint form with the THECB, unless the cause of the delay in filing the student complaint form with the Agency was the complainant's exhaustion of the institution's grievance procedures
- Complaints made by former students more than one year after the student's last date of attendance at the institution and more than 6 months after discovering the grounds for the complaint (unless the cause of the delay in filing the student complaint form was the complainant's exhaustion of the institution's grievance procedures)
- Anonymous complaints
- Matters solely concerning grades, examination results, or evaluation of academic performance
- Matters solely related to student life such as student housing, dining facilities, food service, violations of the student code of conduct, or student activities and organizations
- Matters that are or have been in litigation
- Complaints about religious institutions relating solely to their religious (as opposed to secular) standards and religious programs of study
- Complaints against institutions not authorized by the Agency to operate in Texas
- Complaints regarding tribal institutions
- Complaints about criminal matters

If your complaint pertains to a transfer issue, please see the THECB's [Transfer Resources](#) and information regarding the Transfer of Credit Rules for [Resolution of Transfer Disputes for Lower-Division Courses](#).

### Student Complaint Process

The first step for current, former, or prospective students who would like to file a formal complaint against a Texas higher education institution is to exhaust all of the institution's student complaint or grievance procedures as required by Texas Administrative Code (TAC), [Section 1.116\(b\)](#).

- An institution's student complaint or grievance procedures are typically available in the academic catalog or student handbook on the institution's website.

After all of the institution's student complaint or grievance procedures have been exhausted, if the matter remains unresolved, a formal complaint may be filed with the THECB.

## Required Documentation

Before initiating an investigation, the THECB must receive the following:

- Fully completed and signed [THECB Student Complaint and Authorization Forms \[PDF\]](#) - (Complaints from students with disabilities must also include an [Authorization to Disclose Medical Record Information Form \[PDF\]](#) if the complaint in any way involves alleged discriminatory treatment as a result of the disabilities);
- Documentation of the student's completion of the institution's complaint or grievance procedures, including the ultimate outcome of the procedures; and
- Evidence to support the complaint, such as copies of correspondence, enrollment agreements, course catalog information, and any other information believed to be relevant to the matter of the complaint.

## Submission of Documentation

The required documentation may be submitted to the THECB in one of the following three ways:

1. **Completing the online student complaint form and uploading the required supporting documentation in Portable Document Format (PDF).** To access the online student complaint form, submit an email to the THECB through the "[Inquiries](#)" link with "Student Complaint Against a Higher Education Institution" selected as the Contact Reason. A few moments after the email is submitted, the online student complaint form will be presented for use.
2. **Submitting the required student complaint forms and documentation by email** to [studentcomplaints@theccb.state.tx.us](mailto:studentcomplaints@theccb.state.tx.us). Email attachments should be submitted as PDF documents. **or**
3. **Mailing the required student complaint forms and documentation** to Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Office of General Counsel, P.O. Box 12788, Austin, Texas 78711-2788.\*

\*Documents received by the THECB cannot be returned so original documents should not be submitted. Students are encouraged to retain a copy of their complaint and all documents submitted.

## THECB Review Process

Once the Agency receives the required student complaint documentation, the Agency may refer the complaint to other agencies or entities as follows:

The THECB may refer complaints alleging that an institution has violated state consumer protection laws to the Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney General of Texas for investigation and resolution. The THECB may refer complaints pertaining to a component institution in a university system to the appropriate university system for investigation and resolution. E.g., complaints pertaining to an institution in the University of Texas System, Texas A&M University System, University of Houston System, University of North Texas System, Texas Tech University System, or Texas State University System can be referred to the appropriate university system for investigation and resolution.

If the THECB determines that a complaint is appropriate for investigation and resolution, by the institution's accrediting agency or an educational association such as ICUT (Independent Colleges & Universities of Texas, Inc.), the Agency may refer the complaint to the accrediting agency or educational association. The THECB has the right to adopt any decision made by the accrediting agency or educational association, and may terminate the referral of the complaint to those entities at any time and proceed to investigate and adjudicate the complaint.

If a student complaint concerns compliance with the statutes and regulations the THECB administers and the complaint has not been referred to another entity, the THECB will initiate an investigation. (Again, prior to initiating an investigation, however, the student must exhaust all grievance/complaint and appeal procedures that the institution has established to address student complaints and the student must provide documentation to the THECB of such exhaustion.)

As part of its investigation, the THECB will request a response from the institution, and may also contact other persons or entities named in the student's complaint or in the institution's response, in order to ascertain all relevant facts. During its investigation, the THECB will, in appropriate cases, attempt to facilitate an informal resolution to the complaint that is mutually satisfactory to the student and institution. In cases in which an informal resolution between the student and the institution is not feasible, the THECB will evaluate the results of the investigation of the student complaint and recommend a course of action to the Commissioner. After receiving staff's recommendation, the Commissioner will consider the recommendation regarding the complaint and render a written determination either dismissing the complaint or requiring the institution to take specific actions to remedy the complaint. The Commissioner may also request the Board to review and decide issues that regard institutional integrity.

Rules for the THECB's Student Complaint Procedure can be found under TAC, [Sections 1.110 – 1.120](#).

Inquiries should be directed to:

[studentcomplaints@thecb.state.tx.us](mailto:studentcomplaints@thecb.state.tx.us) or [Kammi.Contreras@thecb.state.tx.us](mailto:Kammi.Contreras@thecb.state.tx.us).

Online submission details can be found at:

<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=989FE9A0-2213-11E8-BC500050560100A9>