

STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

A. General Complaints

If you have any complaints which you feel need attention by the college, please make an appointment with the Dean or the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or submit a letter setting forth your concerns. A personal or written response will be made as soon as the matter has been investigated. Your suggestions as to a possible solution will be taken into consideration.

Anonymous complaints generally are not complete enough to be addressed, as there is no way to obtain additional information to facilitate an investigation. Accordingly, action is seldom taken on anonymous letters.

B. Academic Appeals

If, after having consulted with the appropriate dean, an academic complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, you may solicit the assistance of the Student Appeals and Disciplinary Committee, only if the matter falls within its jurisdiction, as follows:

The Student Appeals and Disciplinary Committee shall have the right to grant an appeal, consider and make a determination with respect to the following (*all references are to the Student Handbook*):

1. Impropriety on the part of any professor in assigning a grade or grades based upon anything other than the student's academic performance, including any breach of the policy on "Anonymity;" the "Grading System;" or the making of a post-submission change to a grade in violation of the stated policy.

2. Irregularities or errors in interpreting or implementing any of the following policies:

- a. The "Academic Deficiency" policy;
- b. The "Academic Supervision" policy; and
- c. The "Extracurricular Activities and Academic Deficiency" policy.

3. Deviations in the processing of "Grade Reductions" or in the "Method of Computing Averages."

4. Provided, however, that nothing contained in this statement of jurisdiction shall be construed as a grant of authority to the committee to revise or deviate from any published standard without the prior approval of the faculty. An appeal to the full faculty may be taken by the student in question or any faculty member, if two or more members of the Student Appeals and Disciplinary Committee dissented from the determination.

C. Complaints Concerning the Program of Legal Education

Houston College of Law (formerly South Texas College of Law) (Not Affiliated with University of Houston) (the “Law School”) is accredited by the American Bar Association (ABA). The ABA Standards for the Approval of Law Schools can be found on the ABA’s website located at http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/standards.html. Copies of the ABA Standards are also available in The Fred Parks Law Library.

Filing of a Complaint

In accordance with ABA Standard 510, any student who wishes to bring to the Law School’s attention “a significant problem that directly implicates the school’s compliance” with the ABA Standards should submit a complaint to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The student’s complaint may be sent by email from the student’s law school email account, by fax, or by U.S. Mail. The complaint must: be in writing and signed by the student; contain the student’s name, home and email addresses, and telephone number; specify the ABA Standard or Standards involved in the complaint; identify the “significant problem that directly implicates the school’s compliance” with those Standards; and describe in sufficient detail to permit investigation what action, process, or policy gives rise to the alleged problem and explain how it directly implicates the Law School’s compliance with the ABA Standards.

Procedures for Addressing Complaints

1. The Associate Dean or his or her designee should acknowledge receiving the student’s complaint within three (3) business days of receiving it. Acknowledgment may be made by email, U.S. mail, or by personal delivery.
2. Within two (2) weeks of acknowledging the complaint, the Associate Dean or his/her designee shall either meet with the complaining student in person or respond to the substance of the complaint in writing. In this meeting or in this writing, the student should receive a substantive response to the complaint or information about what steps are being taken by the Law School to address the complaint or what further investigation of the complaint is required for the Law School properly to respond to the complaint.
3. If further investigation is required, within two (2) weeks after completion of the investigation the Law School shall provide the complainant with either a substantive response to the complaint or information about what steps are being taken by the Law School to address the complaint.

Appeal Process

1. A complainant may appeal the Law School's substantive response or statement of proposed remedial steps to the Dean of the Law School. The student's appeal must be made in writing within two (2) weeks after communication to the complainant of the substantive response to the complaint.

2. The Dean shall respond to an appeal within three (3) weeks of receiving the appeal. The decision of the Dean will be the final action on the matter.

Maintaining a Written Record of the Complaint

The Law School shall maintain a copy of the complaint and a summary of the process and resolution of the complaint in a confidential manner in the Dean's Office from the date of the final resolution of the complaint through the date of the next ABA site evaluation visit.

Protection Against Retaliation

The Law School will not in any way retaliate against an individual who makes a complaint under this policy and shall not permit any faculty member, administrator, employee, or student to do so.

Deadlines

For purposes of this policy, "day" means a business day and "week" means a week when the Law School is open for normal business, regardless of whether classes are in session. In determining any deadlines set forth in this policy, references to a number of "days" prior to or after occurrence of an event shall not include the day of the event.