STATE AUTHORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS (SARA)

STUDENT COMPLAINT

In receiving a student complaint covered by licensure, consumer protection, or educational services (quality), the Alabama State Portal Entity (ASPE) will respond in the following manner. If the student wishes to file a complaint, the initial screening will first, determine if the institution is operating under the SARA agreement, second, if the student was/is properly enrolled, third, the nature of the complaint, and fourth, if the student has exhausted all efforts to resolve the issue under institutional guidelines (published) and procedures provided to all students.

Please note that SARA Guideline 4.5a states, "Complaints against an institution operating under SARA go first through the institution's own procedures for resolution of grievances". Thus, if the out-of-state student has not utilized all available administrative procedures allowed by the institution, as outlined in the institution's Catalog or Student Handbook, she/he will be referred back to the institution to complete the process. The SARA Manual can be found here: SARA Policy Manual | NC-SARA**.**

If all institutional administrative procedures have been completed and the situation is not resolved, the student must complete a formal written complaint **(see form below)** that includes among other things the following: student name, institution, course/program involved, confirmation that all procedures provided by the institution have been met (including contact points, date of hearing/findings, and outcome), and what recourse is the student asking as settlement. At this point, all pertinent parties will be notified, including the primary contact for the State Portal Entity (SPE) in the student's home state. It must be noted that student complaints dealing with grades and/or student conduct will not be considered by the SPE.

Typically, the decision regarding a student complaint made by the SPE is the final determination. However, a complaint may be submitted to the Alabama State Reciprocity Committee and after that the SARA Regional Compact, if the complainant has evidence the SPE acted outside SARA Rules and Procedures in its review and decision making. All materials identified through the initial process must be filed with the SARA within thirty (30) days of the outcome from the Portal review.

STATE AUTHRORIZATION RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS (SARA) STUDENT COMPLAINT FORM

This form must be completed and on file with the Alabama State Portal Entity (ASPE) before any student complaint will be reviewed. Telephone and/or electronic delivered complaints may be considered under emergency circumstances, but in all complaints, the institution's administrative procedures in dealing with student complaints must be completed or documented as to the student's efforts to resolve a complaint. The following must be completed and submitted within two years of the grievance.

Name of Complainant:_____

Home Address:_____

(Street) (City) (ZIP code)

Contact Phone Number:_____

(Home) (Cell)

Student ID Number: _____

Email Address:_____

Date of Submission:_____

Affiliation with institution (check one)

_____ Currently enrolled

_____ Former student

_____ Parent or guardian of student as identified and authorized under the Family Educational Right to Privacy Act (FERPA) and provided for by the student's signature:

_____

Student Signature

☐ Other, (e.g. VA Counselor, Social Worker, etc.) Identify by name and authority.

_____

Institution Name:_____

Have you completed the institution's formal grievance/appeal process? ☐ Yes ☐ No
(Check One)

Date completed: _____

If **No**, provide a complete explanation why you did not complete the process.

If **Yes**, submit all pertinent documents to include minutes of hearings, correspondence (letters and email), and findings to establish your having met all institutional procedures for complaints.

Course and/or Program of Study:_____

Date of Attendance:_____ _____
From/Month-day-year To/Month-day-year

Complaint Description (attach to this form, please provide the following information/documents:

1. Describe your complaint in full detail, including all names of faculty, administrators, and college personnel contacted about the complaint. Include in your transmission all documents that you have in your possession related to your complaint.

2. Provide all contact information, e.g. phone number, email addresses, etc., for institutional staff you have contacted.

3. State for the record what recourse (result) you are seeking by filing this complaint with the Alabama Commission on Higher Education acting as the SARA Alabama State Portal Entity (ASPE).

4. Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) – Consent to Release Student Information Form (see the following page)

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)
CONSENT TO RELEASE STUDENT INFORMATION

TO: _____
(Name of University or College that will be releasing the educational records)

Please provide information from the educational records of

_____
(Name of Student requesting the release of educational records) to:

the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) acting as the Alabama State Portal Entity (ASPE) for the National Council of State Authorization and Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA). Documents should be sent to the designated ASPE Coordinator as identified on ACHE's NC-SARA webpage located at ache.edu.

(Note: this Consent does not cover medical records held solely by Student Health Services or the Counseling Center – contact those offices for consent forms.)

Information to be released:

Any and all relevant documents related to a formal complaint made by the aforementioned out-of-state, online student, the specifics of which will be provided to the institution by the ASPE Coordinator.

The information is to be released for the following purpose:

To assist the State Portal Entity in processing a complaint made by the aforementioned student under the guidelines of the National Council of State Authorization and Reciprocity Agreements of which the college or university is a member.

I understand the information may be released orally or in the form of copies of written records, as preferred by the requester. I have a right to inspect any written records released pursuant to this Consent (except for parents' financial records and certain letters of recommendation for which the student waived inspection rights). I understand I may revoke this Consent upon providing written notice to the aforementioned university or college. I further understand that until this revocation is made, this consent shall remain in effect and my educational records will continue to be provided to ACHE acting as the ASPE for NC-SARA for the specific purpose described above.

Name (print) _____

Signature _____

Student ID Number _____

Date _____

By submitting this form, I affirm that I have met all requirements for filing a student complaint as provided for under this agreement. I agree to the Alabama Commission on Higher Education functioning as the designated "Portal" for administering educational activities under the SARA membership. I further authorize the institution to transmit all pertinent student records related to me under this complaint to the ASPE in the course of this review. I also understand that the records requested may also be shared with the SARA State Portal Entity in my state of residence and/or any other SARA authorized representative.

The information provided under this complaint is complete, true, and correct to the best of my knowledge.

_____
Signature

_____
Print Name

_____
Date

Mail this form and all pertinent documents to:

Standard Address:
Alabama Commission on Higher Education
C/O SARA State Portal Entity
P.O. Box 302000
Montgomery, AL 36130-2000

Express/Overnight Mail:
Alabama Commission on Higher Education
C/O SARA State Portal Entity
100 N. Union Street, Suite 782
Montgomery, Al. 36104

Electronic Transmission:
ron.leonard@ache.edu