



# George Brown College Expression of Educational Concerns and Complaints Policy

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## PURPOSE

George Brown College strives to ensure all students have both the freedom and guidance to express their concerns or to provide constructive feedback about their educational experience in a safe and

supportive environment, and for these concerns to be acknowledged by George Brown College in a timely manner.

## SCOPE

This policy provides transparent information to the George Brown College community on how program-level and college-wide academic concerns and complaints will be managed. It is the intent of this policy to ensure that students have access to a clear process that is founded on fairness, impartiality, accessibility, respect and responsiveness, and which supports students in their attempts to address educational concerns or complaints.

This policy concerns student complaints about the quality of the students' academic educational experience. Certain types of academic concerns or complaints are not considered within the scope of this policy may be covered in one or more of the following:

- The **Academic Appeals Policy** is used by a student for the objection to or appeal of a specific academic decision involving that student.
- The **Academic Integrity Policy** describes the obligation to and procedures for speaking out publicly or lodging complaints confidentially when academic integrity is believed to have been breached by another student (e.g. cheating).
- The **Code of Student Behaviour and Community Standards Policy** describes a mechanism for conflict resolution between students or to lodge a formal complaint about the behaviour of another student that violates the standards set by George Brown College.
- Other policies that govern student concerns not specifically focused on academic educational experiences include but are not limited to **the Accessible Learning Policy**, the **Human Rights Discrimination and Harrassment Policy**.

## DEFINITIONS

This includes an explanation of terms and abbreviations used within the policy and procedure.

Word/Term	Definition
<b>Chair</b>	For purposes of this policy, 'Chair' refers to the academic administrator with most immediate responsibility for the program from which the academic concern/complaint has arisen. This individual may have the title 'Chair' or 'Director' (in the absence of a Chair), depending on the program.
<b>Educational experience</b>	Any interaction, course, program, work-integrated learning, or other experience in which learning takes place.

<b>Faculty</b>	The academic staff responsible for the course.
<b>Policy</b>	A statement of basic principles, rules, regulations and/or guidelines, developed and enforced to direct and/or limit actions and activities.
<b>Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU)</b>	The MTCU is responsible for the administration of laws relating to education and skills training. For more information go to the Ministry website: <a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-training-colleges-universities">https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-training-colleges-universities</a>
<b>Procedure</b>	The operational processes required to implement college policy, to be provided as a clear sequence of instructions to be followed.
<b>Working Day</b>	Monday to Friday, excluding statutory holidays or any other day in which the college has publicly announced that it is not open for business.

## POLICY

- 1.0** George Brown College is committed to delivering the highest quality education possible for students. In support of this commitment all students have the right to express concerns and constructive criticisms regarding their education without fear of penalty.
- 2.0** Students have the right to raise objections or file formal complaints or concerns, either individually or as a group, about a specific educational situation/event or a related program academic quality concern [see **Appendix #1: Procedures for the Expression of Educational Complaints** for relevant procedures].
- 3.0** Students must raise their educational concerns in a professional and respectful manner that respects the confidentiality of all members of George Brown College's community and supports the college's commitment to maintaining a supportive environment for learning. These efforts should occur within an environment of integrity, partnership, fairness, respect, and transparency.
- 4.0** It is expected that students and relevant college representatives will work to resolve educational issues at the program level in a timely fashion. These efforts should occur within an environment of integrity, partnership, fairness, respect, and transparency.
- 5.0** George Brown College will provide, whenever possible, a safe and confidential process to receive concerns or complaints and constructive feedback.
- 6.0** George Brown College will inform students when their concern or complaint has been considered. The college will provide feedback regarding the legitimacy of the concern or complaint within 15 working days.
- 7.0** Confidential records will be kept of all complaints received by the program for a period of 5 years.
- 8.0** Wherever possible George Brown College will provide information relating to immediate, short-term and/or long-term remedies, including but not limited to accountabilities of college faculty and staff where appropriate.

## APPENDIX 1: PROCEDURES FOR THE EXPRESSION OF EDUCATIONAL COMPLAINTS

### Summary of the steps, timelines, and responsibilities for the expression of educational complaints:

#### 1.0 Students who have concerns regarding the quality of their education will:

- 1.1 Approach the college representative (a faculty member, for example) to outline the complaint in person or via George Brown College email. If appropriate the college representative will ask for the student's input and provide directions on how a solution may be reached informally.
- 1.2 If student(s) are unable or unwilling to approach the relevant college representative, or where students' concerns remain unsatisfactorily addressed by this representative, students may approach the Program Chair (or administrative designate) [see **Appendix #2: Template for Bringing Forward Educational Complaints**] to begin a formal complaint process. In the case where the student issue relates specifically to the Program Chair the student may approach the relevant Dean.
- 1.3 At any stage in the Educational Concerns or Complaints process student(s) may consult a Student Association advisor who may provide guidance throughout the resolution process.
- 1.4 If the student wishes to appeal the decision made by the Chair (or appropriate designate) they may do so by providing a written confirmation of their intent to appeal the decision to the appropriate Dean within 5 working days of receiving the decision.

#### Review of Educational Concerns & Complaints:

#### 2.0 Procedures for the Chair: Upon receiving notification of an educational concern or complaint, the Chair (or designate) will:

- 2.1 Acknowledge the student concern or complaint within 10 working days and ensure it is prepared in writing using the "Template for Bringing Forward Educational Complaints" see Appendix #2 (either by the Chair or the student(s)). The complainant(s) and the Chair will agree on the nature of the concern/complaint and sign the formal complaint document within 5 working days following their initial meeting.
- 2.2 Ensure that the appropriate individual(s) is/are informed of the nature of the concern/complaint and provide the individual with an opportunity to address the specific concerns. This may include the development of a strategy to rectify an issue and an agreed upon reporting timeframe.
- 2.3 Notify the student(s) that their complaint has been discussed with the relevant individual.

- 2.4 Following the review process outlined and templated in Appendix #2, review the educational concern/complaint.
- 2.5 If a faculty member is involved in the Educational Concerns and Complaints process they have the right to be accompanied by a representative of their union at any point in the process.
- 2.6 Upon completion of assessment: If the complaint is deemed to have merit, seek to produce a resolution and advise the student of the outcome where possible. Complete the 'Assessment of Student Concerns Form' [See Appendix #3]. If the complaint is deemed to lack merit, inform the students by email of the decision, including a brief explanation of the decision to cease investigation and the reasons for making this decision.
- 2.6.1 If required and feasible, bring the college and student(s) together to discuss the situation to clarify the concern/complaint. (In these situations, a college employee or faculty member may be accompanied by their union representative, and the student(s) may be accompanied by a representative from the Student Association.)
  - 2.6.2 Students who disagree with the Chair's assessment of the complaint may appeal their concerns to the Dean.

### **3.0 Procedures for the Dean:**

- 3.1** In the event a formal complaint is appealed to the Dean, the Dean will reassess the complaint according to procedures outlined in Appendix #2 (the Dean will follow the same investigative procedures as the Chair).
- 3.2** If the complaint is deemed to have merit, the Dean will seek to resolve the complaint according to procedures outlined in Appendix 3.0 (the Dean will follow the same investigative procedures as the Chair).

### **4.0 DISAGREEMENT REGARDING THE VALIDITY OF A CONCERN OR COMPLAINT**

- 4.1 If the faculty member disagrees with the Chair or Dean's assessment of a complaint, the faculty member is entitled to recourse, according to the **Academic Employees Collective Agreement** [link to agreement will be provided]

The Student Complaint Form (Appendix #1); The Initial Chair Assessment Form (Appendix #2) along with relevant supporting documentation and the Final Assessment of the Concern/Complaint (Appendix #3) will be kept by the relevant program for a minimum of 2 years from the date of the final assessment.

## APPENDIX #1: TEMPLATE FOR BRINGING FORWARD EDUCATIONAL COMPLAINTS

Please use the following template when bringing forward an educational complaint. Students may choose to submit the completed form or draft a signed document following the same format.

### A: Student Information

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Please provide accurate information. If you cannot be contacted, you risk missing important deadlines and information and may compromise the effectiveness of the assessment of your complaint.

Last Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

First Name/Preferred Name \_\_\_\_\_

Student I.D. # \_\_\_\_\_

GBC Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

### B: Details of Educational Complaint

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#### 1. Type of Educational Complaint

Please place a checkmark beside the line that best describes the educational concern you wish to have assessed.

Course-level (e.g. concerns related to course outline or delivery of course material)

Program-level (e.g. concerns related to proper resources or program timelines)

#### 2. Course & Program Information

Please fill in the chart below with the course and/or program information that is relevant to your academic appeal.

Course Name \_\_\_\_\_

Course Code \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Name \_\_\_\_\_

Program Name \_\_\_\_\_

Program Code \_\_\_\_\_

#### 3. Explanation of Educational Complaint: (Attach additional pages if necessary)



- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**C: Application Submission**

Note: After meeting with your Chair, you have **5 working days** to agree on the nature of the complaint with the Chair (or relevant academic manager) and sign this complaint document.

Please place a checkmark beside each statement that you acknowledge to be true (you must check all):

- I have read George Brown College’s Educational Complaints Policy.
- I am aware of my right to meet with a Student Association advisor to clarify any questions I may have about the educational complaints process.
- I have met with the faculty and attempted to resolve my concern(s).  
Please specify the meeting date (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_
- I have met with the Chair and we have agreed on the nature of the complaint.  
Please specify the meeting date (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that the statements I have made in this Educational Complaints document are true and complete.

I certify that the supporting documents I have submitted are authentic.

I understand that by submitting this application I am requesting to have my complaint formally assessed by my Program Chair or designate.

Student Signature:	
Date:	

Chair (or Designate) Signature:	
Date:	

## APPENDIX #2: ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL COMPLAINTS

### A: Educational Complaint Information

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Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Course Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Name: \_\_\_\_\_

### B: Chair (or Administrative Designate) Assessment Process

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#### Preliminary Assessment

- The student has completed and submitted the proper Educational Complaint Template and, if appropriate, related evidence
  - If the template has not been completed provide the link to the student.
- The Educational Concerns and Complaints policy is the appropriate policy for this action
  - If this is not the appropriate policy inform the student and, where appropriate, advise the student on the proper policy or support to access.
- The Educational Concern articulated in the template may have merit and warrant an investigation
  - If the Chair believes the complaint is without merit they will advise the student by email.
- I have had an initial conversation with the respondent to the student complaint

#### Assessment Process

#### Key issues addressed by the student(s) and the respondent(s):

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Points of agreement between the student(s) and the respondent(s):**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Possible Additional Witnesses:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Evidence & Documentation Collected:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX #3: ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT CONCERNS FORM**

**Appendix #3 Assessment of Student Concerns Form [Internal Use Only]**

Please place a checkmark beside each statement that you acknowledge to be true, and specify details as required:

- I have met with the student and we have formally agreed upon the nature of the complaint. Please specify the meeting date: \_\_\_\_\_
- I have communicated with the involved persons and understand the steps already taken to try to resolve the issue(s).
- I have reviewed all related supporting documentation from both the student and the college representative.
- I have decided that the educational concern has merit.
- The student’s educational concern was resolved through my review.
- I have attached relevant supporting documentation (e.g.: timeline of events leading to the educational complaint; chronological summary of attempts to resolve the issue; relevant emails; course outline; assignment rubrics; other documents).

List of Attached Documents: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Chair’s Signature:

Date:

## APPENDIX #4: Student Response Template

Dear ,

I have completed my assessment of your educational concern that we discussed on [insert date of in-person meeting]. Since that time I have communicated with the involved persons and have reviewed related supporting documentation from all parties involved.

Template #1 [Complaint has merit]:

I have decided that the educational concern has merit and the college is working to address your concern.

[Provide short synopsis of actions taken to address concerns when possible.]

[Note: In some cases determining the process by which the concern will be remedied may not be immediately known. In other cases confidentiality may limit the ability to provide specific details of the remedy that was taken to address the concern. In these cases, articulate this to the student.]

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Template #2 [Complaint lacks merit]:

I have decided that the educational concern does not have merit.

[Provide reasoning.]

As articulated in section #3 of the Educational Concerns and Complaints policy, you have the right to appeal this decision. If you wish to appeal, please contact [include contact information for Dean and/or appropriate administrative support].

## **NON-COMPLIANCE IMPLICATIONS**

This policy has been sanctioned by George Brown College, requiring compliance across the college. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary measures commensurate with the offence.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Appendix 1: Procedures for the Expression of Educational Complaints under this Policy

Appendix 2: Template for Bringing Forward Educational Complaints

Appendix 3: Assessment of Educational Complaints

## **RELATED POLICIES**

Academic Appeals Policy

Accessible Learning Policy

AODA Accessibility Policy

Employee Code of Conduct – Academic Staff

Code of Student Behaviour and Community Standards Policy

Curriculum Policy

Office of the Registrar's Policies

Human Rights Discrimination and Harassment Policy

## **RELATED MATERIALS**

Academic Appeal Hearing Manual (available from the Office of Academic Excellence)

Academic Employees Collective Agreement

