



## Public Complaint Policy

Georgia Northwestern Technical College (GNTC) is committed to providing accurate information regarding the quality educational programs and services offered to GNTC students, faculty, staff, and the community. GNTC strives to ensure that we provide our customers with a high standard of service and to consistently meet and exceed expectations.

This policy details the procedures in which members of the public may express and resolve misunderstandings, complaints, or grievances about their dissatisfaction with GNTC services. This policy does not apply to the following complaints and appeals. Policy and procedures for these are contained in other policy statements:

- Academic
- Equal Opportunity
- Gender/Sexual Harassment
- Human Resources
- Student Discipline
- Any formal appeal or grievance covered by another GNTC policy (e.g. code of conduct, admissions, financial aid, etc.)
- Appeal and grievance policies and procedures explicitly described in the State Board of the Technical College System of Georgia Policy Manual

The following procedure outlines the rights of a member of the public to file a complaint against Georgia Northwestern Technical College.

### Informal Complaint Procedure

The college recognizes that disputes may sometimes arise. Complainants are encouraged to seek informal resolution of their grievances or concerns. The informal complaint procedure is intended to encourage communication between the parties involved in order to facilitate a mutual understanding of different perspectives regarding the complaint. An individual is not required to seek resolution nor does the seeking of an informal complaint prohibit the individual from filing a formal complaint.

### Formal Complaint Procedure

If resolution is not satisfactory at the informal level, or if a member of the public does not wish to follow the informal process, a formal complaint must be submitted.

The College will deal with legitimate complaints in a fair, prompt, and objective manner. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted. However, all information is kept in strict

confidence, shared only on a need-to-know basis. Complaints will be dealt with promptly and constructively. All complaints will be dealt with in confidence but shared with any person who may be the subject of a complaint. The outcomes of any complaint will be shared with the complainant and any College staff involved.

A formal complaint must be in writing and submitted to the appropriate vice president supervising the area. The formal complaint must specifically state the basis for the complaint (person or area to whom the complainant addresses) and the remedy that the complainant seeks. The appropriate vice president will investigate the complaint to determine its validity.

This would include:

1. A meeting with the complainant.
2. A meeting with the faculty or staff member against whom the complaint was lodged. In the case of a complaint regarding procedures, the meeting would be with the individual responsible for the particular program or service in question.
3. Meetings or discussions with other appropriate faculty, staff, or students.

The vice president, upon clarifying the nature of the complaint, should respond in writing to the complainant lodging the complaint within seven (7) days. The response should include:

1. Acknowledgment of receipt of the complaint.
2. A statement regarding action taken.

If the complainant does not get a satisfactory resolution to his/her complaint, resolution may be sought by appealing to the president. A written description of the complaint, including all pertinent details and the solution offered by the vice president, must be provided to the president. The appeal must be received within ten (10) business days after the failure to receive satisfaction from the vice president.

Once the president receives the formal complaint, he/she has ten (10) business days to reply in writing to the complainant. Once the president makes a decision on the appeal, that decision is final. No further appeal is heard.

The appropriate vice president supervising the area where the complaint is filed shall keep all documents associated with the complaint as part of the files of the college. The records may be subject to public disclosure laws and will be kept according to the state records retention laws.

Note: Any complaint or grievance filed against a vice president should be made directly to the college president. Any complaint against a college president should be made directly to the TCSG commissioner.

#### Complaints to Third Parties Procedure

Complaints made by students, faculty, staff, or the public to third parties (e.g., Governor's Office, Congressional Office, Technical College System of Georgia, accreditors) will be addressed using the procedures set forth by the third party.

Georgia Northwestern Technical College is accredited by the Commission on

Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award associate degrees, diplomas, and technical certificates of credit. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033-4097 or call (404) 679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of Georgia Northwestern Technical College. Inquiries such as admission requirements, financial aid, educational programs, etc., should be addressed directly to Georgia Northwestern Technical College (One Maurice Culberson Drive, Rome, GA 30161, Phone 706-295-6963, Fax 706-295-6944) and not to the Commission's office.

The Commission's complaint procedures are for the purpose of addressing significant noncompliance with the Commission's standards, policies, or procedures, the procedures are not intended to be used to involve the Commission in disputes between individuals and member institutions, or cause the Commission to interpose itself as a reviewing authority in individual matters of admission, grades, granting or transferability of credits, application of academic policies, fees or other financial matters, disciplinary matters or other contractual rights and obligations. Nor does the Commission seek redress on an individual's behalf. Under no circumstances does the Commission respond to, or take action on, any complaint or any allegation that contains defamatory statements.

Further, the Commission will not serve as a grievance panel when the outcome of institutional grievance or appeal processes is unsatisfactory to the complainant. The Commission expects individuals to attempt to resolve the issue through all means available to the complainant, including following the institution's own published grievance procedures, before submitting a complaint to the Commission. Therefore, the Commission's usual practice is not to consider a complaint that is currently in administrative proceedings, including institutional proceedings, or in litigation. However, if there is substantial, credible evidence that indicates systemic problems with an accredited institution, the Commission may, at its discretion, choose to proceed with the review.