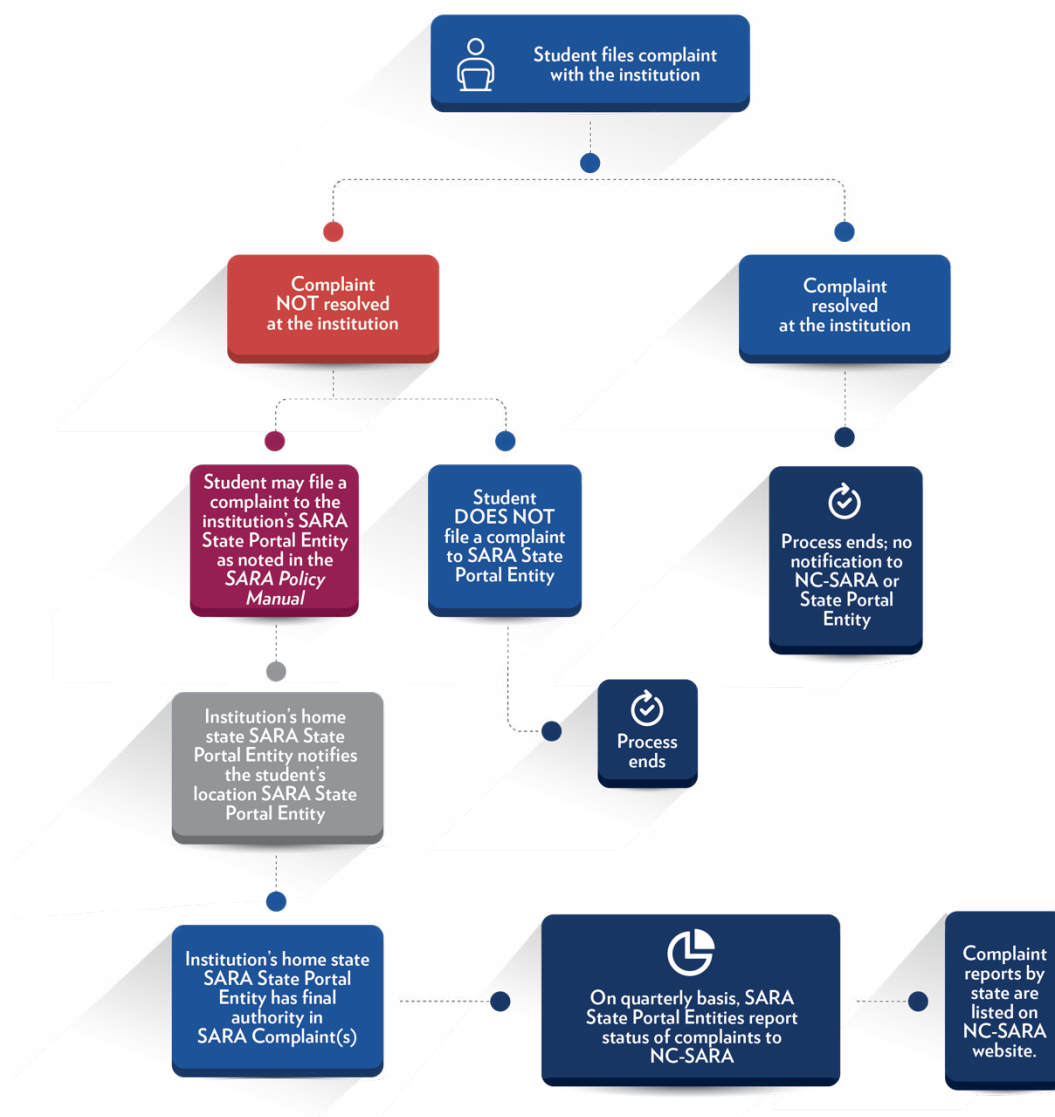


4.5 Process for resolving complaints

SARA STUDENT COMPLAINT PROCESS



*Student complaints about grades or student conduct may not be filed to the SARA State Portal Entity. Complaints about fraud or criminal activity can go to any state Attorney General or the Office of Inspector General or complaint unit of the Dept of Education. *January 2021*

- Complaints against an institution operating under SARA policies go first through the institution's own procedures for resolution of grievances. Allegations of criminal offenses or alleged violations of a state's general-purpose laws may be made directly to the relevant state agencies.
- Complaints regarding student grades or student conduct violations are governed entirely by institutional policy and the laws of the SARA institution's home state.

- c. If a person bringing a complaint is not satisfied with the outcome of the institutional process for handling complaints, the complaint (except for complaints about grades or student conduct violations) may be appealed, within two years of the incident about which the complaint is made, to the SARA State Portal Entity in the home state of the institution against which the complaint has been lodged. That SARA State Portal Entity shall notify the SARA State Portal Entity of the state in which the student is located of receipt of that appealed complaint. The resolution of the complaint by the institution's home state SARA State Portal Entity, through its SARA complaint resolution process, will be final, except for complaints that fall under the provision "g" below.
- d. While the final resolution of the complaint rests with the SARA State Portal Entity in the home state of the institution against which the complaint has been lodged, the SARA State Portal Entity in the complainant's location state may assist as needed. The final disposition of a complaint resolved by the home state shall be communicated to the SARA State Portal Entity in the state where the student lived at the time of the incident leading to the complaint, if known.
- e. While final resolution of complaints (for purposes of adjudication of the complaint and enforcement of any resultant remedies or redress) resides in certain cases with institutions (complaints about grades or student conduct violations), or more generally with the relevant institution's home state SARA State Portal Entity (all other complaints), the regional compact(s) administering SARA may consider a disputed complaint as a "case file" if concerns are raised against a SARA member state with regard to whether that state is abiding by SARA policies, as promulgated in the *SARA Policy Manual*. The regional compact may review such institutional concerns in determining whether a state under its SARA purview is abiding by SARA policies. Similarly, a complaint "case file" may also be reviewed by NC-SARA in considering whether a regional compact is ensuring that its SARA member states are abiding by the SARA policies required for their membership in SARA.
- f. SARA State Portal Entities shall report quarterly to NC-SARA the number and disposition of appealed complaints that are not resolved at the institutional level. NC-SARA shall make that information publicly available on its website. Such data will create transparency and can be used in determining whether a regional compact is ensuring that its SARA member states and those states' institutions are abiding by the policies required for state membership and institutional participation in SARA.
- g. Nothing in the *SARA Policy Manual* precludes a state from using its laws of general application to pursue action against an institution that violates those laws.