

WVU College of Law Policy for Student Complaints Implicating Compliance with ABA Accreditation Standards

1.0 Policy Statement Regarding Student Complaints Under ABA Standard 510

As an ABA-accredited law school, the West Virginia University College of Law gives continual attention to ensuring its compliance with the ABA Standards for the Approval of Law Schools. (Those standards may be found at:

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/legal_education/resources/standards.html.)

ABA Standard 510 requires law schools to develop a policy and procedures through which students can file written complaints that bring to the school's attention significant problems that directly implicate the law school's compliance with ABA Standards. If students see a potential ABA-compliance problem that the College of Law has failed to see or to adequately address, they are encouraged to bring the problem to our attention through the procedures below. Students are, of course, free to raise complaints/concerns about ABA compliance or any other matters with the administration informally at any time. This policy governs more formal complaints on the specific matter of programmatic compliance with ABA Standards.

2.0 Scope of this Policy

This policy governs written complaints raising a significant question about the College of Law's program of legal education and its compliance with ABA Standards. It does not displace more specific policies regarding grade appeals, student misconduct, sexual harassment, or the like. Any complaints or concerns not governed by this policy or by other specific policies should be raised with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and/or the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs. These individuals will be able to address the concern or to determine the appropriate avenue for addressing it.

3.0 Procedures for Filing a "Standard 510 Complaint"

3.1 If a student has a concern that directly and significantly implicates the law school's program of legal education and its compliance with the ABA Standards, the student may file a written complaint with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The submitted writing should be identified as a "Standard 510 Complaint," and it may be submitted to the Associate Dean's office in person, by mail, or by an email from the student's WVU email account.

3.2 The written complaint should describe the nature of the concern in enough detail to facilitate an investigation of the complaint and should explain how the matter raises a question of whether the College of Law's program of legal education complies with ABA Standards. The complaint should explain precisely which ABA Standard or standards are implicated by the student's concern(s).

3.3 The College of Law will provide a response to signed complaints via the student's WVU email account and/or a meeting with the student. Complaints may be submitted anonymously if a student chooses. Anonymous complaints will be investigated in accordance with the procedures below, but (obviously) a student who submits an anonymous complaint will not receive an individual response.

4.0 Investigation and Resolution

4.1 The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs will acknowledge receipt of any signed Standard 510 Complaint within 10 business days of receipt of the written complaint by sending an email to the student's WVU email account. All complaints denominated by students as "Standard 510 Complaints" will be logged as required by section 6.0 below. In some cases, however, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs may determine that the complaint does not fall within the terms of this policy. (E.g., the complaint involves an individual student grievance about a class rather than a matter of programmatic compliance.) Where this is so, the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs will so inform the student at the time of acknowledging receipt of the complaint and will discuss with the student how concerns falling outside the scope of this policy might be properly addressed. Where the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs determines that the complaint falls within the terms of this policy, the faculty will be notified of the complaint no later than the next regularly scheduled faculty meeting.

4.2 The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs may, within his or her discretion, delegate responsibility for investigating the complaint to another administrator, faculty member, or staff member.

4.3 Once the complaint has been acknowledged as required by section 4.1, the Associate Dean or the Associate Dean's designee will respond to the student as soon as possible but no later than 30 business days after sending acknowledgement of the complaint. If the matter is not yet resolved and continuing investigation is required, the student will be informed of the steps that have been taken and the reason why an appropriate resolution requires more time.

4.4 Once an investigation is complete, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs will initiate any needed remedial action and will inform the student complainant of the final resolution of the matter through a written response (transmitted to the student's WVU email), a meeting, or both. In the event an investigation proceeds beyond 30 business days, the student will be informed of the Associate Dean's resolution within ten business days of the completion of the investigation. The faculty will also be timely notified of the resolution.

5.0 Appeal

5.1 If a student regards the school's response to his/her complaint as inadequate, she may file a written appeal with the Dean within 10 business days of being informed of the

Associate Dean's resolution. The written appeal must be signed by the student and should explain why the student believes that the College of Law still fails to comply with the ABA Standards. The Dean will issue a written decision on the student's appeal within 30 business days, and the Dean's decision will be final.

6.0 Recordkeeping for Standard 510 Complaints

A log of all Standard 510 Complaints – including the date received, the general nature of the complaint, and its resolution including any decision on appeal – shall be maintained by the office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. Any documentation of a complaint – e.g., the original written complaint and any written responses to it – will be maintained in a file for a period of eight years.