State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) and Student Complaint Procedures for Online Courses

Massachusetts became a member of the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) in June 2018. NEC is applying to join via the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (MA-SARA).

Following acceptance of NEC’s application by MA-SARA, NEC students enrolled in online courses or programs who are residents of states other than Massachusetts, and when such state is a participant of SARA, may submit a complaint regarding such course or program to the Dean of Students using the Student Complaint Form for Online Classes.

NEC will follow its established and published procedures in addressing any such complaint. These procedures are available in the Student Handbook under “Grievances” at the following link: https://necmusic.edu/student-handbook/non-academic-policies.

The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) makes available to all students a Student Complaint Process for appeals that can be filed with the DHE based on their residency:

- **For Massachusetts Residents and Online Students in Non-SARA Member States and Territories**

  After you have exhausted the complaint procedures made available above, if your complaint has not been resolved, you may file a consumer complaint with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education by using the consumer complaint form. The DHE consumer complaint form should be used by students who are located in:

  - Massachusetts
  - Non-SARA Member States or Territories (e.g., California, Guam, etc.)

- **For Online Students Located in SARA Member States and Territories**

  After you have exhausted the complaint procedures made available above, if your complaint has not been resolved, NEC students enrolled in online courses or programs who are residents of states other than Massachusetts, and when such state is a participant of SARA, may appeal NEC’s decision to the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE). The form for submitting a complaint is available at the DHE’s website: https://www.mass.edu/foradmin/sara/complaints.asp. Please note that this process is only available for complaints “…that pertain to distance (online) education provided by Massachusetts-based SARA institutions to students residing in other states pursuant to SARA only” (https://www.mass.edu/foradmin/sara/complaints.asp).
Additional information from the DHE’s SARA complaint website is below:

The SARA complaint process is as follows:

1. Students must first attempt to resolve their complaint using internal administrative procedures offered by the SARA institution.
2. After all administrative remedies have been exhausted with the MA-SARA institution, the student may submit a SARA Complaint via the URL above.
3. The Department shall send a copy of the complaint to the institution that is the subject of the complaint;
4. Within 30 days of the date that the Department sends a copy of the complaint to the institution, the institution must provide a written response to the student and the Department.

More information about DHE’s complaint processes can be found here.

Contact information for the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education is listed below, and is also available at the MA-SARA links above:

One Ashburton Place, Room 1401
Boston, MA  02108
(617) 994-6950

New England Conservatory will not retaliate in any way against an individual who reports a perceived violation of NEC policy or local, state, or federal law. If a student believes they have been the target of prohibited retaliation, they should immediately contact the Dean of Students. Any person found to have engaged in prohibited retaliation shall be subject to disciplinary action.

290 Huntington Avenue, Boston, MA, 02115
Office of Student Services (617) 585-1310