

State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) is an agreement among member states, districts and territories that establishes comparable national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. It is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state. SARA is overseen by a National Council and administered by four regional education compacts. The [Connecticut Office of Higher Education became a member of SARA](#) in 2017, thus allowing Charter Oak State College to apply to be a member of SARA. This was approved February 2017. This allows Charter Oak State College to accept students from all SARA approved states and territories. Even though California is not a member of SARA, they have implemented a complaint process thus allowing their residents to take courses from out of state institutions.

Student Complaints

Pursuant to federal regulations and the terms of SARA, the Office of Higher Education is responsible for the investigation and resolution of out-of-state students' complaints against institutions of higher education based in Connecticut and offering distance education via SARA. Note that issues regarding student life, such as discipline, grading, etc., fall solely within the purview of the institution and are not generally investigated. Additionally, the Office of Higher Education does not investigate anonymous complaints or provide legal advice. Currently, SARA institutions are to:

- Apply the tuition refund policies of their home state to students located in other SARA states; and
- For students located in non-SARA states, follow any relevant tuition refund policies of those states.
- Students from California attending these out-of-state institutions can file those complaints online at www.dca.ca.gov or call toll-free 833-942-1120. These complaints could be academic or financial, but they allow students to address concerns and resolve issues related to their educations. The complaint system can also help the state identify any predatory, fraudulent or misleading practices at colleges.

Within two years of the incident complained of, out-of-state students enrolled in a Connecticut institution via SARA may file a complaint in accordance with the following steps:

1. The student must attempt to resolve the complaint by exhausting the institution's established internal grievance procedures. These are usually published in the institution's catalog, student handbook and/or posted on the institution's website. Absent extenuating circumstances, the Office of Higher Education will not investigate complaints filed by students who have not first sought a resolution with the institution.
2. If all remedies at the institutional level have been exhausted and the complaint is not resolved, the student may file a complaint with the Office of Higher Education. To file a complaint, please follow [these procedures](#). All documentation for review related to the complaint must be provided by the student as part of the filing.
3. The Office of Higher Education will process the complaint and provide copies of all documents filed with the complaint to the institution. The institution has 20 days to respond. After receiving a response and conducting an investigation, the Office of Higher Education will issue a findings report to all parties. The findings report is final.

If a Connecticut student is enrolled in a distance education program offered by a SARA institution based in another state, the student should contact the portal agency in that state to pursue the complaint process. Connecticut students enrolled in Connecticut institutions must first exhaust an institution's established internal grievance procedures, and then should contact the prior to filing a complaint.

All correspondence, including institutional applications and student complaints, should be sent via or post to:

Emily Bjornberg
Academic Affairs
Connecticut Office of Higher Education
450 Columbus Blvd, Suite 707
Hartford, CT 06103

<https://nc-sara.org/>