

WAC 132B-120-220 Student complaint, grievance and grade appeal processes. The purpose of these procedures is to provide guidelines which enable a student to express and resolve misunderstandings, complaints, or grievances in a fair and equitable manner. Students have the right to receive clear information and fair application of college policies, standards, rules and requirements and are responsible for complying with them in their relationships with college personnel. This grievance procedure emphasizes an informal resolution which promotes constructive dialogue and understanding.

(1) The complaint process. A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with the performance of a college employee or with the implementation of policy and procedure. The goal is to informally resolve the complaint with the employee most closely responsible for the policy, procedure or action. The college employee and student shall make a good faith effort to resolve the issue on a one-to-one basis. (If the complaint is about a grade, follow the grade appeal process below.) Both parties should openly discuss the concern, attempt to understand the other's perspective, explore alternatives and attempt to arrive at a satisfactory resolution.

The college recognizes that in some cases a student will be unwilling or unable to speak directly with the employee. In such cases, the student may proceed to step one of the grievance process.

In general, a student wishing to express a complaint should do so no later than three weeks from the time the student became aware of the concern.

For assistance in identifying the appropriate person a student should contact, the office of the vice president for student services is available to assist in that determination.

The following are guidelines for determining who a student should contact with a complaint regarding:

Academic/instruction: Faculty/dean/vice president instruction;

Accommodations: Coordinator of disability support services/vice president student services;

Bookstore: Bookstore manager/vice president administrative services;

Problem student conduct: vice president for student services;

Discrimination/harassment: vice president student services/human resources;

Facilities: Director of campus operations/vice president for administrative services;

Financial aid: Director of financial aid/vice president for student services;

Other: vice president for student services office for most appropriate contact.

(2) The grievance process. A grievance is a formal procedure instituted when a complaint is not resolved through the informal complaint process. It involves taking the concern to a person other than the employee involved such as a supervisor, dean or vice president. For assistance in identifying the specific person a student should contact the vice president for student services office. The following procedures shall be used when a student initiates the grievance process.

(a) A discussion with the dean/vice president or supervisor who shall attempt to resolve the matter promptly and fairly. The student may be asked to express the grievance in writing. Written grievances should include an explanation of what has happened, the nature of the

student's concern, what the student and/or others have done about it to date and what resolution the student seeks.

(b) The supervisor will investigate and may:

(i) Render an immediate decision;

(ii) Ask the staff members for a written response;

(iii) Request a meeting of one or both parties individually or together; and/or

(iv) Request supporting materials prior to rendering a decision.

In the case of a written grievance, the supervisor will provide a written decision within fifteen instructional days of receipt of the written grievance. If an investigation requires more time, the deadline may be extended to a mutually agreed future date.

(c) If the student feels a satisfactory resolution was not achieved in step two, he/she may appeal to the president of the college within five instructional days of receipt of the written decision. The president may amend, modify, reverse or accept the recommendation of the vice president. The decision of the president shall be final.

In general a student wishing to express a complaint should do so no later than three weeks from the time the student became aware of the concern. In any event, with the exception of discrimination and harassment, informal complaints and formal grievances must be filed within one academic quarter of the inciting event. Timely initiation of a complaint rests with the student.

The appropriate vice president may suspend this rule under exceptional circumstances such as extended illness or leave of a party to the complaint. When either party to the complaint is no longer present at the college and does not expect to return, the vice president will give the absent party reasonable opportunity to reply to the complaint before making a decision.

(3) The grade appeal process.

(a) Before a student can file a formal or written grade appeal, he or she should try to resolve the issue directly with the instructor. Grade appeals should occur within one quarter of issuance of the grade. In any event, appeals will not be considered beyond one year of the grade report.

(b) If direct discussion with the faculty does not resolve the grade dispute to the student's satisfaction the student, within ten instructional days after meeting with the faculty, shall take the matter to the vice president for instruction. The student shall express the appeal in writing. The written appeal should include the course and instructor involved, an explanation of why the student believes the grade received is unfair or unwarranted, what steps the student has taken with the faculty member to resolve the issue, and what resolution the student seeks.

(c) The vice president for instruction will attempt to investigate the appeal and will:

(i) Review the course syllabus;

(ii) Meet with the course instructor; and

(iii) May request and review other supporting documentation prior to rendering a decision.

Within ten instructional days of receiving the written appeal, the vice president of instruction will provide a written decision. If an investigation requires more time, the deadline may be extended to a mutually agreed future date.

(d) If the student feels satisfactory resolution was not achieved in step three, he/she may, within five instructional days of receipt of the written decision, notify the vice president for instruction to

request a hearing before the academic review committee. The committee will be chaired by the vice president for student services or designee.

(i) If anyone on the academic review committee perceives a conflict of interest, they will recuse themselves from the committee for the duration of the appeal. Students are to be given an opportunity to talk with the committee chairperson regarding any concerns about committee membership.

(ii) As soon as possible, the academic review committee (with a minimum attendance of six individuals) will meet with the student, instructor, the vice president of instruction and relevant parties to hear the points at issue in the appeal. The committee will provide its written decision to all parties within five instructional days following the hearing. The decision is final and may not be reviewed further.

(4) Grievances excluded. The student grievance procedure described in this section is not intended to cover complaints of discrimination or sexual harassment. The college has separate, specific procedures for such complaints. See the vice president for student services for information on those specific procedures.

A student may not use the provisions of these sections as the basis for filing a grievance based on the outcome of summary or other disciplinary proceedings described in earlier sections of this student rights and responsibilities code or for resolution of specific categories of student complaints where other procedures are required.

Federal and state laws, rules and regulations, in addition to policies, regulations and procedures adopted by the state board for community college education or the board of trustees of Community College District No. 2 shall not be grievable matters.

(5) Records. The appropriate supervisor shall keep all written statements or transcripts as follows:

(a) Complaints for one year from the initial complaint;

(b) Grievances for six years from the initial complaint;

(c) Grade appeals for five years following the last quarter attended by the student. At that time, the files shall be destroyed.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 28B.50.140.13 [28B.50.140(13)]. WSR 10-17-031, § 132B-120-220, filed 8/9/10, effective 9/9/10. Statutory Authority: RCW 28B.50.140. WSR 04-01-100, § 132B-120-220, filed 12/16/03, effective 1/16/04. Statutory Authority: RCW 28B.50.140(13). WSR 98-09-012, § 132B-120-220, filed 4/6/98, effective 5/7/98.]