



## **STUDENT COMPLAINTS, GRIEVANCES AND APPEALS**

### **STUDENT COMPLAINTS**

PVCC students and members of the public have the right to file informal and formal complaints against PVCC personnel or actions. Verbal complaints are considered informal and the procedure for informal complaints is to be followed. Written complaints (hard copy and e-mail) are considered formal and the procedure for formal complaints is to be followed.

This policy does not apply to (a) student grade appeals, (b) all human resource policies, (c) all appeal and grievance policies and procedures explicitly described in the *VCCS Policy Manual*, (d) any formal appeal or grievance covered by another PVCC policy (e.g., code of conduct, admissions, financial aid, satisfactory academic progress, etc.).

#### **1. Policy and Procedure for Informal Complaints**

Informal (verbal) complaints by students or members of the public are to be dealt with through a face-to-face discussion between the complainant and the responsible college administrator supervising the area. If through this process, a mutually satisfactory resolution of the complaint cannot be reached, the complainant may put the complaint in writing and move to the policy and procedure on formal complaints or the complaint will be considered inactive.

It is the responsibility of the administrator involved in an informal complaint to write a memorandum for the record detailing the nature of the complaint and the resolution. The administrator is to retain such memoranda in a file accessible to his/her supervisor upon request.

#### **2. Policy and Procedure for Formal Complaints**

1. Formal complaints by students or members of the public are to be dealt with by the responsible college administrator supervising an area. Faculty and staff who receive a formal complaint should forward it to the supervisor of the area(s) involved in the

complaint.

2. The administrator handling the complaint is to gather information as necessary. Information must be gathered from the complainant.
3. A written response (hard copy or e-mail) is to be sent to the complainant. A copy of the complaint and the written response is to be sent to the assistant to the president.
4. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, he/she may file a written complaint to the president. In such cases, the president will gather information and provide a final written response to the complainant with a copy to the assistant to the president.
5. The assistant to the president will maintain a file of all formal complaints and responses.

## **STUDENT GRIEVANCES**

The Student Grievance Procedure is designed to provide an equitable process by which students at Piedmont Virginia Community College may resolve a grievance. A grievance is defined as a written claim raised by a student alleging improper, unfair, arbitrary, or discriminatory action by an employee or a student involving the application of a specific provision of a college rule or regulation. A grievance is defined as a difference or dispute between a student and a faculty member, administrator, or member of the classified staff with respect to the application of the rules, regulations, policies and procedures of the College or the Virginia Community College System as they affect the activities or status of each student.

Grievable issues must be related to interpretation or application of policy. Personal opinions, matters of taste or preference, and circumstances covered by external rules, laws, or guidelines are not typically grievable under the Student Grievance Procedure. Grade appeals, financial aid appeals, competitive admission program appeals, and Code of Conduct appeals including charges of academic dishonesty, and parking ticket and fine appeals have their own procedures and are excluded from the Student Grievance Procedure.

The college administration and the Threat Assessment Team reserves the right to supersede any step in the PVCC Student Grievance Procedure when doing so is in the best interest of protecting the safety of the college community and the individual(s) involved.

### **1. Policy and Procedure for Student Grievances**

**Step 1.** The student with the grievance shall first discuss the grievance with the faculty member, administrator, or member of the classified staff involved. Every reasonable effort should be made by both parties to resolve the matter at this step. A grievance must be raised within twenty (20) school days from the time the student reasonably should have gained knowledge of the occurrence.

**Step 2.** If the student is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at Step 1, a written statement of the grievance shall be sent to the faculty member, administrator, or member of the classified staff within five (5) school days of the discussion at Step 1. This written statement shall include the current date, the date the grievance occurred, an explanation of the grievance, and a statement presenting the student's recommended action to resolve the grievance. The faculty member, administrator, or member of the classified staff must respond in writing within five (5) school days.

**Step 3.** If the student is not satisfied with the written response obtained in Step 2, or the faculty member, administrator or member of the classified staff fails to answer the grievance, the student shall contact the immediate supervisor within five (5) school days. A copy of the original written grievance and the reply (if available) should be provided to the supervisor. Within five (5) school days of receipt of the student's notification, the supervisor shall schedule a conference with all involved persons in an attempt to resolve the grievance. Notification of the supervisor's decision will be given in writing within five (5) school days after the conference.

**Step 4.** If the student is not satisfied with the disposition at Step 3, a written appeal may be made to the appropriate vice president (or president, if the grievance involves a Vice President or if the VP is involved at earlier steps) within five (5) school days of the hearing at Step 3. The student has the option of having a conference with the appropriate vice president, or the student may present the case before a selected panel. The panel will include three students, three persons from the appropriate faculty, administrative or classified ranks, and the Dean of Student Services who will serve as Chair of the panel. Selection of the panel will be made by the Vice President for Instruction and Student Services, with approval by the President. The decision of the appropriate vice president or panel is binding. Final notification of the decision at Step 4 will be presented in writing within five (5) school days of the termination of the conference or panel.

## **STUDENT APPEALS**

### **1. GRADE APPEAL POLICY**

Faculty members are responsible for informing students of the basis on which grades in each class will be assigned. Assignment of grades is the responsibility of the faculty member and presumes fairness and best professional judgment.

It should be understood that the student who chooses to appeal a grade assumes the burden of proof concerning any perceived error in the grade assigned.

**Step 1.** The student who believes a course grade received to be in error may appeal directly to the instructor within 10 school days after the beginning of classes of the semester following the one in which the grade was reported. Every reasonable effort should be made by both parties to resolve the matter.

**Step 2.** If Step 1 does not resolve the question, the student may file a written appeal to the division dean within five school days after an attempt to resolve the matter with the faculty member. The division dean will conference with the student and faculty member via e-mail, telephone, video, or in person in an effort to resolve the grade appeal. The division dean may within five school days of the conference appoint a committee of three faculty members and two students to review and make a recommendation on the matter. Within five school days of the conference, or if a committee is formed within five school days of the receipt of the committee's recommendation, the division dean will prepare a report of the disposition of the matter with copies to the student, the faculty member, and the divisional record.

**Step 3.** If either the student or the faculty member wishes to appeal Step 2 disposition of the matter, he or she may do so in writing to the vice president for instruction and student services within five school days of the receipt of the division dean's report. If, in the vice president's discretion, the appeal and record of previous actions indicate further consideration of the matter is not warranted, the vice president will so notify the student, faculty member, and division dean within five school days, and the division dean's decision shall be final and binding on all parties.

If the vice president grants the appeal, he or she may schedule a conference via e-mail, telephone, video, or in person with the division dean, faculty member, and student. Within five school days of the conference, the vice president will prepare a written decision with copies to the student, faculty member, and division dean. The vice president's decision shall be final and binding on all parties.

## **2. FINANCIAL AID APPEALS**

Students who fail to meet the credit progress schedule, the cumulative grade point average, and/or satisfactory academic progress (SAP) standards and lose eligibility for financial aid have the right to appeal the financial aid suspension (SS). Appeals will be evaluated by the Financial Aid Appeals Panel. The Financial Aid Appeals Panel will include three students, three persons chosen from the faculty, administrative or classified ranks, and the Dean of Student Services who will serve as Chair of the panel. Selection of the panel will be made by the Vice President for Instruction and Student Services, with approval by the President. Decisions of the Appeal Panel are final. Students must make their appeals in writing and be willing to meet with the panel. Students must complete the Financial Aid Appeal Application. Students are strongly encouraged to appeal within seven (7) school days of notification of suspension to allow adequate time for processing and review.

## **3. STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT APPEALS**

The Student Code of Conduct enumerates clear expectations of students as members of the college community, the kind of unacceptable behavior that may result in disciplinary action, and sanctions and disciplinary proceedings utilized when the code is not observed. While on college property or at college sponsored/supervised events, all persons, including guests of students,

are required to abide by all college policies, procedures, practices, and related rules and regulations. Copies of the PVCC Code of Conduct are available in the Admissions and Advising Center and at the college receptionist area. The current code of conduct is posted on the college Web site [http://www.pvcc.edu/files/media/code\\_of\\_conduct.pdf](http://www.pvcc.edu/files/media/code_of_conduct.pdf).

Students who have been charged with a student code of conduct violation and who have received a minor or major sanction may appeal to the President in writing within 10 school days of the decision. The President shall take one of three actions: uphold the sanction, reverse the sanction, or dismiss the sanction. The decision of the President is final.

#### **4. COMPETITIVE ADMISSION PROGRAM APPEALS**

Students who are denied admission to competitive admission programs have the right to appeal. Students who are denied admissions should first meet with the appropriate program director to discuss the reasons why the student was denied admission. If this meeting does not resolve the issue, the student may file a written appeal to the appropriate program director. Appeals must be received within seven (7) school days after the meeting with the respective program director.

The appeal should include the reasons why the student feels their application should be reconsidered, what criteria or information the student feels was overlooked and any supporting documentation.

Appeals will be evaluated by the Admissions Appeals Panel. The Admissions Appeal Panel is made up of three faculty from outside of the health and life sciences division, three students including one currently enrolled in a health science competitive admission program, and the Dean of Health and Life Sciences who will serve as Chair of the panel. Selection of the panel will be made by the Vice President for Instruction and Student Services with approval by the President. The decision of the Admissions Appeals Committee is final.

#### **5. PARKING TICKET AND FINES APPEALS**

Students who have received parking citations and fines may appeal in writing to the Parking Appeals Panel through the Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services. The Parking Appeals Panel consists of two students, one employee with faculty rank and one classified employee. Selection of the Panel will be made by the Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services with approval by the President. The Vice President for Finance and Administrative Services will inform students who appeal parking tickets in writing of the results of the appeal.

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