



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. There are two types of student grievances.

Academic grievance: An academic grievance is an appeal of a final course grade or dismissal from an academic program. An academic grievance must be based on at least one of the following: arbitrary and/or capricious action on the part of the faculty member, including the assignment of a grade or dismissal from a program on some basis other than performance in the course or program; application of standards different from those that were applied to other students in the same course or program; the assignment of a grade not in accordance with the grading protocol on the course syllabus; or dismissal from a program not in accord with the program standards.

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. The student who chooses to appeal a grade assumes the burden of proof concerning any perceived error in the grade assigned.

When a student grieves a dismissal from an academic program or a final grade that has the effect of preventing the student from continuing in a program or course sequence, the student may be permitted to continue in the academic program or course sequence until the grievance process is concluded with the following exception:

- The student is in a nursing or allied health or other clinical program where the students' continuation in the program may pose a health or safety risk to the student, patients, or others.

Non-academic grievance-A non-academic grievance is a formal difference or dispute between a student and a college employee about the interpretation and/or application of the policies and procedures of the College or the Virginia Community College System that negatively affects the student. A non-academic grievance may be based on one of the following claims: arbitrary and/or capricious actions by a college employee or administrative office; policy or procedure applied unfairly and/or in a different manner than it was applied to others; administrative error in the application of the policy or procedure.

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

Level 1. A grievance must be raised within twenty (20) business days following the event giving rise to the grievance. The student with the grievance shall first meet to discuss the grievance with the faculty member, administrator, or member of the classified staff involved. At the meeting, the student must clearly present his or her case regarding the grieved issue and the resolution he or she seeks. Every reasonable effort should be made by both parties to resolve the matter at this level. In the case of academic grievances, if the faculty member who issued the grade is no longer at the College or is otherwise unavailable, the student should proceed to the division dean at Level 2.

Level 2. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the grievance in Level 1, or the faculty member, supervisor, or other college official fails to answer the grievance, or if the student has been allowed to bypass Level 1, the student may submit a written grievance to the division dean, supervisor, or other college official within ten (10) business days. A copy of the original written grievance and the reply at Level 1 (if available) should be provided. Within ten (10) business days of receipt of the student's grievance, the dean, supervisor, or other college official shall schedule a meeting with all involved persons in an attempt to resolve the grievance. The dean, supervisor, or other college official will prepare a written report of the outcome of the grievance within ten (10) business days after the meeting.

Level 3. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the grievance at Level 2, the student may file a written appeal to the appropriate vice president (or president, if the grievance involves a vice president or if the vice president is involved at earlier steps) within ten (10)

business days of the hearing at Level 2. The Vice President will collect relevant information from all parties and review the record of previous actions.

If, in the judgment of the vice president, the appeal and record of previous actions have resolved the grievance or do not warrant further action, he/she will notify the parties within ten (10) business days of receiving the appeal. The vice president's determination that the grievance does not warrant further action is final.

If, in the judgment of the vice president, the grievance warrants further action, he/she will appoint a Grievance Panel within ten (10) business days of receiving the written appeal.

The panel will include three students, three persons from the appropriate faculty, administrative, or classified ranks, and the Vice President for Instruction and Student Services who will serve as Chair of the panel. In no case may an individual involved in an earlier level of the grievance process serve on the Grievance Panel. Selection of the panel will be made by the Vice President for Instruction and Student Services, in consultation with the Dean of Student Services, and with approval by the President.

Within ten (10) business days after the Grievance Panel has been selected, the Chair will set aside a time and place for the hearing and notify the parties in writing at least 48 hours prior to the hearing. The hearing will be held within fifteen (15) business days after the Grievance Panel has been appointed, and no later than thirty (30) days after the written appeal has been submitted to the vice president.

Both parties may have an adviser present at the hearing; however, each party must so inform the Chair of the panel at least five (5) days prior to the hearing. Either party may consult with their own adviser; however, the adviser may not speak for the party or address the members of the panel. The parties will each have the opportunity to present any information relevant to the grievance. The Panel may also request information from other sources.

The Grievance Panel will make its decision by simple majority vote. The Chair of the Grievance Panel will prepare a written report of the outcome of the hearing and provide it to both parties within ten (10) business days after the conclusion of the hearing. The decision of the Grievance Panel is final and binding.

1. 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) business days of notification of suspension to allow adequate time for processing and review.

2. 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.

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 business 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.

3. 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) business 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.

4. 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. The decision of the Parking Appeals Panel is final.

PVCC Complaints, Grievances and Appeals
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