

## 7.12 Student Grievance Process

**Last Revised:** May 2021

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**Policy:** Piedmont Community College (PCC) encourages the resolution of all non-discipline related disputes involving students through open and informal communication between the affected parties. If a non-discipline dispute remains unresolved, students are provided due process to seek a resolution.

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### **Purpose**

The student grievance procedure provides a process for resolving student disputes with employees. This procedure applies to all student issues, including but not limited to academic issues, student services, or administrative concerns.

The grievance procedure may be used by persons who were enrolled as students at PCC at the time the incident occurred. The person filing the grievance must be the subject of alleged unfair treatment that is related to their status as a student or program participant. A grievance cannot be filed on behalf of another person.

### **Definitions**

**Grievance**—a formal or informal written statement by an individual student indicating that they feel they have been adversely affected by a violation, misapplication, or misinterpretation of the NC General Statutes, College policies, rules, or regulations. A grievance must specify the statute, policy, rule, or regulation in question, and the details of the alleged violation, misapplication, or misinterpretation of the same.

**Academic Disputes**—grievances involving final course grades or satisfactory completion of instructional program requirements.

**Appeal**—the procedure for further consideration of a grievance if the student or employee believes there were exceptional circumstances that affected the grievance procedure decision. An appeal should not be pursued if either the student or the employee simply disagrees with the decisions made during the grievance procedure.

**Complaint**—a document that outlines the stated reason for which the student is filing a grievance.

**Formal**—the informal communication regarding an incident has not led to resolution through initial steps in the procedure and rises to the level of complaint, and the student files an official grievance form. All formal grievances are documented and logged in the Vice President, Student Development’s office.

**Incident**—the situation or circumstance that the student perceives as grievable.

**Informal**—the communication regarding an incident is simply at the inquiry stage and open to resolution without a formal procedure.

**Days**—days on which classes are regularly held by the College. This excludes weekends, closings due to weather conditions, and holidays observed by the College.

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**Approval Authority/Monitoring Authority:** Piedmont Community College’s Board of Trustees has approval authority for this policy. The Vice President, Instruction and the Vice President, Student Development-have monitoring authority.

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**Procedure:**

Section 1: Step One-Informal

- 1.1. In the event the alleged grievance lies with an instructor/staff member, the student must first contact the instructor/staff member to inform them of the alleged grievance and attempt to informally resolve the matter unless the grievance involves unlawful harassment, sexual assault, or a Title IX violation.
  - 1.1.1. If the complaint does involve unlawful harassment, sexual assault, or a Title IX violation, the grievance process begins with Step Three—Formal Grievance. (See PCC Policy 2.18 Sexual Assault, Policy 2.17 Unlawful Harassment, and Policy 2.6 Title IX Complaint Process for additional information.)
- 1.2. Both the student and instructor/staff member must have an informal conference to discuss the situation and document the attempts taken to resolve the grievance at this level.
- 1.3. In the event that the student is unsatisfied with the resolution reached at the informal conference, they may proceed to Step Two within ten (10) business days after the informal conference.
- 1.4. Not proceeding to Step Two within the time period will result in the grievance not being heard and the matter being closed.

Section 2: Step Two- Informal

- 2.1. The student meets with the employee's supervisor to present the grievance within ten (10) business days of the meeting with the employee in an attempt to resolve the issue.
- 2.2. All parties should document the facts and possible outcome for their own records.
  - 2.2.1. If the issue is not resolved at this step, the supervisor provides information about the **formal** grievance procedure to the student, which begins with Step 3.

Section 3: Step Three– Formal Grievance

- 3.1. If the grievance is not resolved at Step Two (given the nature of grievance or if the grievance involves an employee and their direct supervisor, Step Three begins the process) the student may file a written grievance with the Vice President, Student Development.
- 3.2. The complaint must be filed within five (5) business days after the student is informed of the formal grievance process by either the supervisor (from Step 2 of the process) or the Vice President, Student Development (if the grievance process started with Step 3).
- 3.3. In the complaint document, the student must state specifically
  - 3.3.1. the full name, address, and telephone number of the complainant;
  - 3.3.2. the full name and title of the person against whom the complaint is made;
  - 3.3.3. the action or failure of action complained of; and
  - 3.3.4. the remedy sought.
- 3.4. The Vice President, Student Development (or, depending on the nature of the grievance, another appropriate vice president) shall review the written grievance and conduct whatever further investigation, if any, is necessary to determine any additional facts that are needed to resolve the grievance.
- 3.5. The vice president shall provide their written decision within ten (10) business days after receipt of the grievance.

- 3.6. In the event that the student is unsatisfied with the resolution reached by the vice president, they may proceed to Step Four within ten (10) business days after receipt of the vice president's written determination.
- 3.7. Not proceeding to Step Four within the time period will result in the grievance not being heard and the matter being closed.

#### Section 4: Step Four—Appeal

- 4.1. If the student is not satisfied with the vice president's determination, the student may appeal to the President.
  - 4.1.1. The appeal must be in writing and must provide a written summary of the specific facts and must contain any other documentation pertinent to the matter.
  - 4.1.2. The President will conduct a formal review and, if necessary, conduct any further investigation that is necessary to ascertain the facts needed to make a determination.
  - 4.1.3. The President may, at their discretion, establish a committee to further investigate the matter and make a recommendation to the President.
- 4.2. At the conclusion of the investigation and not later than fifteen (15) business days after receipt of the student's appeal (unless a committee is needed then within thirty (30) business days), the President shall provide a written decision to the student.
  - 4.2.1. The President's decision is final at the local level.

#### Section 5: State-level Appeal Option

- 5.1. After a student has exhausted the College's complaint or grievance procedures, if a matter remains unresolved, a formal complaint may be filed with the online Student Complaint Portal.
- 5.2. The Portal is hosted by the Licensure Division of the University of North Carolina System Office.
  - 5.2.1. The Portal can be found online at: <https://studentcomplaints.northcarolina.edu>

5.2.2. A student can also complete and submit a [Student Complaint Form \(PDF\)](#).

5.2.3. For more information, send an email to: [studentcomplaint@northcarolina.edu](mailto:studentcomplaint@northcarolina.edu).

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**Legal Citation:** [N.C.G.S. 115D-20\(7\)](#)

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**History:** Effective March 1984; Revised October 1988, October 2001, October 2011, November 2019, May 2021—cross-references PCC Policy 2.18 Sexual Assault, Policy 2.17 Unlawful Harassment, and Policy 2.6 Title IX Complaint Process