

VIRGINIA WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

I – ACADEMIC & STUDENT AFFAIRS POLICIES

I-19 – STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY & PROCEDURES

Policy Number: I-19

Last Reviewed: August 16, 2016

Responsible Dept.: DEAN OF STUDENT SERVICES/DEAN OF ACADEMIC SCHOOLS

The purpose of the student grievance policy and procedure is to provide an equitable and orderly process to resolve grievances. A grievance is a difference or dispute between a student and a college employee regarding the following:

- Grade dispute
- Final grade appeal
- Issue with an instructor or staff member
- Issue with a class
- Issue with a college procedure

For appeals of student conduct issues, please reference the student conduct policy.

Policy

To maintain good relationships, grievances should be initiated and processed as rapidly as possible. Every effort will be made by all parties to expedite the process. Informal resolution of grievances should be pursued whenever possible.

Effect of student failure to appeal within time limit

If a decision at the first step is not appealed to the next step within the specified time limit, the grievance will be considered settled on the basis of the last decision rendered. All written grievances and appeals will include the name of the student making the grievance and a brief statement of the nature of the grievance.

Procedure

The student must bring a grievance within the time frame listed below.

Grievance	Timeline to submit written grievance on Student Grievance Form
Grade Dispute (other than final grade in course)	Within five business days of notification of grade unless otherwise indicated by instructor
Final Grade Appeal	Within one month after the grade is posted
Issue with an Instructor or Staff Member	Within one month of the incident (or within one month after the grade is posted for a course)
Issue with a Class	Within one month after the grade is posted
Issue with a College Procedure	Within one month of the incident

Step One: The student contacts the college faculty member or employee with whom the student has a difference or a dispute. Every reasonable effort should be made by all parties to resolve the matter informally at this level, and no written records of the matter will be placed in the student's official file.

Step Two: If the issue cannot be resolved at the first step, a Student Grievance Form must be submitted by the student within the time frame listed in the table above. The steps outlined on the form must be followed.

Step A: The student provides a description of the grievance in Box I.

Step B: For academic issues, the student schedules a meeting with the program head for that department. If the issue is with the program head, skip to Step C. For non-academic issues, the student schedules a meeting with the supervisor of the employee or department with whom he or she has a complaint. Following the meeting, the program head or supervisor will have the employee complete Box II. The supervisor/program head will complete Box III and notify the student of the decision.

Step C: If the student is not satisfied, he or she can schedule a meeting with the academic dean for academic issues or with the Dean of Student Services or appropriate Vice President for non-academic issues. The decision of the Vice President is final.

Step D: If the student met with a dean in Step C and is not satisfied with the outcome of the grievance, he or she may appeal to the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs following Step Three below.

Step Three: If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the grievance as determined by the Completion of the Student Grievance Form with either an academic dean or the Dean of Student Services then

1. The student must submit a written request for a hearing with the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs within five business days of receipt of the decision given in Step C of the grievance process. If, based on the preponderance of evidence, the Vice President decides that the appeal and record of previous actions indicate an appeal is not warranted, the Vice President will notify the student, employee, and the dean within five calendar days after receipt of the appeal.
2. If the Vice President hears the appeal, he or she will set a date for a meeting and notify the student of the time and location in which the meeting will take place, but the meeting will take place no later than ten business days after receipt of the written appeal of the student. The Vice President will notify the student of the decision in writing within five business days after hearing the appeal.
3. A copy of the appeal and the decision of the Vice President will be placed in the student's official file, and a copy will be retained by the Vice President's office. The decision of the Vice President is final.

Step Four: (For students living outside of Virginia taking online courses only)

In accordance with the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA) (<http://www.nc-sara.org/>), the grievance procedures outlined above, as they apply to online courses taken by students living outside of Virginia, are subject to the oversight of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) (<http://www.schev.edu/index/students-and-parents/resources/student-complaints>). Grievances must follow the college's process outlined above prior to being referred to SCHEV under SARA. Grade appeals and student conduct appeals are not allowed under SARA.

Final Grade Appeal Procedure

The final grade appeal procedure provides an equitable and orderly process to resolve situations in which a student may contest a final grade assigned in a course during the previous academic semester. Students

should be aware that establishing course requirements and assignments, evaluating a student's work, and assigning a grade are the responsibility and the prerogative of the individual instructor. In the event that the final grade received in a course was assigned in a manner inconsistent with the course outline, or was assigned using a method other than that used to compute other students' grades in that course, the matter may be resolved through an informal or a formal procedure.

Timeline

Students are allowed to submit a grade appeal only if they do so within one month after the grade is posted.

Exception

In circumstances in which the student has mitigating documented circumstances, grade changes must be requested within one year of the receipt of the grade in question.

Informal Procedure

The student should attempt to resolve the final grade dispute with the instructor informally. If the situation is resolved informally and the instructor agrees that an error was made, the instructor will submit a Grade Change Form to the appropriate academic dean, who will forward it to the Records Office.

Formal Procedure

If final grade conflicts cannot be resolved informally as described above, students must adhere to the following:

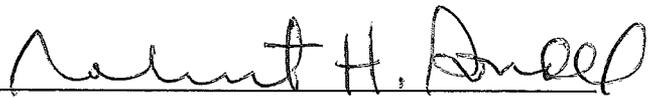
1. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the Program Head within five business days of the instructor's decision to deny a grade change through the informal process using the Student Grievance Form.
2. There are two grounds for formal grade appeal:
 - a. The assignment of a grade in a manner other than as described on the course outline or amended by the instructor without appropriate notice;
 - b. The assignment of a grade using a method other than that used for the other students in the class.
3. The Program Head will follow the Student Grievance Process using the Student Grievance Form. Course syllabi and evaluation materials will be included in the review of the disputed grade.
4. Following the Student Grievance Procedure, if the student is not satisfied with the Program Head's decision, the student may follow the process outlined on the Student Grievance Form to appeal the decision to the academic dean and the Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs if necessary. The decision of the Vice President of Academic & Student Affairs is final.
5. If at any time it is determined that a grade change is warranted, a grade change form will be submitted to the Records Office.

If a student has exhausted all available grievance procedures established by Virginia Western Community College and did not receive a satisfactory resolution, he/she may contact SCHEV as a last resort in the grievance process

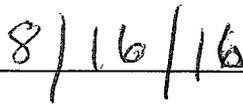
<http://www.schev.edu/index/students-and-parents/resources/student-complaints>

Review/Revised: December 2012; June 2014; August 2016

Approved by



Robert H. Sandel, Ed.D.
President


Date