

IV-1.1.8 Student Complaint

A student complaint is a request for a college action or decision to be reviewed and either confirmed or changed to reflect impartial application of college policies. A complaint may or may not be grade related. Any student may file a complaint and request a review.

Procedure

1. Cases/appeals regarding Academic Integrity violations/sanctions are processed through the procedure outlined in IV-1.1.3 Student Academic Integrity. Cases/appeals regarding student conduct violations/sanctions are processed through the procedure outlined in IV-3.1.1 Student Conduct. Student complaints of discrimination are processed through the procedure outlined in V-1.1.10 Equal Opportunity. The following are procedures for all other student complaints—either complaints of an inaccurate grade in a course or complaints of nondiscriminatory misapplication of college policy.
2. General Guidelines:
A student should visit the Office of the Vice President of Student Services to obtain a copy of the complaint procedure and required forms or print the documents directly from the college website. During any step in the procedures outlined below, either the student or employee may request a college facilitator (often a department/division administrator or a counselor) to sit in on the discussion to help facilitate the process. The facilitator's job is to help with communication and maintain a neutral position.
3. Timeliness:
A non-grade related complaint must be presented within 30 calendar days after the action or decision being questioned. A grade related complaint must be filed within 15 working days of the beginning date of the subsequent term (fall, spring, or summer) (e.g., a complaint regarding a spring term grade must be filed by the 15th working day of summer term even if the student is not enrolled for summer classes).

While every attempt will be made to address the complaint in the shortest possible timeframe, processing at each step in most circumstances will not exceed 10 working days; however, the time may be extended by agreement of both parties or by extenuating circumstances as reasonably and objectively decided by the administrator to whom the complaint is presented. If the issue is not resolved at one level and the student chooses to move the concern to the next step of the complaint process, s/he must complete that action within 5 working days of receiving a decision.

If the supervisor/administrator at each step does not meet processing time limitations, and no extension has occurred as stated above, the student may then request administrative assistance from the next-level supervisor/administrator in obtaining requested information. If the student does not meet the stated time limitations, the process will be terminated and such complaint cannot be resubmitted.

4. Non-Grade Related Complaint Procedure:

- a. The student shall first informally discuss the matter in question with the college employee most directly involved unless the issue is a claim of discriminatory harassment. In that case, the student may appeal directly to the employee's immediate supervisor/administrator.
 - b. If the student is unable to resolve the matter in question through discussion with the college employee directly involved, the student may file a formal, written complaint form for non-grade related issues with the employee's immediate supervisor/administrator. All such complaint submissions shall state the basic facts in the case.
 - c. When a decision is rendered, the student may choose to forward the complaint to the next level supervisor/administrator identified on the Student Complaint Non-Grade Related Appeal Form. Should the complaint reach the level of the area vice president, the decision of the vice president will be final.
 - d. Upon final decision regarding the complaint, all records related to the complaint will be forwarded to the vice president of Student Support Service's office for retention and tracking. A confidential log will be maintained. Informal complaints will not be documented on the log.
5. Grade Related Complaint Procedure:
- a. It is the responsibility of faculty at GTCC to assign course grades according to methods that are professionally acceptable, communicated to everyone in the class, and applied to all students equally. Any questions about assigned grades are best addressed with the faculty member who assigned the original grade.
 - b. A student may appeal a final grade for the following reasons:
 - i. Inconsistency between what is written in the syllabus and what is practiced in the classroom
 - ii. A grade miscalculation
 - iii. Errors in the final exam if a change in final exam grade would cause a change in the course grade
 - iv. Inconsistent classroom practices
 - c. A student may not appeal a final grade based on:
 - i. Disagreements with teaching methodologies
 - ii. Attendance policies
 - iii. Documented grade weighting methods
 - d. Any student who questions a final course grade must first attempt to resolve the matter informally with the faculty member who assigned the grade. Failing to reach a resolution with the faculty member, the student may appeal the final course grade in accordance with the formal procedure outlined below. While the process is similar to appeals for non-grade related complaints, the contacts for grade related complaints differ depending on whether the final grade was issued in a credit course or a non-credit (Continuing Education) course. For credit courses, the formal complaint will begin with the department chair, with the possibility of escalating the complaint to the academic dean, associate vice president of Instruction (AVPI), and final appeal with the senior vice president of Instruction. For non-credit (Continuing Education) courses, the formal complaint will begin with the coordinator, with the possibility of escalating the complaint to the associate vice president, Workforce and Continuing Education, final appeal with the senior vice president of Instruction.

- e. Formal Grade Related Complaint Process:
- i. The student must complete and submit the Student Complaint Grade Related Appeal Form to the department chair/coordinator where the final grade was awarded. This written appeal must be filed within 15 working days of the beginning date of the subsequent term and cannot be appealed beyond this period (See Section 3, "Timeliness"). The written appeal will become the document of record.
 - ii. When the department chair/coordinator reviews the case and renders a decision, s/he will communicate that decision in writing to the student and the faculty member, within the timelines identified in this policy.
 - iii. When a decision is rendered, the student may choose to forward the complaint to the next level administrator identified on the Student Complaint Grade Related Appeal Form.
 - iv. Using the Student Complaint Grade Related Appeal Form and other supporting documents submitted by the department chair/coordinator, the academic dean/director will confer with the student and the faculty member to seek understanding. Based on these discussions, the academic dean/director will render a decision.
 - v. When the academic dean/director renders a decision, s/he will communicate that decision in writing to the student, the faculty member, and the department chair/coordinator, within the timelines identified in this policy.
 - vi. For Credit courses, once this decision is rendered, the student may choose to contact the AVPI for an appointment. The AVPI will request all documentation, including the Student Complaint Grade Related Appeal Form from the academic dean prior to meeting with the student. The AVPI will confer with the student, faculty member, department chair/coordinator, and the academic dean. Based on these discussions, the AVPI will render a decision.
 - vii. When the AVPI renders a decision, s/he will communicate that decision in writing to the student, the faculty member, the department chair/coordinator, and the academic dean, within the timelines identified in this policy.
 - viii. If the conference with the AVPI (for credit courses) or director (for non-credit courses) does not resolve the matter, then the student may request a review by the area vice president. The area vice president will request all documentation, including the Student Complaint Grade Related Appeal Form and all subsequent documentation prior to meeting with the student. The area vice president will confer with the student, faculty member, department chair/coordinator, the academic dean/director, and the AVPI if applicable. Based on these discussions, the area vice president will either render a decision in writing or if appropriate convene the Grade Appeal Committee. The decision of the area vice president regarding the status of the grade appeal is final.
 - ix. If the area vice president determines that further evaluation of the student's work is warranted, the area vice president will convene a Grade Appeal Committee. This committee will consist of the convening administrator, four faculty members, and one student government representative. The Faculty Association will appoint one faculty member; the college will assign three faculty members from the curriculum committee; and the Student Government Association president will assign a student member. The student and faculty member who assigned the grade will be present at

the meeting. The student may bring one guest as an observer. The student and faculty member will be given an opportunity to address the committee and to answer questions. The Grade Appeal Committee will move into closed session to deliberate and make a decision on the appeal. The committee's decision will be final. The area vice president will communicate the committee's decision in writing to the student, the faculty member who assigned the grade, department chair/coordinator, academic dean/director, and the AVPI.

- x. Upon final decision regarding the appeal, all records related to the Grade Related complaint will be forwarded to the vice president of Instruction's office for retention and tracking. A confidential log of formal written complaints will be maintained. Informal complaints will not be documented in the log.

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