

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 Code of 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:

Complaint forms are available on the GTCC website in the Student Policies and Information page. 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 5 business days after the action or decision being questioned. A grade related complaint must be filed within 5 business days of the beginning date of the subsequent session (fall, spring, or summer) (e.g., a complaint regarding a spring session one grade must be filed by the 5th business day of spring session two, however a spring session two complaint must be filed by the 5th business day of the summer term even if the student is not enrolled for summer classes).

The college will attempt to address the complaint in the shortest possible timeframe, processing at each step in most circumstances will not exceed 10 business days; however, the time may be extended by the administrator to whom the complaint is presented due to extenuating circumstances. 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, they must complete that action within 5 business 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 online 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 appeal the complaint to the next level supervisor/administrator identified on the *Student Complaint Non-Grade Related Appeal Form* within 5 business days based on one or both of the following criteria:
 - 1) The GTCC policy and procedure for non-grade-related complaints was not followed.
 - 2) New information that could not have been provided at the time of initial review that is likely to change the outcome decision is now available for consideration.
- d. When following the process moving through supervisory ranks, should the complaint reach the level of the area vice president or senior vice president, College and Workforce Instruction, the decision of the vice president or senior vice president, College and Workforce Instruction will be final.
- e. Upon final decision regarding the complaint, all records related to the complaint will be maintained in the electronic records system according to the college's records retention policy. Informal complaints will not be documented. Formal complaints regarding non-grade related issues that reach the final level of appeal and complaints that can be used for training purposes will be maintained indefinitely.

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. Grade-related complaints are limited to final course grades and will not be considered for individually graded course assignments or examinations.
- c. A grade-related complaint must be filed
 - 1) within 5 business days of the beginning date of the subsequent term (fall, spring, or summer) for 16 weeks courses;
 - 2) within 5 business days of the beginning date of the subsequent session (fall session 1, fall session 2, spring session 1, spring session 2, or summer) for 8 weeks courses;
 - 3) for example, a complaint regarding a spring 16 weeks term or spring session 2 grade must be filed by the 5th business day of summer term even if the student is not enrolled for summer classes.
- d. A student may appeal a final grade for the following reasons:
 - 1) Inconsistency between what is written in the syllabus and what is practiced in the classroom
 - 2) A grade miscalculation
 - 3) Errors in the final exam if a change in final exam grade would cause a change in the course grade
 - 4) Inconsistent classroom practices
- e. A student may not appeal a final grade based on:
 - 1) Disagreements with teaching methodologies

- 2) Attendance policies
- 3) Documented grade weighting methods
- f. 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/program director. If needed, the appeal can escalate through the chain of command to the academic dean, associate vice president, Instruction, and final appeal with the senior vice president, College and Workforce Instruction. For non-credit (Continuing Education) courses, the formal complaint will begin with the director/coordinator. If needed, the appeal can escalate through the chain of command to the dean of adult education (if applicable), appropriate associate vice president, and final appeal with the senior vice president, College and Workforce Instruction.
- g. Formal Grade Related Complaint Process:
 - 1) The student must complete and submit the *Grade Related Student Complaint Form* available on the GTCC website. The written complaint will become the document of record.
 - 2) This written complaint must be filed within 5 business days of the beginning date of the subsequent session or term and cannot be appealed beyond this period (See Section 3, "Timeliness"). The written appeal will become the document of record.
 - 3) When the department chair/coordinator reviews the case and renders a decision, they will communicate that decision in writing on the *Grade-Related Student Complaint – Report of an Administrative Decision form* to the student and the faculty member, within 10 business days; however, the time may be extended by the administrator to whom the complaint is presented due to extenuating circumstances.
 - 4) When a decision is rendered, the student may choose to appeal the complaint to the next level administrator if one or both of the following criteria are met:
 - a) The GTCC policy and procedure for grade-related complaints was not followed.
 - b) New information that could not have been provided at the time of initial review that is likely to change the outcome decision is now available for consideration.
 - 5) Using the *Grade Related Student Complaint Appeal Form* the student must identify the grounds for their appeal and provide any additional supporting documents and submit within 5 business days of the department chair/coordinator decision.
 - 6) The dean/director will review all material and will meet/confer with the student and the faculty member to seek further understanding as needed. Based on these discussions, the dean/director will render a decision in writing on the *Grade-Related Student Complaint – Report of an Administrative Decision Form* to the student within 10 business days; however, the time may be extended by the administrator to whom the complaint is presented due to extenuating circumstances.
 - 7) When the academic dean/director renders a decision, they will communicate that decision in writing to the student, the faculty member, and the department chair/coordinator, within the timelines identified in this policy.

- 8) For credit courses, once this decision is rendered, the student may choose to contact the associate vice president, Instruction (AVPI) for an appointment within 5 business days of the dean/director complaint decision. The AVPI will request all documentation, including the *Grade Related Student Complaint 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.
- 9) When the AVPI renders a decision, they 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.
- 10) 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 senior vice president, College and Workforce Instruction. The senior vice president, College and Workforce Instruction will request all documentation, including the *Grade Related Student Complaint Appeal Form* and all subsequent documentation prior to meeting with the student. The senior vice president, College and Workforce Instruction will confer with the student, faculty member, department chair/coordinator, the academic dean/director, and the AVPI if applicable. Based on these discussions, the senior vice president, College and Workforce Instruction will render a decision in writing. The decision of the senior vice president, College and Workforce Instruction regarding the status of the grade appeal is final.
- 11) Upon final decision regarding the appeal, all records related to the Grade Related complaint will be forwarded to the senior vice president, College and Workforce 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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