

POLICY: 6Hx28: 8-10



Responsible Executive: Vice President,
Student Affairs and Campus Provosts

Policy Contacts: Deans of Academic Affairs

Specific Authority: 1001.65, F.S.

Law Implemented: 1001.51, F.S.

Effective Date: 09-23-2015

Date of Last Policy Review: 12-19-2019

Student Academic Dispute and Administrative Complaint Resolution

**Policy
Statement:**

I. Student Academic Dispute Resolution

A. Final Grades

1. Students have recourse through the Student Academic Dispute Resolution process to seek a fair determination for the assignment of a final course grade. However, final grades of "W", and "I" based upon the failure of the student to take the final examination, excessive absences, or other administrative reasons may not be grieved to the Student Final Grade Dispute Resolution Committee.
2. The policies and procedures for resolving disputes over final grades are intended to consider the college's responsibility to both students and professors. They do not invalidate any requirements mandated by a course curriculum, i.e., department-sponsored final exams, or requirements to enter or remain in a specific program. The academic prerogatives of a professor at Valencia College regarding specific course assignments or stated policies on a syllabus or other formal course-related materials cannot be challenged or appealed through this process.
3. The faculty member and/or the chief learning officer of the college, or designee, shall have the authority to authorize a change to a final course grade as a result of the process.

4. The college will establish procedures to implement the Student Academic Dispute Resolution process that

- a. Offers a specific protocol to all students at Valencia College for resolving disputes over assigned final grades.
- b. Prohibits retaliation against a student for participating in the Student Academic Dispute Resolution process.

B. Non-Final Grades and Matters Involving Academic Progress towards Graduation

1. Each Campus President shall be responsible for designating a person or persons to serve in the role of student Ombudsperson(s), who in that role is accountable to the president, to assist students who wish a review of decisions that are related to access to courses and credit granted toward the degree (excluding final grades). Students shall be notified of opportunities for assistance or appeal.
2. The Ombudsperson listens to student complaints, investigates the facts surrounding the complaints, and attempts to objectively make recommendations on how best to resolve the issue. The Ombudsperson is impartial, private, and informal. The Ombudsperson will not be an advocate or critic but considers the rights and interests of all parties concerned and advocates for a fair resolution. The Ombudsperson will consider the rights and obligations of the student and Valencia College. Also, the issues presented remain in confidence upon request unless otherwise required by Valencia's policies and procedures. Speaking with the Ombudsperson may help students clarify their thoughts or feelings about a situation and increase awareness of their alternatives. The Ombudsperson works with students to explore options and assists them in establishing communication with appropriate campus departments and offices.
3. The Ombudsperson:
 - a. Answers questions or refers students to someone who can help
 - b. Interprets Valencia policies and procedures and offers guidance;
 - c. Recommends changes in policies and procedures when necessary;
 - d. Mediates conflicts when requested.

II. Student Administrative Complaint Resolution

The president or designee shall develop and implement procedures for addressing written student complaints regarding administrative decisions which adversely affect the complaining student.

Policy**History:**

Adopted 12-11-74; Amended 9-15-76; Amended 1-19-83; Amended 11-18-92; Amended 12-11-07; Amended 9-23-15; Formerly 6Hx28:10-06; Formerly 6Hx28:10-14; Formerly 6Hx28:10-13

Related**Documents/Policies:**

Ombudsman Guidelines

Policy 6Hx28:8-11 - Academic Dishonesty

Accreditation: Valencia College is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award Associate and Bachelor's degrees.

Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 to file a complaint against the institution for alleged non-compliance with a standard or requirement.

National Council on State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements Website <https://nc-sara.org/>

Florida State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement Website <http://www.fldoe.org/sara/>

Procedures:**I. Final Course Grades**

- A. If a student thinks that a final course grade was assigned in an arbitrary or capricious manner, in violation of college policy, or was not calculated in accordance with the grading system as defined by the faculty member, the student shall have recourse through the Student Academic Dispute Resolution process to seek a fair determination of the grievance.
- B. A campus Student Final Grade Resolution Committee shall be established by each Campus President.
- C. Each member shall serve for one (1) calendar year but may be reappointed for additional one-year terms. The respective Campus President shall appoint the chair of each committee. The Campus President may choose to serve as chair.
- D. Student Final Grade Resolution process:
 1. The first step in the conflict resolution process shall be an informal conference between the student and the faculty member about the assigned final grade.

2. If the differences have not been resolved at the first level, the second step in the resolution process shall be an informal conference between the student and the academic dean or other immediate supervisor of the faculty member, and subsequently, if deemed necessary by the academic dean or other supervisor, joined by the faculty member.
3. If the differences have not been resolved at the second level, then within sixty (60) days after the final course grades are distributed to students from the Office of Admissions and Records via Atlas the student may then request a conference between the student and the appropriate Campus President, and subsequently, if deemed necessary by the appropriate Campus President, joined by the academic dean or other immediate supervisor of the faculty member and the faculty member. A student who chooses this alternative may not also choose to request the review of the campus Student Final Grade Resolution Committee. In the case of a denial of a grade change, the decision of the Campus President shall be final. If a final course grade change is recommended by the Campus President, then the Campus President may recommend to the faculty member that the grade be changed, or in the absence of faculty concurrence, shall forward a recommendation to the chief learning officer, who in concurrence may inform the Assistant Vice President of Admissions and Records to make the grade change. No further appeal shall be provided.
4. In the alternative, if the student's concerns remain unresolved following the conference with the dean, rather than request a conference between the student and the appropriate Campus President, the student may request the review of the campus Student Final Grade Resolution Committee by obtaining the appropriate forms on Atlas and submitting them to the Campus Presidents office. This alternative is not available for the review of final grades of "W", and "I" based upon the failure of the student to take the final examination, excessive absences, or other administrative reasons.

E. Student Final Grade Resolution Committee review process:

1. The request for review shall be presented to the Student Final Grade Resolution Committee by the student through the submission of the completed forms (the Student Final Grade Resolution Checklist and Petition) to the Campus President's office. These forms must be delivered or mailed to the appropriate Campus President within sixty (60) days after the final course grades are distributed to students from the Office of Admissions and Records via Atlas. Upon receipt of the form, the Campus President will notify the committee chair, who shall send copies of the form to the faculty member and the academic dean or other immediate supervisor of the faculty member.
2. The Student Final Grade Resolution Committee shall act only upon a complaint that a final course grade was assigned in an arbitrary or capricious manner, in violation of college policy, in substantial and material noncompliance with the

course syllabus or other formal course-related materials, or was not calculated in accordance with the grading system as defined by the faculty member.

3. The Student Final Grade Resolution Committee shall conduct its review in a prompt manner.
4. The following rules shall govern the conduct of the committee review conference:
 - a. A quorum for each review conference shall consist of not fewer than four (4) members or alternates. Whenever feasible, committee membership should be based on student, faculty, staff and multi-campus representation. However, in order to expedite the process, formal review conferences may proceed with a quorum of four (4) members or alternates.
 - b. The student shall be given an opportunity to provide the committee chair, within five (5) working days prior to the review conference, with an advance copy of materials, a list or summary of major issues, and a list of persons expected to be asked by the student to attend the review conference. The committee will determine what materials and who will be included in the review conference; however, the committee shall afford the student with a fair opportunity to present his or her position and all pertinent facts supporting his or her position.
 - c. The involved faculty member at his or her discretion may elect to appear or not to appear at the review conference although the faculty member is encouraged to do so. However, the faculty member shall provide the committee with his or her course syllabus and/or other formal course-related materials by which the student's final grade was determined and a memorandum of response to the student's complaint which shall set forth the evaluation system used in the course and the means by which the final course grade was assigned to the student. The student shall not have access to the professor's grade book.
 - d. Should the student indicate on his or her Petition the intention of attending the review conference and fail to appear without timely prior notification to the chair, the committee may elect to terminate the matter without further consideration.
 - e. The committee shall review the student's complaint in an informal, non-legalistic manner according to procedures determined by the committee that shall ensure that pertinent information is made available to the committee, and, promptly following the review conference, the chair shall make the written recommendation of the committee to the Campus President. The committee's recommendation shall contain a summary of the conclusions of the committee. A copy of the recommendation of the committee shall be furnished to the student and the involved faculty

member. In the case of a denial of a grade change, the decision of the Campus President on the committee's recommendation shall be final.

5. If a final course grade change is recommended by the committee and accepted by the Campus President, then the Campus President may recommend to the faculty member that the grade be changed, or in the absence of faculty concurrence, the Campus President shall forward a recommendation to the chief learning officer, who in concurrence may inform the Assistant Vice President of Admissions and Records to make the grade change. No further appeal shall be provided. Copies of the recommendation of the committee and decision of the Campus President shall be sent to the student, the faculty member, and the chair of the Student Final Grade Resolution Committee.

6. If a final course grade change is not recommended by the committee and the Campus President accepts the recommendation, the Campus President shall issue a memorandum to that effect. The decision of the Campus President shall be final. Copies of the recommendation of the committee and decision of the Campus President shall be sent to the student, the faculty member, and the chair of the Student Final Grade Resolution Committee.

F. The office of the respective Campus President shall maintain appropriate files.

G. Retaliation against a student by a faculty member for participating in this process is prohibited.

II. Non-Final Grades and Matters Involving Academic Progress towards Graduation

A. Each Campus President shall establish procedures by which a student may contact the office of the campus Ombudsperson(s) regarding a decision that is related to the student's access to courses and credit granted toward the degree. Information concerning these procedures will be included in the catalog and/or on the college website.

B. The college shall develop minimum standards for the role of the campus Ombudsperson(s). The standards shall address the issue of notification of students of opportunities for assistance or appeal.

C. Retaliation against a student by a faculty or staff member for participating in this process is prohibited.

III. Student Administrative Complaint Resolution

Valencia staff leaders are a resource for students seeking assistance in resolving issues with non-academic matters. The chart below lists the appropriate staff leaders who can assist with designated issues. Students may follow the progression of staff assistance in an administrative area, starting with the first response level, to bring resolution to the issue.

Issues	First Response	Next Level	Next Level	Assistant Vice President	Vice President
Advising/ Counseling	Dean of Students				Student Affairs
Application	Manager, Answer Center	Assistant Director, Admissions	Director, Admissions/ and Registration	Admissions and Records	Student Affairs
Bookstore	Manager, Bookstore	Director, Bookstore		Budget and Logistical Services	Business Operations & Finance
Discrimination	Counselor	Dean of Students	Title IX Coordinator/Equal Opportunity Officer	Equity and Access	Organizational Development & Human Resources
Entry Testing (CPT)	Student Services Specialist, Assessment	Director, Standardized Testing	AVP Recruitment, Enrollment and Retention	Enrollment Management	Student Affairs
Faculty Concerns	Academic Dean	Campus President			Campus President
Financial Aid	Coordinator, Financial Aid	Director, Financial Aid	AVP Financial Aid and Veterans Services	AVP Enrollment Management	Student Affairs
Florida Residency	Manager, Answer Center	Assistant Director, Admissions	Director, Admissions and Registration	Admissions and Records	Student Affairs
Graduation	Assistant Director, Admissions	Director, Graduation and Records	AVP Admissions and Records	AVP Enrollment Management	Student Affairs
Harassment	Counselor	Dean of Students	Title IX Coordinator/Equal Opportunity Officer	Equity and Access	Organizational Development & Human Resources
Library	Library Services Supervisor or Librarian	Director, Library	Campus President	Curriculum and Articulation	Chief Learning Officer
New Student Orientation	Coordinator, New Student Orientation	Dean of Students			Student Affairs
Parking	Field Supervisor, Security	Manager, Security		Safety, Security and Risk Management	Business Operations & Finance
Refund Requests	Assistant Director, Admissions	Director, Admissions and Registration	AVP Admissions and Records	AVP Enrollment Management	Student Affairs
Registration	Manager, Answer Center	Dean of Students			Student Affairs
Security	Field Supervisor, Security	Manager, Security		Safety, Security and Risk Management	Business Operations & Finance

Student Accounts	Coordinator, Business Office	Bursar		Financial Services	Business Operations & Finance
Students with Disabilities	Manager, Students with Disabilities	Director, Students with Disabilities		Equity and Access	Student Affairs
Transcripts	Assistant Director, Admissions	Director, Admissions and Registration	AVP Admissions and Records	AVP Enrollment Management	Student Affairs
State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements	AVP, Teaching and Learning	VP, Academic Affairs			

IV. National Council on State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements Requirements

- A. Students located in a State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) state with a complaint about an institution operating under SARA, including Valencia, must first go through the College's procedure for resolution of student grievances. Allegations of criminal offenses or alleged violations of Florida's general purpose laws may be made directly to the relevant State agencies.
- B. Accordingly, if a student located in a State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA) state bringing a complaint about Valencia is not satisfied with the outcome of the College's process for handling complaints, **excluding complaints regarding student grades or student conduct violations - which are governed entirely by Valencia's policies and procedures and the laws of Florida** - the complaint (except for complaints about grades or student conduct violations) may be appealed, within two years of the incident about which the complaint is made, to the Florida Postsecondary Reciprocal Distance Education Coordinating Council (Council).
- C. The Council shall notify the SARA Portal Entity for the State in which the student is located of receipt of that appealed complaint. While the final resolution of the complaint rests with the Council, the Portal Entity in the complainant's location State may assist as needed. The Council is responsible for conducting the investigation and resolution of eligible complaints that are not resolved at the College level. The Council may enlist the assistance of other responsible entities in the State in carrying out the work of complaint resolution. The resolution of the complaint by the Council, through its SARA complaint resolution process, will be final, except for complaints that involve the State of Florida using its laws of general application to pursue action against the College for alleged violations of those laws.
- D. Postsecondary Reciprocal Distance Education Coordinating Council complaint requirements include:
 - 1. Complaint must be filed within two years of the incident about which the complaint is made.

2. Complete the institutional complaint process prior to submission with the Council.
 3. Complaint must be a formal assertion in writing that the terms of SARA, or of laws, standards or regulations incorporated by SARA, are being violated by a person, institution, state, agency or other organization or entity operating under the terms of SARA.
 4. You are a student of an FL-SARA approved institution.
 5. If you are not a student, but have a concern about any of the above, you may submit a complaint.
 6. For additional information, please visit [FL-SARA Complaint Process](#).
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Procedure

History:

Adopted 1-5-09; Amended 9-23-15; Amended 12-19-19; Formerly 6Hx28:10-13

Date of Last Procedure Review: 12-19-2019