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## Grade Grievances

### Student Grievances

Types of Student Grievances

Formal Process for Non-Grade Grievances

Grade Grievances

**Please Note:** There is a formal and informal process for student grievances. Please review this page and/or the document carefully before submitting any grievance form. For complete details on the grade grievance process, please see:

- SMCCCD Administrative Procedure 7.73.1: [catalog.canadacollege.edu/current/student-grievances/\\_docs/smccc-administrative-procedure-7-73.1.pdf](http://catalog.canadacollege.edu/current/student-grievances/_docs/smccc-administrative-procedure-7-73.1.pdf)
- SMCCCD Board Policy 7.73: [catalog.canadacollege.edu/current/student-grievances/\\_docs/smccc-board-policy-7-73.pdf](http://catalog.canadacollege.edu/current/student-grievances/_docs/smccc-board-policy-7-73.pdf)

**Please Note:** For non-grade grievances, see "Non-Grade Grievances" section of this catalog. For parking citation appeals, see "Appealing a Parking Citation" section of this catalog.

In the absence of mistake, fraud, bad faith or incompetency (according to Education Code 76224) the grade issued by the instructor may not be changed. There is a deadline of year from the date that the grade is posted for a student to initiate a grade grievance.

### Informal Resolution of Grade Grievances

- Any student who has a grievance shall make reasonable effort to try to resolve the matter on an informal basis prior to pursuing a formal grievance, which includes a hearing, and shall attempt to solve the problem directly with the instructor. The student may bring a person of his/her choosing who is an observer only to meet with the instructor.
- If the grade grievance is not resolved informally with the instructor, the appropriate division dean will review the student's grievance and obtain information from the instructor.
- In attempting to resolve the grade grievance at the informal level, the student should be prepared to provide a written statement to the division dean to include the following information:
  - A statement describing the nature of the problem and the action which the student desires taken.
  - A statement of the steps initiated by the student to resolve the problem by informal means.
  - A description of the general and specific grounds on which the grievance is based. The student must be able to demonstrate mistake, fraud, bad faith or incompetency in accordance with Education Code 76224. In the absence of mistake, fraud, bad faith or incompetency, the grade issued by the instructor may not be changed.
- A written notice of the division dean's decision shall be provided to the student within 20 days of the student's meeting with the division dean or as soon as the division dean has completed his/her investigation.

### Formal Process for Grade Grievances

#### Step 1. Filing A Grievance

- Any student who believes, after the informal process, that he or she continues to have a grievance shall file a Statement of Grievance Form available on the college website or from the division dean. The form shall be filed with the Vice President, Instruction within one year from the date the grade was issued. The student should attach to the Grievance Form any documentation to support the grievance.
- The Statement of Grievance must be filed whether or not the student has already initiated efforts at informal resolution, if the student wishes the grievance to become official.

#### Step 2. Review of Grievance

- Within five days following receipt of the Statement of Grievance Form, the Vice President, Instruction shall advise the student of his or her rights and responsibilities under these procedures.
- In general, the requirements for the Statement of Grievance to present sufficient grounds for a hearing shall be based on the following:
  - The grievance shall allege specific facts, which, if true, show that the grade was issued based on mistake, fraud, bad faith, incompetence;
  - The grievant is a student which includes applicants and former students;
  - The grievant is personally and directly affected by the alleged grievance;
  - The grievance was filed in a timely manner;
  - The grievance is not clearly frivolous, clearly without foundation, or clearly filed for purposes of harassment.
  - For a grade grievance, the grade given to a student shall be the grade determined by the instructor. In the absence of mistake, fraud, bad faith or incompetency (according to Education Code 76224) the grade issued by the instructor may not be changed. The appropriate Division Dean and Vice President, Instruction will assist in determining if the student's grievance meets the criteria established by the Education Code.
- The Vice President, Instruction will schedule a Hearing with the Grievance Committee within 14 days following receipt of the Statement of Grievance Form. All parties shall be given not less than 4 days notice of the date, time and place of the hearing.

#### Step 3. Grievance Hearing Process

##### Grievance Committee

**Membership:** The Grievance Committee shall consist of three faculty members and two students. Faculty members for the pool will be identified by the Academic Senate and students will be identified by the Associated Students. No person shall serve as a member of a Grievance Committee if that person has been personally involved in any matter giving rise to the grievance, has made any statement on the matters at issue, or could otherwise not act in a neutral manner. Any party to the grievance may challenge for cause any member of the hearing committee prior to the beginning of the hearing by addressing a challenge to the Vice President, Instruction.

**Grievance Officer:** The Vice President, Instruction shall appoint a staff member to serve as the Grievance Officer for the Grievance Committee. This individual shall not serve as a member nor vote. The Grievance Officer shall serve to assist all parties and the Grievance Committee to facilitate a full, fair and efficient resolution of the grievance.

Prior to scheduling the Grievance Hearing, the Vice President, Instruction shall collect the following information:

- The Statement of Grievance Form filed by the student
- A written response to the grievance by the instructor who issued the grade. The instructor will provide this to the Vice President, Instruction, within 5 days of the request.
- Any materials relating to the division dean's review and decision.

Copies of these materials will be provided to the student, the instructor and members of the Grievance Committee.

##### Hearing Process

1. Prior to the scheduled Grievance Hearing, the Grievance Committee shall meet in private and without the parties present to select a chair and review the grounds for a hearing.
2. The members of the Grievance Committee shall be provided with a copy of the grievance filed by the student, the written responses provided by the instructor and the division dean's review and decision before the hearing begins.
3. Each party to the grievance may call witnesses and introduce oral and written testimony relevant to the issues of the matter.
4. Any relevant information shall be admitted. Formal rules of evidence shall not apply.
5. **Participants:** Each party to the grievance represents himself or herself, and may also be accompanied by a friend of his or her choice who is an observer only. Each person present will be asked to identify themselves by name.
6. Parties are not allowed to be represented by legal counsel. The instructor may request to be accompanied by a union representative.
7. Hearings shall be closed and confidential.
8. **Witnesses:** In a closed hearing, witnesses shall be present at the hearing only when testifying.
9. **Recording:** The hearing may be recorded by the college and shall be the only recording made. If recorded, no witness who refuses to be recorded may be permitted to give testimony.
10. **Attendance:** If the individual filing the grievance fails to appear at the hearing, only the written information will be used to make a recommendation.

#### Step 4. Decision

- Committee Recommendation: Within 5 days following the close of the hearing, the Grievance Committee shall prepare and send to the Vice President, Instruction a written decision. The decision shall include specific factual findings regarding the grievance, and shall include specific conclusions regarding whether a grievance has been established as defined above. The decision shall be based only on the record of the hearing, and not on matter outside of that record. The record consists of the original grievance, any written response, and the oral and written evidence produced at the hearing. In the absence of mistake, fraud, bad faith or incompetency (according to Education Code 76224) the grade issued by the instructor may not be changed.
- A written notice of the Vice President, Instruction's decision shall be provided to the student within ten days of receipt of the Grievance Committee's recommendation. The decision of the Vice President, Instruction, is final.

#### Definitions:

- **Party:** The student or any persons claimed to have been responsible for the student's alleged grievance, together with their representatives. "Party" shall not include the Grievance Hearing Committee or the College Grievance Officer.
- **Student:** A currently enrolled student, a person who has filed an application for admission to the college, or a former student. A grievance by an applicant shall be limited to a complaint regarding denial of admission. Former students shall be limited to grievances relating to course grades to the extent permitted by Education Code Section 76224(a).
- **Respondent:** Any person claimed by a grievant to be responsible for the alleged grievance.
- **Day:** Unless otherwise provided, day shall mean a day during which the college is in session and regular classes are held, excluding Saturdays and Sundays.

For both Non-Grade and Grade Grievance Forms, please visit <https://canadacollege.edu/policies/grievances.php>.