

Student Complaint Policy

MECC has a student grievance procedure that provides for equitable and orderly processes to resolve complaints made by students for improper treatment. A grievance is defined as a written claim raised by a student alleging improper, unfair, arbitrary, or discriminatory action by an employee or a student involving the application of a specific provision of a college or rule/regulation or a board policy or procedure.

Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) endeavors to find an equitable resolution to all student complaints at the lowest administrative level. MECC students have the right to file formal complaints regarding MECC personnel or actions. Student complaints are defined as those which are nontrivial in nature, either academic or non-academic, made formally by submitting a completed and signed Student Complaint Form to a college employee within ten (10) calendar days of occurrence. The Student Complaint Form is located at on the College Website under "Student Support" This policy does not apply to (a) student grade appeals, (b) all human resource policies, (c) all appeal and grievance policies and procedures explicitly described in the VCCS Policy Manual, (d) any formal appeal or grievance covered by another MECC policy (e.g., code of conduct, admissions, financial aid, satisfactory academic progress, etc.). A student can submit the Student Complaint form to any employee who will forward the form to the Dean of Student Services for appropriate dissemination.

Elements of a Formal Complaint of an Academic Nature

- The elements of a formal complaint of an academic nature may vary based on the nature of the complaint. In general, academic-related complaints are first addressed by the Dean of the academic area for which the complaint originates. If the complaint is resolved at this level, documentation of the initial complaint and resolution remains in the office of the Dean of the academic area. Documentation of a formal complaint that is appealed from the Dean's level is maintained with the liaison of the Student Affairs Committee and a copy of the documentation is held with the Dean responsible for the area the complaint was made.

Elements of a formal complaint under appeal include:

- The initial complaint, including any information gathered from the complainant.
- A written response (hard copy or e-mail) sent to the complainant by the Academic Dean. In addition to a written response, the Academic Dean will include the appeal process for both the Student Affairs Committee and the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions, should the complainant choose to appeal at either level.
- A copy of a written complaint of appeal, if the Complainant chooses to file a written complaint to the Student Affairs Committee.
- A written response of the Student Affairs Committee to the complainant with a copy to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions.
- An appeal to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions, if the Complainant chooses to file said appeal.
- The final response of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions to the Complainant's appeal.

Elements of a Formal Complaint of a Non-Academic Nature

The elements of a formal complaint of a non-academic nature may vary based on the nature of the complaint. All non-academic complaints should be forwarded to the Dean of Student Services, by the student or employee who receives the complaint form, who will review and forward the complaint to the Supervisor of the department and/or division where the complaint originated. If the complaint is resolved by the supervisor, documentation of the initial complaint and resolution remains in the office of the supervisor of the area with a copy forwarded to the Dean of Student Services; however, the Dean of Student Services will keep a copy of the original formal complaint form and documentation of forwarding the complaint to the appropriate area in the Office of Student Services. If the complaint is not resolved at the level where the complaint originated, the documentation is housed at the level where the complaint is resolved (Student Affairs committee or VP of Academic Affairs & Workforce Solutions.) Elements of a formal complaint of a Non-Academic Nature under appeal include:

- The initial complaint, including any information gathered from the complainant.
- A written response (hard copy or email) sent to the complainant by the supervisor. In addition to a written response, the supervisor will include the appeal process for both the Student Affairs Committee and the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions, should the complainant choose to appeal at either level.
- A copy of a written complaint of appeal, if the Complainant chooses to file a written complaint to the Student Affairs Committee.
- A written response of the Student Affairs Committee to the complainant with a copy to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions.
- An appeal to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions, if the Complainant chooses to file said appeal.
- The final response of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions to the Complainant's appeal.

Policy and Procedure for Formal Complaints

The responsible college administrator supervising the area from which the complaint originated first addresses formal complaints filed by students. All academic complaints should be forwarded to the Academic Dean of the area where the complaint originated, and all non-academic complaints should be forwarded to the Dean of Student Services within ten (10) calendar days of occurrence. The administrator handling the complaint thereupon gathers the Formal Complaint Form and any other information related to the complaint from the complainant as well as from appropriate individuals with information related to the complaint and/or available documentation related to the complaint. Following the investigation, a written response (hard copy or e-mail) is sent to the complainant along with the appeal process for both the Student Affairs Committee and the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions should the student choose to appeal the decision. A copy of the complaint and the written response is also sent to the Dean of Enrollment Services, who serves as the liaison for the Student Affairs Committee, and to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, he/she may file a written appeal to the Student Affairs Committee.

In cases of appeal, the Student Affairs Committee gathers information and provides a written response to the complainant with a copy to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response of the Committee, he/she may thereupon file an appeal to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions. Upon consideration of the complainant's appeal, the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions provides a final response with his/her decision regarding the complaint. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions maintains a file of all formal complaints and responses that result from an appeal to that office. All formal complaints are recorded on the Complaint Log housed on a secure network by MECC. The Dean or Vice President of the area where the complaint originated is responsible for entering the data onto the Complaint Log. The external release and retention of a student's conduct record or any portion of its contents may only occur in accordance with Federal law.

Mountain Empire Community College makes every effort to handle student complaints in a timely manner and also strives to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of all parties involved. Student complaint and appeal procedures apply to all MECC students, including those taking classes through distance learning.

Appeal Procedures for Student Complaints

A student may request an appeal if he/she is not satisfied with the written response from the supervisor of the area where the complaint originated. A written appeal to the Student Affairs Committee must be made in writing to the Dean of Enrollment Services within 72 hours of receipt of the original written decision, or by 9 a.m. on the next College business day if the deadline falls on a weekend or holiday, or after 5 p.m. on a weekday.

The Student Affairs Committee chairperson will schedule an appeal hearing to be conducted no later than ten (10) calendar days following the student request for appeal. The Student Affairs Committee chairperson will be responsible for notifying the student, the Dean of Student Services, the supervisor of the area where the complaint originated and the Vice President for

Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions of the day, time, and location of the hearing. The Student Affairs Committee shall make its decision by simple majority vote and communicate its findings in writing to the student, Dean of Student Services, Dean of Enrollment Services, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions within five (5) business days after the hearing is completed.

A subsequent appeal must be submitted in writing to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions within 48 hours of the student receiving the previous appeal decision in writing, or by 9 a.m. on the next College business day if the deadline falls on a weekend or holiday, or after 5 p.m. on a weekday.

The Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions or his/her designee will schedule an appeal hearing to be conducted no later than ten (10) calendar days following the student request for appeal. The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions or his/her designee will make a decision and communicate his/her findings in writing to the student and the Dean of Student Services within (5) business days after the hearing is completed.

The decision of the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Workforce Solutions or his/her designee is the final decision for the College.