



STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES



STUDENT COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Vernon College recognizes that students have the right to file a complaint when they have a grievance against college policy or personnel. Vernon College has defined “grievance” as a written student complaint submitted to the Vice President of Student Services on the Vernon College Grievance Form. Vernon College has reasonable, just, and timely policies and procedures in place for the resolution of these written student complaints. All students are encouraged to resolve problems when they first arise with the parties involved. Only when problems cannot be solved informally are they moved to the formal grievance procedure. The grievance procedure is also published in the Student Handbook, which is available online. The Vice President of Student Services or the Dean of Student Services is available to discuss Vernon College Grievance Procedures and provide guidance in navigating the process.

A grievance must be initiated within three (3) weeks of the date of the alleged occurrence. Neither the student nor the institution is entitled or allowed to have an attorney present during any of the grievance proceedings.

Grievances against College policy or personnel are categorized into two distinct types, “academic” or “non-academic.” Prior to initiating any phase of the student grievance procedure, students must determine which category of grievance best represents their concern. Students will not be allowed to vacillate between academic and non-academic grievance determinations once any phase of the student grievance procedure has been initiated. In both non-academic and academic grievances, the term “class day” is meant to be synonymous with Vernon College business/working days. Any student having a question regarding this process should contact the Vice President of Student Services. Should the student have a grievance against the Vice President of Student Services, the student should appeal directly to the President of the College.

Non-Academic Grievances

A non-academic grievance is a college-related internal problem or condition which a student believes to be unfair, inequitable, discriminatory, or a hindrance to the educational process.

A student who has a non-academic grievance against a faculty or staff member may take the following action:

1. Discuss the matter with the faculty or staff member involved.
2. The decision of the faculty or staff should be made and communicated to the student within five (5) class days of the student conference. The decision is final unless within five (5) class days after the decision, the student contacts the appropriate division chairperson or supervisor for review.
3. The division chairperson or supervisor may request of the student a written narrative outlining the alleged complaint.
4. The division chairperson or supervisor has five (5) class days to investigate, reach a decision, and respond in writing to the student. The decision is final unless within five (5) class days after the decision has been made, the student completes a "Student Grievance and Appeals" form, (available online, and also through College Deans, Vice Presidents, Department Chairs, and all Student Services offices) and presents it to the appropriate Vice President for review.
5. The appropriate Vice President has five (5) class days to investigate, reach a decision, and respond to the student in writing. The decision is final unless within five (5) class days after the decision has been made the student makes a written request for review to the Student Appeals Committee. Rules of procedure governing the Student Appeals Committee are outlined later in this section. If assistance is needed, the Vice President of Student Services (or designee) should be contacted.

Academic Grievances

An academic grievance is a dispute over the awarding of grades and/or any other decision based on academic program procedures.

A student who has an academic grievance against a faculty member may take the following action:

1. Discuss the matter with the faculty member involved.
2. The decision of the faculty member should be made and communicated to the student within five (5) class days of the student conference.
3. If the matter remains unresolved, the student, within five (5) class days, may appeal to the division chairperson or the Dean of Instruction. The division chairperson or the Dean of Instruction may request of the student a written narrative outlining the alleged complaint. The division chairperson or the Dean of Instruction will investigate, reach a decision, and respond in writing to the student

within five (5) class days. The decision is final unless, within five (5) class days after the decision has been communicated to the student, the student completes a “Student Grievance and Appeals” form, (available online, and also through College Deans, Vice Presidents, Department Chairs, and all Student Services offices) and presents it to the Vice President of Student Services to forward to the Vice President of Instructional Services for review.

4. The Vice President of Instructional Services has five (5) class days to investigate, reach a decision and respond to the student in writing. The decision is final unless within five (5) class days after the decision has been communicated to the student, the student makes a written request for review to the student appeals committee. Rules of procedure governing the Student Appeals Committee are outlined later in this section. If assistance is needed, the Vice President of Student Services (or designee) should be contacted.

Time Limits: If the student fails to meet the time limits or advise the Vice President of Student Services of a perceived hindrance prior to the deadline at any step, the grievance is automatically considered dropped. If college personnel, at any step, fail to meet the time limits, the grievance is automatically advanced to the next step.

Student Appeals Committee

The Student Appeals Committee will be appointed by the College President (or designee) and will have the authority to impose appropriate sanctions/decisions upon any student or students appearing before it. The chairperson of the Student Appeals Committee is appointed by the President. The committee will consist of three faculty/staff members plus the chairperson and three students. The chairperson, two faculty/staff members and two students must be present to constitute a quorum and hear a case. The chairperson will insure that there is equal representation of faculty/staff members and students. To insure a fair and impartial hearing, any member of the committee who has a direct interest in the case should disqualify himself/herself from the committee, in which case the President will appoint an appropriate replacement. The chairperson of the committee may vote only when it is necessary to break a tie vote.

Upon receipt of a written request to the Student Appeals Committee for a hearing, the committee chairperson will within three (3) class days contact the committee members to arrange a hearing date, time, and place and will advise the Vice President of Student Services of such. The Vice President of Student Services will, in turn, issue notice to the student. The student will be given at least three (3) class days notice of the date, time, and place of the scheduled hearing.

Hearing Procedures

All Student Appeals Committee hearings will be conducted in private in order to protect the confidential nature of the proceedings. The chairperson will preside at the hearing. The Vice President of Student Services (or designee) will be present to make sure procedural matters are followed. At the hearing, only the committee chairperson, the Vice

President of Student Services (or designee), the serving committee members, the student filing the grievance, and the Vernon College respondent shall be present. No other parties are allowed to be present in the hearing room. The hearing shall be of an informal nature and need not adhere to the rules of procedures or technical rules of evidence followed by courts of law. Likewise, deviations from prescribed procedures will not necessarily invalidate a decision or proceeding, unless significant prejudice to a student respondent or the College may result. Only one student and only one college employee shall be designated to represent during the hearing procedures. A written record of the proceedings will be kept by the committee chairperson. No audio recordings will be permitted. The record of the hearing will be filed in the office of the Vice President of Student Services and only for the purpose of appeal be accessible to the College and the student.

Hearings will proceed in the following order:

1. Reading of the complaint/grievance by the committee chairperson.
2. The student's statement of position with respect to the complaint/grievance (no more than three (3) minutes).
3. The private presentation of evidence by the respondent (no more than 15 minutes), as well as questions by the student appeals committee (no more than 10 minutes).
4. The private presentation of evidence by the student (no more than 15 minutes) as well as questions by the student appeals committee (no more than 10 minutes).
5. Brief closing statements by both parties (no more than three (3) minutes) with the college respondent speaking first, followed by the student.

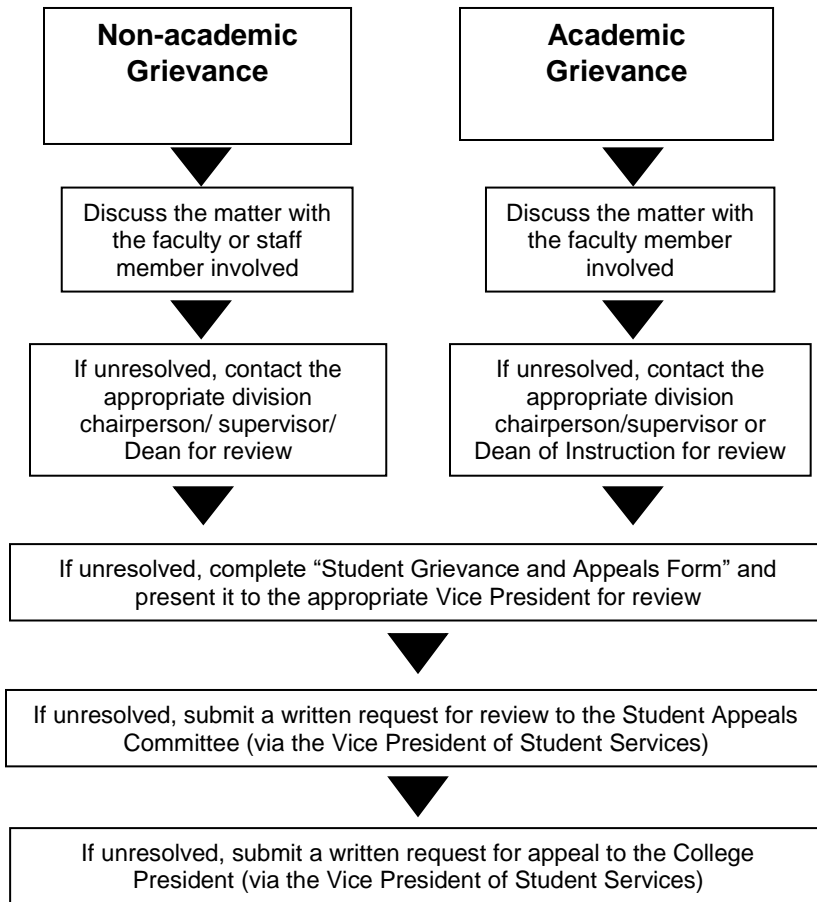
* The committee chair is able to reasonably extend the time for evidence or questions for either the student or respondents.

Upon conclusion of the hearing, the Student Appeals Committee will consider the merits of the case. The appeals committee chairperson will transmit the committee's findings and determinations in writing to only the student (via registered mail), the respondent, and the Vice President of Student Services within three (3) class days. The decision of the appeals committee is final, unless within five (5) class days after the decision has been made, the student makes a written request for a Presidential review via the Vice President of Student Services.

Appeals to the President

Within five (5) class days after the decision has been made by the Student Appeals Committee, either or both parties may submit a written request for appeal to the College President. The President's review will be based on the record of the hearing. Both parties may, at the discretion of the President, submit oral or written arguments to support their position. The President may approve, reject, or modify the decision in question. The President may require that the original hearing be reopened for the presentation of additional evidence and reconsideration of the decision or for correction of a procedural error.

STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE CHART



I have discussed my grievance with the faculty or staff member involved and have been unable to resolve the problem _____ student's initials.

Name of faculty or staff member _____

Date of meeting _____

I have discussed my grievance with department chairperson or supervisor involved and have been unable to resolve the problem _____ student's initials.

Name of department chairperson/supervisor _____

Date of meeting _____

I am requesting a review by the appropriate dean who supervises the faculty or staff member involved and the department chairperson or supervisor involved _____ student's initials.

Name of appropriate dean _____

I am requesting a hearing by the Student Appeals Committee _____ student's initials.

Name of Student Appeals Committee Chairperson _____

Date notified of Appeals Committee Request _____

Date of Committee Meeting _____

Date notice of committee findings were sent to parties involved _____

I am requesting a review by the President of Vernon College _____ student's initials.

Date submitted to the President _____

Student Services Office Use Only:

Date of completion _____

Outcome: _____

Date Student Notified _____