

**4.5** The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. **(Student complaints)**

**Compliance Status:** Compliance

The College of Coastal Georgia has formal, published procedures for addressing student complaints. Written student complaints and grievances may be submitted for a variety of concerns, including 1) Appeal, 2) Petition, and 3) Harassment complaint.

### **Appeal**

#### Academic Appeal

An academic appeal is an allegation by a student of an unjustified deviation to the student's detriment, from policies, procedures and/or requirements regarding grading policies, special agreements, instructor's requirements and academic requirements of the College.

A student may appeal a grade assigned by a faculty member or the interpretation or application of an academic policy by an academic administrator, including issues related to intellectual diversity. Prior to filing such an appeal, the student is asked to review the section entitled "[Alternative Dispute Resolution](#)" in *2010-2011 College of Coastal College Catalog*.

Specific procedures for filing an academic appeal are delineated in the College's *Catalog* under the section "[Academic Regulations](#)."

In any grievance involving a faculty member, the student is asked to first review the situation with the instructor or academic administrator who is responsible for the grade or academic policy interpretation with the goal of achieving a mutual resolution to the grievance. If this action is not successful, the student may submit a written grievance to the appropriate supervisor of the faculty or academic administrator in question. If the student believes that the appeal was decided in an arbitrary, capricious, discriminatory or unfair manner at the supervisor's level, he or she may appeal in writing to the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Appeals of decisions made by the Vice President for Academic Affairs may be made in writing to the President within five calendar days after receiving the decision of the Vice President. The President will appoint a committee composed of three members of the faculty of the institution or utilize the services of an appropriate existing committee. This committee shall review all facts and circumstances connected with the case and shall, within ten calendar days, submit its findings and report thereon to the President. After consideration of the committee's report, the President shall, within five calendar days, make a decision which shall be final so far as the institution is concerned.

The following [case](#) illustrates how these grievances are handled:

- *On July 23, 2010, a student appealed the grade she received in a course titled, "Certification Fundamentals" (RADT 2003), which resulted in her dismissal from the Radiologic Science Program.*
- *The appeal was denied on August 11, 2010 by the Dean of Nursing and Health Sciences.*
- *On August 16, 2010, the student exercised her right under the Student Academic Appeal Policy to seek further review of her request by the Vice President for Academic Affairs.*
- *On August 18, 2010, the Vice President for Academic Affairs also denied the student's appeal of her dismissal from the Radiologic Science Program.*
- *Two days later, on August 20, 2010, the student sought relief under the Student Academic Appeal Policy from the President of the College. Based upon this request, a committee was convened to hear the appeal and submit its findings and report thereon to the President.*
- *On August 31, 2010, a hearing was held to review all of the facts and circumstances connected with the student's dismissal from the Radiologic Science Program.*
- *On September 7, 2010, the recommendation of the committee was submitted to the President of the College. The committee unanimously recommended the student's dismissal from the Radiologic Science Program be sustained.*
- *On September 10, 2010, the President of the College issued a final decision in the matter, sustaining the student's dismissal from the Radiologic Science Program.*

#### Non-Academic Appeal

There are often instances when a student has a non-academic grievance, complaint, appeal, or issue with another student, a faculty member, or a staff member. In such instances, students are encouraged to follow a series of steps. Documentation of the [general process](#) may be found in the *2010-2011 College of Coastal Georgia Student Handbook*.

In a situation where the matter involves a fellow student, students are encouraged to meet with the Vice President for Student Affairs. The Vice President or his/her designee will investigate the situation and assist the students involved in resolving the problem or grievance in a collaborative manner. In a situation where the matter involves a faculty or staff member, students are encouraged to meet one-on-one with the person with whom they have a complaint or issue in order to discuss the issue openly. If this does not resolve the situation, students should meet with the immediate supervisor or supervisors of the College personnel with whom they have the complaint or grievance. If the situation still is not resolved, students are encouraged to meet with the senior administrator in the employee's chain of command.

If this informal process does not resolve the issue, students are encouraged to consider using the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Program. The [ADR program](#) is fully explained in the *2010-2011 College of Coastal Georgia Student Handbook*.

Examples of complaints in this category range from matters involving customer service to alleged inequities in the administration of College policies.

The following two cases illustrate how these grievances and appeals are handled:

- 1. A student receives what she believes to be poor customer service from the Financial Aid office and sends an email to the Vice President for Student Affairs recounting the nature of the interactions with the office and asking for assistance. The Vice President replies either by email or phone directly to the student asking for additional information so he can address the complaint with the Financial Aid staff. The Vice President reviews the complaint with the Director of Financial Aid and determines that the student did, indeed, receive poor service. He then directs the Director to contact the student to (1) apologize for the poor service received, and (2) take the action(s) requested by the student, as appropriate.*
- 2. A student who had been employed through the College Work-Study program the previous semester is informed by the Financial Aid office that he is not eligible to work for the current semester because of a shortage of funds. The student contacts the Vice President for Student Affairs who, with the assistance of the Financial Aid Office, investigates the student's situation and learns the student had utilized all available work-study funding in the prior term. The Vice President confirms with the student that he is not able to work in a College Work-Study position and suggests (1) that the student inquire with the Human Resources Office about the availability of student assistant positions (non-College Work Study jobs) on campus, and (2) meet with the Career Services staff to inquire about off-campus employment opportunities.*

### **Petitions**

Petitions are appeals from students on matters or issues that do not directly impact academic work or progress, but which can significantly affect a student's ability to matriculate or remain enrolled in school. Such petitions are not filed to report a specific grievance or cite an issue of perceived unfairness, but, rather, to request that an exception be made to established policy. Typically, such petitions are based on personal hardship or extraordinary circumstances.

The [process](#) for filing these types of petitions is generally outlined in the *2010-2011 College of Coastal Georgia Student Handbook*. In most cases, the office to which the petition is directed requires the completion of specific form(s), which ensures that all similar petitions are dealt with in a uniform manner. The routing process is based on the nature of the petition. Such petitions can deal with numerous activities and circumstances, including in-state residency status, financial aid, and parking violations.

The following two cases illustrate how such petitions are handled:

1. *A student is denied federal financial aid for the coming academic term due to failure to make Satisfactory Academic Progress. She appeals the decision by petitioning the Director of Financial Aid, who convenes a committee to review the petition and the circumstances of the student's request. After the request is approved with a set of conditions, the Director of Financial Aid informs the student, in writing, of the decision and the conditions for receiving continued federal financial aid. The student signs a document acknowledging acceptance of the conditions.*
2. *A student who is classified for tuition purposes as an out-of-state student appeals for in-state residency status by submitting the [Petition for Georgia Residence Classification](#) and supporting documentation to the Registrar's Office. The petition is reviewed by the Registrar, who notifies the student, typically by email, of her decision. The process is in conformity with USG Board of Regents Policy Manual, [Section 4.7](#).*

### Harassment Complaint

A harassment or discrimination complaint is defined as any complaint filed under the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1972, or any State or Federal laws or policies related to harassment or discrimination of any type. The College expects that all faculty, staff, and students will act in a responsible and professional manner to establish a working and learning environment that is free of discrimination and harassment; all of the College's expectations are codified in the [Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#), which is posted on the College's website and in the *Student Handbook*. The College has aligned its policies with those of the USG, whose policies are also available online.

The following case illustrates how these complaints are addressed.

*A staff member in the institution's library contacted the Vice President for Student Affairs by phone to report an incident involving an image a student was displaying on his laptop computer. The Vice President met with the student to discuss the situation and reviewed the image, which, in his opinion, could justifiably be viewed as sexual harassment if visible in a public setting. After reviewing with the student the definition of sexual harassment, as stated in the College's Student Handbook, and determining that the student had not meant to harass or offend others, the Vice President issued the student a verbal warning to not display the image in any public setting on campus. The student agreed to abide with the Vice President's decision and, in fact, exceeded the stated stipulation by committing to leave his laptop at home so that there would be no further chance of the image offending others while he was on campus.*

The [Student Conduct Code](#) published in the 2010-2011 College of Coastal Georgia Student Handbook and administered by the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs, outlines the procedures for addressing student complaints regarding prohibited conduct of students.

**Supporting Documentation**

[\*2010-2011 College of Coastal Georgia Catalog\*](#)

[\*Student Academic Appeal Report, September 7, 2010\*](#)

[\*2010-2011 College of Coastal Georgia Student Handbook\*](#)

[\*USG Petition for Georgia Residence Classification\*](#)

[\*USG Board of Regents Policy Manual, Section 4.7\*](#)

[\*College of Coastal Georgia Non-Discrimination and Harassment Policy\*](#)