

Polk State College District Board of Trustees Rule

Rule Number	Subject	Rule Making Authority	Statutory Reference	SBE Rule Reference	Effective Date
6Hx21 4.26	Student Appeal/Complaint Policy	FS 1001.64	FS1005.04(1)(h)		2/25/19

The purpose of this rule is to express the Board's policy assuring students the opportunity to express informal appeals and complaints and to initiate formal appeals and complaints regarding the operation of the College and the actions of its employees performing their duties.

I. Definitions of the terms used in the rule include:

- A. An *informal appeal* is a student request for special consideration in matters of interpretation and application of College rules, policies, or procedures.
- B. An *informal complaint* is a student's expressed concern about or objection to a College rule, policy, procedure, or action of an employee(s) in performance of his/her/their duties.
- C. A *formal appeal* is a request expressed in a formal written statement.
- D. A *formal complaint* is a complaint expressed in a formal written statement.

II. Student Rights

- A. All College employees are expected to be sensitive to the needs and feelings of students while performing their duties in accordance with College rules, policies, and procedures. They should be alert to, respond to, and resolve student appeals and complaints at the operational level whenever possible.
- B. Students have the right to express their disagreement with and/or objection to the application of College rules, policies, procedures, and/or actions of staff in the performance of their duties. Such expression is initially considered an informal appeal or a complaint.
- C. Students who feel an informal appeal or complaint has not been responded to or resolved appropriately are assured the right of formal redress through the appropriate channel(s). To exercise this right, a student must express and submit the formal appeal or complaint in written form and follow the appropriate administrative channels in accordance with item D below. A formal complaint must follow the steps outlined in item D.2. below.

- D. Appropriate channels of formal appeal and formal complaint include the following:
1. Matters for which a formal appeal or complaint process is specified in other Board rules or procedures. The appropriate rule/procedure is referenced.
 - a. Matters regarding grading issues and classroom policies and procedures may be appealed to the instructor or the administrator who is the instructor's immediate academic supervisor (Procedure 1018).
 - b. Matters of interpretation of academic rules may be appealed to the Petitions Committee (Procedure 5023).
 - c. Matters regarding student services for students with disabilities may be appealed with the assistance of the Director of Disability and Counseling Services. (The avenues of appeal are specified in Board Rule 4.23 and College Procedure 5008.)
 - d. Matters regarding financial aid and scholarships may be appealed to Student Financial Services.
 - e. Matters regarding conduct of other students may be appealed to the campus Dean of Student Services, or designee, who will assist with the provisions and procedures in the Student Conduct, Discipline, and Due Process Rule (4.01).
 - f. Matters of discrimination, discriminatory policies, or discriminatory actions (other than matters of discipline or student employment) may be appealed through the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. Claims of employment discrimination may be appealed using Procedure 6054, Applicant Equity Complaint Procedure.
 - g. Matters of complaint against an employee may be appealed to the employee's supervisor. If the complaint is not resolved at this level, the next step in the formal process is listed below in item 2.
 - h. Matters involving sexual harassment may be appealed using Procedure 6076, Sexual Harassment.
 2. All other matters should be processed as listed below:
 - a. Matters of complaint against an employee. The first step is informal appeal to the employee's supervisor.
 - b. Matters of complaint against an institutional policy or practice. The first step is informal appeal to the administrator responsible.

c. If the appeal or complaint is not resolved and is not outlined in the procedures mentioned under item 1, a formal appeal/complaint process must be followed.

(1) A written statement of the complaint must be submitted to the Director or Dean responsible for the organizational unit in which the complaint originated.

(2) The Director or Dean is responsible for investigating and resolving the complaint in a reasonable amount of time. A written decision statement will be issued to the parties involved.

(3) If the complaint is against the Director or Dean responsible for the organizational unit, that person's supervisor will review the complaint.

E. Students who have exhausted all avenues of Polk State's institutional grievance policy and feel their complaint has not been resolved satisfactorily, may contact the state of Florida. Information on the state grievance procedures are found on the state website at <https://www.fldoe.org/sara/student-concerns.stml>.

F. Out-of-State Distance Education students, who have completed Polk State's internal institutional grievance process as stated above and the applicable state grievance process found on the webpage listed above, may appeal non-instructional complaints to the FL-SARA Postsecondary Reciprocal Distance Education (PRDEC) Council. For additional information on the complaint process, please visit the FL-SARA Complaint Process page found at <https://www.fldoe.org/sara/student-concerns.stml>.

Polk State College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, veteran status, genetic information, disability, or pregnancy in its programs, activities, or employment. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies:

Valparisa Baker
Director, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (Title IX Coordinator)
999 Avenue H NE
Winter Haven, FL 33881-4299
Office: WAD 227
863.292.3602 Ext. 5378
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polk.edu/equity

History

Adopted: August 24, 1992

Revised: May 23, 1994; June 27, 2005; September 25, 2006; February 22, 2010; May 22, 2017; February 26, 2018; February 25, 2019; September 19, 2024