

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES AND DUE PROCESS FOR STUDENTS

A student who feels unjustly treated by the College, including its agents, may file a grievance. This grievance procedure does not apply to the contesting of disciplinary decisions, to ADA concerns, or to harassment complaints, since separate disciplinary appeal and ADA and harassment procedures exist. (For ADA or disability service concerns, see “ADA Grievance Procedures.” For information about harassment, see “Harassment/Physical Assault Policy.” The procedure for a student wishing to have a grievance heard is as follows:

I. Purpose.

The purpose of this student grievance procedure is to provide fair and orderly processes to resolve student grievances at Northeast.

II. Definitions.

Student: A student is defined as one who is or who has been duly and legally registered as either a full-time or part-time enrollee at Northeast.

Grievance: A grievance is defined as a difference or dispute between a student and a college employee with respect to the application of the rules, policies, procedures, and regulations of the College as such affect the student.

III. Grievance Steps.

First Step: The student should contact the College employee who would be best able to handle the grievance, i.e., the person with whom the student has a difference or a dispute. This contact should be made within ten (10) calendar days following the event giving rise to the grievance. Every reasonable effort should be made by all parties to resolve the matter informally at this level.

Second Step: If the student is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance at the first step, he/she may file a written appeal to the immediate supervisor of the employee involved within five (5) calendar days of receipt of the decision given in the first step. Within five (5) calendar days of the supervisor’s receipt of the written appeal from the student, the supervisor shall notify the employee involved in the complaint. The supervisor shall also set a date for a meeting and notify the student where and when the meeting shall take place. The meeting date shall not be later than ten (10) calendar days after the supervisor’s receipt of the written appeal. At this point, the College employee involved may respond in writing to the grievance.

Third Step: If the student is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance by the supervisor of the employee involved, he/she may request a meeting with the appropriate dean(s) within five (5) calendar days after the receipt of the disposition of his/her grievance at the second step. The dean will render a decision to redress the grievance if it is judged that one occurred. If in the dean’s judgment the appeal and record of previous actions have redressed the grievance or do not warrant further action, the involved dean(s) shall notify the student, employee, and supervisor within five (5) calendar days after receipt of the appeal.

Fourth Step: If the student is not satisfied with the disposition of the grievance by the dean(s) involved, he/she may request a meeting with the president within five (5) calendar days after the receipt of the disposition of his/her grievance at the third step.

If in the president’s judgment the appeal and record of previous actions have redressed the grievance or do not warrant further action, the president shall notify the student, employee, supervisor, and dean(s) within five (5) calendar days after receipt of the appeal.

If the president grants the appeal, the president may either hear the appeal or appoint a hearing committee to hear the appeal. Such hearing committee will include student representation. The president will notify the student, employee, supervisor and dean(s) of this decision within ten (10) calendar days after the conclusion of the meeting.

If the hearing committee is to hear the appeal, the chairman shall within five (5) calendar days after the appointment of the committee set a time and place for the hearing and notify the student, the employee, and the employee's supervisor. The committee shall determine the facts and communicate its recommendation in writing to the president within five (5) calendar days after the hearing is completed.

Within ten (10) calendar days of the president's receipt of the recommendation, the president shall make the decision and notify the student, the employee involved, and the employee's supervisor. If the president hears the appeal, the president will make his decision and notify the student, the employee involved, and the employee's supervisor within ten (10) calendar days. The decision of the president shall be final under the provision of this grievance procedure.

A copy of the appeal, the recommendation of the committee, and the decision of the president shall be placed in the student's official file, unless the president directs otherwise.

IV. Time Limitations.

Extension of time: It is important that initiated grievances be processed as rapidly as possible. Every effort shall be made by all parties to expedite the process. The time limitations specified herein may be extended by written mutual agreement.

Failure to appeal within time: If there is no written mutual agreement to extend the time limit set herein, and if a decision at any step is not appealed by the student to the next step of the procedure within the stated time, the grievance shall be deemed settled on the basis of the last decision rendered provided the decision is within the authority of the parties.

Failure to respond within time limit: Failure at any level of the grievance procedure to notify the student of the reviewer's decision within the specified time limit shall permit an appeal at the next step of the procedure within the time which would have been allotted had the decision been communicated by the final day.

V. General Provision.

Identification: All written grievances and appeals shall include the name and position of the aggrieved party, a brief statement of the nature of the grievance, and the redress sought by the aggrieved person.

Informal discussion: Nothing contained herein shall be construed as limiting the right of the student having a grievance to discuss the matter informally with any appropriate member of the College and having the grievance informally adjusted, nor of the right of the College to manage itself.

Employment of attorney: A student may employ an attorney at his/ her own expense to provide counsel at any level if the student so desires.

Constitutional rights: The grievance procedure shall not be construed as to restrain students in their exercise of constitutional rights.

Consumer and student complaints that are not resolved at the institutional level are thus arbitrated at the state level by the Alabama Community College System (ACCS) Office.

The objective of the student complaint process is to ensure that the concerns and complaints of students are addressed fairly and are resolved promptly. A student must exhaust his/her rights under the institution's official complaint/grievance policy before advancing any complaint to the System Office of Alabama Community College System. Students may file consumer/student complaints with the Alabama Community College System by following these procedures:

- a) If, after exhausting all available institutional processes, a student's complaint remains unresolved, the student may appeal to the Alabama Community College System using the System's official Student Complaint Form, which is available online at the ACCS website (www.accs.cc). Students may submit completed complaint forms by printing the form, signing it, and then either (1) scanning it and e-mailing it to complaints@accs.edu or (2) mailing it to:
Alabama Community College System
Attention: Division of Academic and Student Affairs
P.O. Box 302130Montgomery, AL 36130-2130
- b) The Division of Academic and Student Affairs will investigate the complaint within 30 days of receipt.
- c) The institution which is the subject of the complaint has 30 days to provide a written response to questions and/or concerns raised during the investigation. Such response may or may not contain a resolution.
- d) The Division of Academic and Student Affairs will adjudicate the matter and write a report or letter to the institution and student detailing corrective action, if any is necessary, or stating that the school has no violation of policies.
- e) If corrective action is needed, the institution will have 30 days to comply or develop a plan to comply with the corrective action.
- f) The System Office will monitor the institution's compliance to ensure the completion of any required corrective action.