

TITLE: APPEALS: INFORMAL RESOLUTION

POLICY STATEMENT:

Students have a right to question, receive explanations and seek changes to decisions made by faculty, administrators and staff of Red Deer College involving administrative decisions, academic decisions, academic misconduct, and non academic misconduct. Red Deer College seeks to resolve issues relating to these decisions informally before proceeding to the formal appeal process.

PURPOSE:

This policy defines the guidelines and procedures for the informal resolution process for students. It enables students, faculty, staff, and administration to expedite resolutions in a manner that is consistent with the principles stated in this policy. This policy defines and outlines the informal resolution procedures for students who disagree with decisions made by the College and defines the decisions that may be appealed.

SCOPE:

This policy relates to appeals of Administrative, Academic, Academic Misconduct, and Non-Academic Misconduct decisions and applies to all members of the College community.

PRINCIPLES:

An atmosphere of freedom and respect, and appreciation for the basic rights and responsibilities of all members of the RDC community are essential conditions for a learning community.

Procedures and decisions at Red Deer College:

- Are nondiscriminatory, respectful, dignified and unintrusive.
- Incorporate open, honest and timely communication.
- Are made in a timely manner.
- Provide appropriate confidentiality and privacy.
- Provide appropriate access to education.
- Ensure that all learners, faculty and staff are treated fairly.
- Ensure that all participants have access to informed support regarding policies, procedures, rights and responsibilities.
- Ensure that all participants are respected in their basic right to be heard, to present submissions on their behalf, to present verifiable evidence, to be heard by an impartial decision maker, and to receive a decision based on evidence.
- Operate with clear written expectations for learner conduct and handling of complaints.
- Ensure that all accreditation standards are met.
- Ensure that a high standard of administration and instruction in all areas of educational programs and services are maintained and clearly stated in College practices and policies.
- Alternate forms of communication are provided to participants who require such accommodation.

DEFINITIONS:

Academic decisions: Decisions usually made by the student's instructor in matters related to academic performance. These decisions include such academic matters as academic standing, requirement to withdraw, grades, marks, and other related academic decisions.

Academic misconduct decisions: Disciplinary decisions made regarding the giving, taking, or presenting of information or material that unethically or dishonestly aids oneself or another on any work which, under normal circumstances, is to be considered in the determination of a grade or the compilation of academic requirements or the enhancement of that student's record or academic career. The two key areas of academic dishonesty are cheating and plagiarism.

Administrative decisions: Decisions made and implemented to support the management and operation of services for students relating to exams, tuition and fees, refunds, and prior learning assessment.

Non-academic misconduct decisions: Decisions made by faculty or staff of the College concerning student behavior that has been deemed unsafe or disruptive that has interfered with the normal teaching, learning, or business processes at the College. This also includes damage to or theft of College assets such as facilities, electronic devices, the computer network, or electronic data; making false or frivolous allegations; disclosure of confidential information; and actions that place the College at potential legal risk.

Support Person: The Support Person provides guidance, moral and emotional support to the Appellant or Respondent at any time throughout the resolution process. The Support Person may attend any related interviews or meetings with the student.

GUIDELINES:

1. Attempts at informal resolution precede formal appeal.
2. Students affected may seek the support of the Students' Association or an appropriate third party for advice at any time throughout the informal resolution process.
3. Participants in the informal resolution process are expected to exclude themselves if there is a potential for conflict of interest. This includes staff, faculty and Support Person.
4. The decision-maker communicates the decision. When a student disputes a decision, the decision-maker communicates the next step in the informal resolution process to the student.
5. Timelines for resolution reflect student need and the nature of the decision being resolved.
6. All parties involved in the resolution process must be notified of any exception to the stated timelines.
7. Students are allowed to proceed in courses until the informal resolution process is completed, except in situations where safety to self or others is an issue or there is disruption to the learning environment.
8. Timelines for program completion may be extended to accommodate the informal resolution process.

9. The Director of Student Services may authorize the use of the informal resolution process for other decisions not included in the definitions above.
10. This policy supersedes any Departmental procedures.
11. If a student claims harassment or discrimination during the appeal process, the matter is immediately referred for resolution under the College Harassment and Discrimination Policy.
12. All parties are expected to respect the principles of confidentiality.
13. Documentation collected for the purpose of the informal resolution process for administrative decisions, as outlined in this policy, is held in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
14. Alternative forms of communication are provided to participants who require such accommodation.

PROCEDURE:

1. The student attempts to resolve the issue by meeting with the original decision-maker within six (6) working days of being informed of the decision. The original decision-maker informs the student of the outcome of this meeting within two (2) working days of the meeting.
2. a) If resolution for **Academic decisions or Academic Misconduct Decisions** is not reached with the original decision-maker, the student contacts the **Chair of the program** within three (3) working days, who immediately initiates a review by gathering information relevant to the issue. In cases where the Chair is the original decision-maker, the student contacts the **Dean of the Division**;

OR

b) If resolution for **Administrative decisions or Non-Academic Misconduct Decisions** is not reached with the original decision-maker, the student contacts the Director of Student Services (or in his/her absence, the Registrar) within three (3) working days, who immediately initiates a review by gathering information relevant to the issue.
3. The Chair, Dean or Director of Student Services uses the information acquired to attempt a resolution agreeable to both the student and the decision-maker and communicates the outcome of the informal resolution process in writing to the parties involved within three (3) working days of initiating the review.
4. If the parties cannot agree during the informal resolution process, the student may proceed to the formal appeal process as outlined in the Appeals: Formal Policy. The student must initiate the Appeal: Formal process within ten (10) working days following receipt of the written outcome of the informal resolution.

OFFICER RESPONSIBLE: Chair of Academic Council

RECOMMENDING AUTHORITY: Academic Council

CONSULTATION FOR REVIEW: Students, Director of Student Services, Registrar, Deans' Council, Service Council, Academic Council, Faculty, Academic Policy Committee

POLICY REVIEW DATE: January 2016

EFFECTIVE DATE: March 1, 2011

REVISION HISTORY: July 1, 2004 (Student Dispute, Appeal and Misconduct Process Policy and Standard Practice)

January 1, 2005

March 1, 2011 (Student Dispute, Appeal and Misconduct Process Policy and Standard Practice rescinded and replaced with replaced with Student Misconduct: Academic and Non-academic; Appeals: Informal Resolution; Appeals: Formal)

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