



Policy	#3-31 (Formerly #2-09)
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STUDENT COMPLAINT RESOLUTION POLICY

POLICY

North Island College is committed to working with students to resolve their complaints about employees, instruction, program content and services in an open, collaborative and timely manner. Students should attempt to resolve complaints informally and only consider utilizing the formal complaint process when informal resolution attempts fail.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide students and the College community with a process to resolve student complaints.

SCOPE/LIMITS

This policy provides a mechanism for students to resolve their complaints about employees, instruction, program content and services. Situations involving Human Rights, Harassment and Protection of Violence in the workplace should be addressed using the appropriate College policy.

PRINCIPLES

- North Island College expects that every effort will be made to achieve an informal resolution of student complaints.
- North Island College will not consider anonymous, frivolous or vexatious complaints.
- North Island College will investigate student complaints in an impartial, transparent and timely manner that is carried out in accordance with the principles of natural justice.
- A student who lodges a complaint will not be adversely affected in their course or program of studies.

- A student can withdraw his/her complaint at any time during the process. In this case, the matter is considered closed.

Guidelines:

- North Island College will apply this policy in a manner that meets the prevailing terms of existing law, other NIC policies, Collective Agreements and regulations.
- North Island College will widely and openly communicate this policy and its related procedures to its students, community users and employees.
- Students should become familiar with College policies which are relevant to their concerns, including, if appropriate, policies on human rights and harassment.
- North Island College will uphold the principles of privacy in accordance with the *BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.
- North Island College requires that all persons involved in the student complaint process keep the information relating to the complaint confidential. However, North Island College cannot guarantee anonymity.
- North Island College expects that students will initiate their complaint as soon as possible and within three (3) months of the occurrence of the concern.
- North Island College expects that all participants in a complaint resolution process will demonstrate respect and professional conduct throughout the process.
- Students are encouraged to seek advice and assistance from their Department Chair, a Counsellor in Student Services or a faculty member in the Access for Students with Disabilities department, to ensure that their complaint is best addressed by this policy.
- North Island College will notify students of their right to appeal decisions arising from the application of this policy.

PROCEDURES

Student Services will keep procedures outlining the implementation of this policy and the College will post them on the website. They are also included as Appendix A to this policy.

CROSS REFERENCE:

Human Rights Policy #2-08
Student Final Grade Resolution Policy #4-03
Student Appeal Policy #3-30

Appendix A PROCEDURES

The Informal Resolution Process

Step 1

- a) A student with a complaint about College employees, instruction, program content, or services should identify his/her concerns to the individual involved. The student should outline the nature of his/her complaint, including a description of his/her concerns and the circumstances of the situation.
- b) The respondent will consider the student's concerns and outline the respondent's understanding of the situation.
- c) Both parties are expected to clarify their perspectives and to pursue dialogue and other courses of action to reach a successful resolution.

The student and respondent may wish to seek the assistance of a Department Chair, a Counsellor in Student Services, or a faculty member in the Access for Students with Disabilities department for advice about the complaint resolution process.

The student and respondent may also bring a support person with them during this process. This may be a Counsellor from Student Services or a personal support person.

Step 2

- a) If a student is unable to resolve his/her complaint through dialogue with the person involved, then the student should, in writing, outline:
 - his/her complaint and
 - how he/she has attempted to resolve the complaint
- b) The student should submit his/her written document as follows:
 - Complaints concerning instruction or program content

If a student's complaint concerns instruction or program content, then the student should submit the written document to the Department Chair. The Department Chair will facilitate the resolution process by facilitating discussion between the parties involved. The Department Chair may seek the assistance of the program Dean.

If the complaint is about the Department Chair, then the student should submit the written report to the Dean of the program.

- Complaints concerning College services

If a student's complaint concerns College services, then the student should submit the written document to the Responsible Administrator. The Responsible Administrator will seek resolution by facilitating discussion between the parties involved.

If the parties informally resolve the student's complaint, then the matter shall be considered closed.

The Formal Resolution Process

Should a resolution not be achieved through concerted efforts to resolve a complaint informally, then the student may choose to bring the matter forward to a Dean/Director or Responsible Administrator.

- a) To initiate the formal complaint resolution process, the student must submit a written request to a Dean/Director or Responsible Administrator. The written request shall include:
- the complaint and,
 - a description of all attempts to informally resolve the complaint.

In cases where a student's complaint concerns:

- two or more programs of study in two or more areas of decanal/director responsibility; and/or
- a declared conflict of interest by the program Dean/Director or Responsible Administrator; and/or,
- a declared bias by the program Dean/Director or Responsible Administrator then,

the responsible Vice President will assign a Dean/Director or Administrator to manage the student's complaint.

- b) Within ten (10) working days of receiving the written document from the student, the Dean/Director or Responsible Administrator will confirm that every effort has been made to informally resolve the complaint, and if so, will initiate his/her investigation of the matter and render a decision.
- c) The Dean/Director will communicate in writing his/her decision to the student within five (5) working days of making the decision.

A decision from the appropriate administrator at the Dean/Director level will complete the formal complaint resolution process.

APPEAL

A student who believes that the Dean/Director or Responsible Administrator did not follow an appropriate investigation process and/or acted in contradiction of College policy may appeal the decision of the Dean/Director.

In situations concerning instruction or program content, appeal is to the Vice-President of Education.

In situations concerning services, appeal is to the responsible Vice-President.

The appeal process will only address the appropriateness of the investigation process and the execution of College policy.