

PROCEDURE

Subject	Student Request for Conflict Resolution as Related to Academic Matters Page 1 of 4	Number: 4.14.01
Source	Vice President, Student Affairs	Reference (Rule #) 6HX14-4.14
President's Approval/Date: 02/25/2014		

A. Definition

For purposes of this procedure a “conflict” or “complaint” is defined as the allegation by a State College of Florida, Manatee – Sarasota student in such instances where the student finds it necessary to secure a resolution to an academic concern including, but not limited to, a perceived inequity concerning his or her academic standing, or where the academic regulations of the course, program, or College are perceived by the student to have been inappropriately interpreted and/or applied to him or her.

B. Purpose and Conditions for a Conflict Resolution Procedure

State College of Florida, Manatee - Sarasota (SCF) strives to maintain a professional work and academic environment where all students, staff, faculty and other members of the collegiate community are treated with respect and dignity. The goal of the College is to provide an academic and institutional climate that is conducive to learning and working productively. To that end, the purpose of this Student Request for Conflict Resolution Procedure is to:

1. Provide students with a complaint mechanism for their perceived conflicts/complaints.
2. Assure students that there will be no retaliation for pursuing the resolution of their conflict/complaint under the procedure.
3. Provide students with:
 - a. Assurance that policies are applied consistently and equitably;
 - b. An effective method to present concerns to faculty and administration for resolution internally.
 - c. A process that provides a prompt, thorough and impartial investigation.
 - d. The potential for resolution at the lowest level possible
 - e. Assurance that confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible within legal requirements.

The burden of proof needed to substantiate the merits of an academic complaint shall rest with the student. Therefore, the student must demonstrate:

- (a) the presence of a wrong or loss;

- (b) that the specific alleged incident caused damage;
- (c) that there is a remedy available to right the wrong.

Examples of the above may include, but are not necessarily limited to, situations where students feel that they received an inappropriate grade in a particular course or academic policy was misapplied. They do not include questions concerning admission to a program or a specific course selection.

In keeping with the intent and spirit of this Procedure, it is incumbent upon all parties involved to show respect, civility, restraint, and professionalism in their efforts to resolve complaints. It is incumbent upon faculty members and students to arrange meetings and conferences with each other in good faith and to communicate decisions within established time frames to all concerned parties.

C. Conflict Resolution Policy

General Guidelines:

1. Students are encouraged to direct their concerns to the faculty member with whom their complaint exists. However, in the event that these efforts fail, the *Conflict Resolution Procedure* provides guidelines and procedures for resolving the conflict.
2. This Procedure is not to be used for complaints of admission. These concerns are to be directed to the AVP, Enrollment Services, and subsequently to the College Admissions Committee.
3. This Procedure is not to be used for complaints of *alleged harassment or discrimination*. These concerns are to be directed to the College Equity Officer, and subsequently another College Procedure for resolution.
4. This conflict resolution process may only be initiated by the affected student and not by third parties in a representative capacity.
5. Students, faculty, and supervisors are encouraged to communicate directly and openly to resolve conflicts at the lowest possible level. However, a designated College advisor from Student Services acting in the capacity of *student advocate* may serve as an additional resource for the student during the resolution process.
6. The time limits provided in this Procedure shall be strictly observed by all parties, unless extended by written agreement of the parties. The number of days indicated at each step will be considered as the maximum and every effort will be made by the parties to expedite the process. Failure of the student to process the conflict/complaint within the time limits herein provided shall result in the dismissal of the complaint. Failure of faculty, supervisory employees or the administration to process the complaint within the time frames provided shall entitle the student to proceed to the next step of the Procedure.
7. The written conflict/complaint of the student must state pertinent facts in enough detail to enable an otherwise uninformed third-party to determine from the document the academic conflict/complaint requiring resolution, assuming the truth of the facts as stated. The written explanation of the conflict/complaint must specify with particularity the relief sought by the student.

8. In each of the procedure steps, working days shall be defined as any day the College is open for business and shall EXCLUDE Saturdays, Sundays, any holiday the College has published as “College Closed,” and emergency closings.

D. Conflict Resolution Procedure

It is the College’s intent to be responsive to its students and their concerns; therefore, the following conflict resolution procedure has been established.

Step One – Informal Procedure

- a. The student and faculty member(s) will meet within ten (10) working days from when the conflict/complaint or sanction imposed occurred; unless the situation warrants immediate attention.
- b. The faculty member will take a positive approach, explain the reasons for any action, grade, or policy which may have contributed to the conflict/complaint, and seek a mutually agreeable solution.
- c. In the case of a final grade, the request for a conference must be made in writing by the student within ten (10) working days of the first day of class of the following semester (Fall, Spring, or Summer). Within ten (10) working days of receipt of the student’s request, the faculty member, or if unavailable, the faculty member’s Department Chair, must hold the conference with the student.
- d. The goal of both parties should be to resolve the issues at this level.

Step Two – Informal Procedure

- a. If within ten (10) working days of the initial meeting to resolve the conflict/complaint as provided in STEP ONE, the conflict/complaint is not resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the student and faculty member; or the conflict/complaint involves perceived unfair treatment by the faculty member, the student may request a meeting with the faculty member’s immediate supervisor - the Department Chair (or another Academic Affairs administrator designated by the Vice President, Academic Affairs, if the conflict/complaint is with the Department Chair).
- b. The student and the Department Chair or designated administrator shall meet within ten (10) working days from the date of the student’s request as provided in STEP TWO, part a.
- c. The Department Chair or designated administrator will then meet with the faculty member no later than five (5) working days from the date he/she met with the student; unless the situation warrants immediate attention.
Note: As part of the Procedure, the Department Chair or designated administrator may also consult with his/her supervisor, the Vice President, Academic Affairs, the Director of Human Resource Operations and/or the College Equity Officer to assure equitable treatment and adherence to College Policies and state and federal laws as related to the conflict/complaint in question.
- d. Within five (5) working days after the meeting with the faculty member, the Department Chair or designated administrator will issue a verbal decision to the student.
- e. The goal of the three parties should be to resolve the issues at this level.

Step Three – Informal Procedure

- a. If the resolution at Step Two does not resolve the conflict/complaint to the satisfaction of the student, the student may request in writing to proceed to Step Three and shall submit the written complaint to the next higher level of supervision, with a copy to the Vice President, Academic Affairs. The submission of the written conflict/complaint at this Step Three is due within five (5) working days of the student and faculty member's receipt of the finding of the Department Chair or designated administrator in Step Two, including documentation of the dates when the student initially met with the faculty member, and the subsequent meeting with the Department Chair or designated administrator.
- b. Upon receipt of the formal written conflict/complaint, the supervisor of the Department Chair shall schedule a meeting with the student within five (5) working days to discuss the conflict/complaint. As a part of the Procedure, the supervisor will consult with the faculty member, and Department Chair and/or designated administrator, to assure equitable treatment and adherence to College policies and state and federal laws as related to academic due process.
- c. Within ten (10) working days after the meeting with the student, the supervisor will issue a decision in writing to the student, the faculty member, and Department Chair or designated administrator, with a copy to the Vice President, Academic Affairs.

Step Four – Formal Procedure

- a. The student may within five (5) working days of receipt of the disposition of Step Three request in writing to proceed to Step Four in which the Vice President, Academic Affairs shall investigate the conflict/complaint. The student shall submit such written request with a summary of the findings at Step Two and Three.
- b. The Vice President will meet with the parties directly involved to facilitate a resolution or gather further information from the parties and other resources as needed. The Vice President's investigation shall be conducted confidentially and any individuals interviewed in the course of the investigation shall be advised to maintain such confidentiality.
- c. A written finding will be given within ten (10) working days of completion of the investigation by the Vice President, Academic Affairs. A copy of the findings will be provided to all parties and the Vice President, Student Affairs.
- d. The decision of the Vice President, Academic Affairs shall be the final settlement of the conflict/complaint.